

LANG 3990 Topic: Language & Religion

Fall semester 2017

Preliminary SYLLABUS

Instructor: **Karin deJonge-Kannan**, Ph.D. email karin.dejongekan@usu.edu

Office Phone: 435-797-8318 (but email works much better) Office Location: Old Main 002-J

Office hours: Tues & Thurs 1:00 – 2:00 PM
other times by appointment.

Course Description:

Two key aspects of a person's identity are language and religion. Typically, to belong to a religion means to adopt its worldview and to carry out its ritual practices – verbal and non-verbal. What specific linguistic practices are connected with the religions of the world? How are children acculturated into these practices? If the language used by a religious group is not the dominant language of the society in which the group lives, what effects can be observed on the group, the individuals, and the language? These sociolinguistic questions about the topic of religion form the focus of this course. Through discussion of texts and videos, students will develop their understanding of the roles of language and religion in the wider world. At the end of the semester, students will be able articulate their perspective on issues of social power connected with language and religion.

Course Objectives:

Utah State University uses the IDEA Center Student Evaluation process to assess the extent to which students believe that a course has helped them learn. The objectives selected as “Essential” or “Important” for LANG 3990 are:

Learning to *apply* course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)

Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems

Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking my own questions and seeking answers

Instructor Philosophy:

Students are motivated to learn (and therefore learn better and more) in student-centered classrooms that provide them with freedom to make choices and direct their own learning. This class is for students who are ready to participate and take initiative. Students are expected to be generators of questions as well as seekers and synthesizers of information. If you are intellectually curious and enjoy pursuing answers to your own questions, this is a course for you. No tests, quizzes or exams will be administered in this course; students will demonstrate their understanding of course topics in face-to-face class discussions, short written responses, three brief presentations, the four parts of an *iSearch* process, and a written final reflection.

Basic format

Since none of us knows much about languages or religions outside our personal experience, we will read a lot so that we can learn. Students should take notes while reading, to make sure they read carefully and understand what they have read. A Reading Response template for note-taking is provided. When we meet as a class, we will discuss what we have read, what we learn from class guests, and what we see in video material. This time of discussion – checking our understanding against that of others; bouncing our ideas off others; asking questions and pondering possible answers – is critical for learning. Therefore, class **attendance is mandatory**. If you cannot make it to class for a legitimate reason (the instructor is the judge of what constitutes ‘legitimate’), you are expected to act like a responsible adult and inform the instructor immediately. Four absences are allowed without penalty; after that, absences will start affecting your final grade. Also, arriving late or leaving early disrupts the class. To discourage this type of disruptive behavior, three late arrivals / early departures will count as one absence.

To learn from each other while we are together, it is mandatory that everyone arrive on time and put away electronic gadgets and other distractions. This is your class; make it interesting, **show respect, demonstrate attentiveness** to one another. Pretend, if you have to.

Assignments & Points

- 30% On-going participation (15% attendance; 15% reactions & reading responses)
- 18% Class presentations (3 presentations, worth 6 points each):
 - Faith Tradition overview
 - 2 presentations of journal articles
- 20% Parts I and II of *iSearch*
- 20% Parts III and IV of *iSearch*
- 6% Presentation of Parts III and IV
- 6% Written Final Reflection

For each reading, a portion of the class reads the assigned article and does the Reading Response. One student leads the discussion (since at least some of the class will have read it, this should work).

Preliminary Schedule (to be updated after Oct 2)

1	Aug 28	Introducing ourselves: Our own faith tradition; our language(s); motivations for taking this class. Summary of Part I (Ch. 1-8) of Partridge’s <i>World Religions</i> (2 nd ed.) Watch & discuss USU library’s video <i>World Religions</i>
	Aug 30	Finish watching & discussing video.
	Sep 1	Introduction to the concept of Harkness method. Practice this method with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everett (2017)• Reza Aslan (2017)
2	Sep 4	In-class readings + group discussions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language & Religion in Popular media
	Sep 6	Our names & identities (readings & introspection) Reasons for studying sociolinguistics of religion
	Sep 8	Fishman - What do you lose when you lose a language?
3	Sep 11	Major faith traditions: Language & Religion in Hinduism
	Sep 13	Major faith traditions: Language & Religion in Buddhism

	Sep 15	Major faith traditions: Language & Religion Jainism
4	Sep 18	Major faith traditions: Language & Religion in Chinese/Korean/Japanese Religions
	Sep 20	Major faith traditions: Language & Religion Judaism; Christianity
	Sep 22	Major faith traditions: Language & Religion Islam; Sikhism
5	Sep 25	Class guest Rev. Scott Thalacker; short written reaction
	Sep 27	Class guest Dr. Ravi Gupta; short written reaction
	Sep 29	Watch & discuss DVD – Brothers in the Buddha
6	Oct 2	Finish watching & discussing video. Plan topics for remainder of semester.
	Oct 4	Class guest; short written reaction
	Oct 6	Class guest; short written reaction
7	Oct 9	Intro: First-person academic searching (<i>iSearch</i>) Brainstorming topic ideas
	Oct 11	Library session – room change!!! – meet in LIB 122
	Oct 13	2 articles; 1 reading response
8	Oct 16	2 articles; 1 reading response
	Oct 18	2 articles; 1 reading response
	Oct 19	(yes, Thurs!) 2 articles; 1 reading response
9	Oct 23	2 articles; 1 reading response
	Oct 25	2 articles; 1 reading response
	Oct 27	2 articles; 1 reading response
10	Oct 30	2 articles; 1 reading response
	Nov 1	2 articles; 1 reading response
	Nov 3	Parts I and II of <i>iSearch</i> due; sharing of experiences with iSearch approach
11	Nov 6	2-3 Student-selected articles; 1 reading response
	Nov 8	2-3 Student-selected articles; 1 reading response
	Nov 10	2-3 Student-selected articles; 1 reading response
12	Nov 13	2-3 Student-selected articles; 1 reading response
	Nov 15	2-3 Student-selected articles; 1 reading response
	Nov 17	2-3 Student-selected articles; 1 reading response
13	Nov 20	2-3 Student-selected articles; ; 1 reading response; parts III and IV of <i>iSearch</i> due
	Nov 22	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>
	Nov 24	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>
14	Nov 27	Final presentations (summary of parts III and IV of iSearch)
	Nov 29	Final presentations (summary of parts III and IV of iSearch)
	Dec 1	Final presentations (summary of parts III and IV of iSearch)
15	Dec 4	Final presentations (summary of parts III and IV of iSearch)
	Dec 6	Film + discussion
	Dec 8	Film + discussion
Finals Week		Reflection Paper due

Learning Climate:

In this class we promise to:

- ❖ Acknowledge that human beings experience and participate in religion in many ways
- ❖ Ask questions respectfully, humbly, and with an open mind
- ❖ Seek to discover, analyze, and understand

Specifically, we will not engage in denigration of that which is holy or sacred to others, nor will we attempt to promote our own religious beliefs and religious value system over those of others.

