

# PAPER GUIDELINES

## General Instructions

### Due Dates:

1. **Jan. 24:** “What does it mean to study Religion?”
2. **Feb. 11:** Reflection, “Sita Sings the Blues”
3. **Feb. 28:** Reflection, “The Life of the Buddha”
4. **March 31:** Reflection, “Confucius”
5. **April 14:** Reflection, “To Live”

### Descriptions:

**“What does it mean to study religion?”** — Early in the semester you are asked to write a short (approximately 500-750 words) essay on the challenges of studying religion in an academic setting. This essay requires a careful consideration of one element, question, or issue from the Herling text and is a reflection on the unique enterprise of Religious Studies as a discipline. You have the freedom to use personal narrative, but only when it contributes directly to your thesis. Also remember that you *must* include class texts in your essay.

**“Reflection Essays”** — These essays (also approximately 500-750 words) should reflect on how each film relates to the course reading(s) and discussion on that section’s specific Asian religion. Questions that could be considered are: what religious themes are present? What aspects appear to be misrepresented? How does film enhance or hinder the study of religion? These questions should be answered through both personal reflection and textual evidence. For example, a student might provide a personal anecdote while also citing a text that explains why that story connects with the topic. Again, remember that you *must* include class texts in your essays.

### General Writing Instructions (from syllabus):

Your writing will be equally weighted between content and form. You are expected to use 12-point font with one-inch margins, page numbers, word count, and a bibliography. All citations and bibliographic information should be formatted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines, available at: <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.

**Lateness and missing papers.** All papers are due on the date indicated. Late papers are docked one-third of a letter grade per 24 hours late after the initial due date (i.e., a “B” paper becomes a “B-“). Writing is a required (and essential) element of the course. If you do not submit the essays you will receive a zero, which is *much* worse than an F. Even if

a paper is not all you want it to be or late, it's best to turn it in and get some credit, rather than not doing the paper at all.

### Grading:

You will be graded on three equally weighted criteria: (1) **grammar/formatting**, (2) **interaction with the course materials**, and (3) **overall argument**. Papers earning an "A" will be *exceptional* in all areas, communicating a specific and clear thesis supported by course texts, while simultaneously avoiding formatting or grammatical mistakes. Errors in these areas will lower the final grade (e.g., incorrect grammar and formatting will automatically reduce an "A" paper to an "A-," and further error in the other sections will result in a "B+" and so forth).

### Specific Rubric:

#### Argument — **33** possible points

- Clear thesis: **15**
- Organized argument: **10**
- Followed the prompt/topic: **8**

#### Course Materials — **33** possible points

- Texts included within essay: **20**
- Thoughtful analysis: **13**

#### Grammar/Formatting — **34** possible points

- Proper grammar: **17**
- All details accounted for (page numbers, word count, bibliography): **12**
- Correct citations: **5**

### Style:

Your paper *must* include an introductory paragraph that contains a thesis statement. What is your paper about? Why is this important to you? How are you going to argue your point? Be aware that since these papers are short, you will need to choose a rather narrow topic to discuss. Choose a single question and make sure every paragraph and sentence address your exact topic and thesis.

You can choose to *either* cite your work with footnotes or internal citations so long as you remain consistent throughout the paper. As stated above, every paper should include a bibliography, which is not included in the 500-750 words count total.

## EXAMPLE:

Name  
Class  
Date  
Word count  
(page numbers at the bottom)

### Title of Your Paper

Begin your paper...the end of your introductory paragraph must include a thesis statement: **I argue** that the film enhances (or hinders) the study of religion because \_\_\_\_.

## Helpful Reminders

### Additional Writing Guidelines (from previous classes):

- End your introductory paragraph with a clear and precise thesis:
  - “Therefore, I argue...”
  - “I contend that...”
- Avoid overgeneralizations:
  - “Buddhists believe \_\_\_\_\_”
  - “The only explanation is \_\_\_\_\_”
- Relatedly, use qualifiers:
  - “I think...”
  - “...often...”
  - “It seems that \_\_\_\_\_ is common based on \_\_\_\_\_”
- Avoid contractions (don’t, can’t, etc.)
- Do not end sentences with a preposition
- **\*\*\*Proper citation\*\*\*:**
  - “Herling said \_\_\_\_\_.”<sup>1</sup> (then your footnote to the right of the quotation)
  - “Herling said \_\_\_\_\_” (Herling 2016, page number).
- Make sure to be inclusive with pronouns:
  - Not: “one believes that he...”
  - Not: “mankind...”
- Proofread!
- Please double-space

## Good luck!

---

<sup>1</sup> Bradley L. Herling, *A Beginner’s Guide to the Study of Religion* (New York: Continuum, 2016), 5.