**Assignment 1: Personal reflection essay**

Due: Friday, January 24th in class

8 pages, double spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage critical thinking about your own perspectives regarding religion and spirituality. This will help to better understand the perspectives of others, as well as to identify the life experiences and spiritual contexts that we each bring, personally, to the study of religion.

**Your assignment is to write an essay answering at least one question** (or more, if that’s easier for you) **from each of these three categories** (so at least three questions total)**:**

1. ANSWER AT LEAST ONE OF THESE QUESTIONS:

* Do you consider yourself part of an established religion? If so, please describe it and describe your history with it (born into it, joined later in life, feel differently about it now than before, etc.).
* If you are atheistic or agnostic, outline your experiences coming to this worldview. What were some important experiences in your life that shaped this worldview?
* In what ways are you spiritual, and what, if any, are some religious practices that you currently keep?

2. ANSWER AT LEAST ONE OF THESE QUESTIONS:

* Describe any tensions or criticisms you have with your own religion or community (past or present). How do these tensions or criticisms relate to your own worldview and/ or sense of morality?
* Describe any tensions or criticisms with a viewpoint you have had experiences with, or are learning about now in this class.

How do these tensions or criticisms relate to your own worldview and/or sense of morality?

3. ANSWER AT LEAST ONE OF THESE QUESTIONS:

* Describe an experience that felt profoundly religious or spiritual to you. How does this object reflect your understanding of your place/role in the world?
* Describe a religious symbol, work of art, passage of text, etc. that means a lot to you. How does this object reflect your understanding of your place/role in the world?
* Do any religious or spiritual experiences you have had (or lack thereof) affect how you approach this class? How?

As the purpose of this assignment is primarily to exercise critical thinking skills and self-reflection, any research beyond personal reflection is not required (no need to list citations unless you happen to quote something directly), but I encourage you to browse any of the supplemental materials at the end of each chapter in the textbook or on the course website, especially if you need inspiration regarding what you would like to write about.

Grading rubric:

Answering required questions: 45%

Thoughtful / critical / reflective response: 40%

Language usage and style: 15%