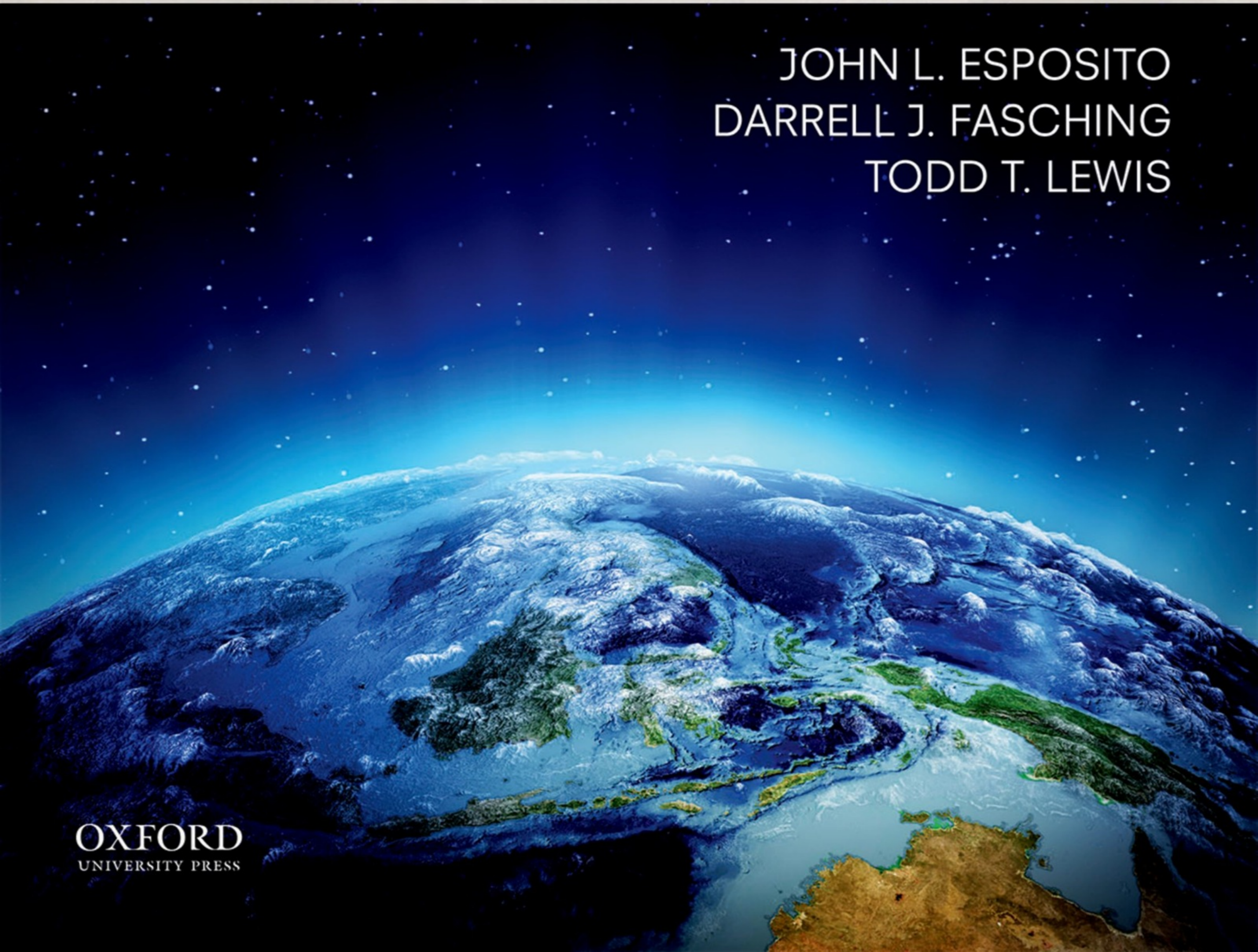


# WORLD RELIGIONS TODAY

SIXTH EDITION

JOHN L. ESPOSITO  
DARRELL J. FASCHING  
TODD T. LEWIS

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS



WORLD  
RELIGIONS  
TODAY



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*Sixth Edition*

JOHN L. ESPOSITO

*Georgetown University*

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*College of the Holy Cross*

New York Oxford

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*This edition is dedicated to the memory of our colleague and co-author Darrell Fasching, a masterful teacher and scholar*

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# PREFACE

Religion is unquestionably a dynamic spiritual and political force in the world today. Around the globe religious experiences and beliefs profoundly change individual lives even as they influence politics and play a powerful role in international affairs. This sixth edition of *World Religions Today* addresses this reality with an introductory volume for college and university students.

Although this is a multiauthored text, with each author taking primary responsibility for different chapters (John Esposito: Islam; Darrell Fasching: Judaism, Christianity, and New Age Religions and Globalization; and Todd Lewis: Hinduism, Buddhism, East Asian Religions, and Indigenous Religions), it has truly been a collaborative project from start to finish. Throughout the entire process we shared and commented on each other's material.

*World Religions Today* grew out of our several decades of experience in teaching world religions. It is a product of our conviction that, for our students to understand the daily news accounts of religions in our global situation, they need more than just the ancient foundations of the world's religions. Textbooks on world religions have too often tended to emphasize historical origins and doctrinal developments, focusing on the past and giving short shrift to the "modern" world. Many stressed a textual, theological/philosophical, or legal approach, one that gave insufficient attention to the modern alterations of these traditions. Most gave little attention to their social institutions or their connections to political power. As a result, students came away with a maximum appreciation for the origins and development of the classical traditions but a minimum awareness of the continued dynamism and relevance of religious traditions today. So, despite the growing visibility and impact of a global religious resurgence and of the unprecedented globalization of all world religions, most textbooks have not quite caught up. *World Religions Today* began with our commitment to address this situation.

*World Religions Today*, Sixth Edition, continues our hallmark approach of using historical coverage of religious traditions as a framework to help students understand how faiths have evolved to the present day. Indeed, we open most chapters with an "Encounter with Modernity." These encounters illustrate the tension between the premodern religious views and the modern/postmodern world. Each chapter then returns to the origins of the tradition to trace the path that led to this confrontation with "modernity." We attempt to show not only how each tradition has been changed by its encounter with modernity but also how each religion in turn has influenced the contemporary world.

## NEW TO THE SIXTH EDITION

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The book's major theme and chapter structure have been retained from the earlier editions, though they have been updated and revised. We have also updated chapter content to reflect recent events at the time of writing. In response to reviewer suggestions, we have:

- reduced, by approximately 20 percent, the complexity of detail that often overwhelmed students
- expressed complex ideas as clearly and directly as possible
- updated the timelines

## FEATURES

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Each chapter is enriched by a wide variety of thematic and special-topic boxes that explore particular ideas or practices in some depth. It is our hope that these lively and interesting boxes are seen as an integral part of the text, allowing students to imagine how religion today is among the most colorful, lively, and striking of human endeavors.

- “Gender Focus” boxes present additional information, beyond that in the regular text, about different practices by believers of different sexes.
- “Rituals and Rites” boxes describe the ritual practices of believers, often with a focus on ways these rites have changed over time.
- “Contrasting Religious Visions” boxes compare the beliefs of two significant adherents of a faith who both see the demands of their religion calling believers in very different directions, demonstrating that, no matter what religion we are examining, that very same religious tradition can be used to promote either peacemaking or conflict.
- “Teachings of Religious Wisdom” boxes offer some of the primary texts and formal teachings of different religions.
- “Tales of Spiritual Transformation” offer descriptions of religious experiences in the believers' own words.

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

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**For the instructor:** Supplementary materials are available on the Oxford University Press **Ancillary Resource Center (ARC)**, a convenient, instructor-focused single

destination for resources to accompany your text. Accessed online through individual user accounts, the ARC provides instructors with access to up-to-date ancillaries at any time while guaranteeing the security of grade-significant resources. In addition, it allows OUP to keep instructors informed when new content becomes available. Available on the ARC:

- The **Instructor's Manual**, which includes the following:
  - Chapter summaries
  - Chapter goals
  - Lecture outlines
  - Key terms with definitions
  - Suggested web links and other resources
- A **Computerized Test Bank**, including 40 multiple-choice, 40 true/false, 40 fill-in-the-blank, and 12 essay/discussion questions per chapter
- **Lecture outlines** as PowerPoint-based slides

A link to the ARC is available on the **Companion Website** ([www.oup.com/us/esposito](http://www.oup.com/us/esposito)).

**For the student:** The **Companion Website** ([www.oup.com/us/esposito](http://www.oup.com/us/esposito)) includes the following student resources:

- Chapter goals
- Flashcards of key terms
- Suggested web links and other resources
- Self-quizzes, containing 20 multiple-choice, 20 true/false, 20 fill-in-the-blank, and 6 essay/discussion questions per chapter, selected from the Test Bank in the ARC

The Instructor's Manual and Computerized Test Bank, as well as the student material from the Companion Website, is also available in **Learning Management Systems Cartridges**, in a fully downloadable format for instructors using a learning management-system.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

This sixth edition of *World Religions Today* has been substantially revised in light of the valuable comments we continue to receive from colleagues across the country who have used it and in light of our own subsequent experiences and reflections. We offer special thanks to the following professors and to the other,

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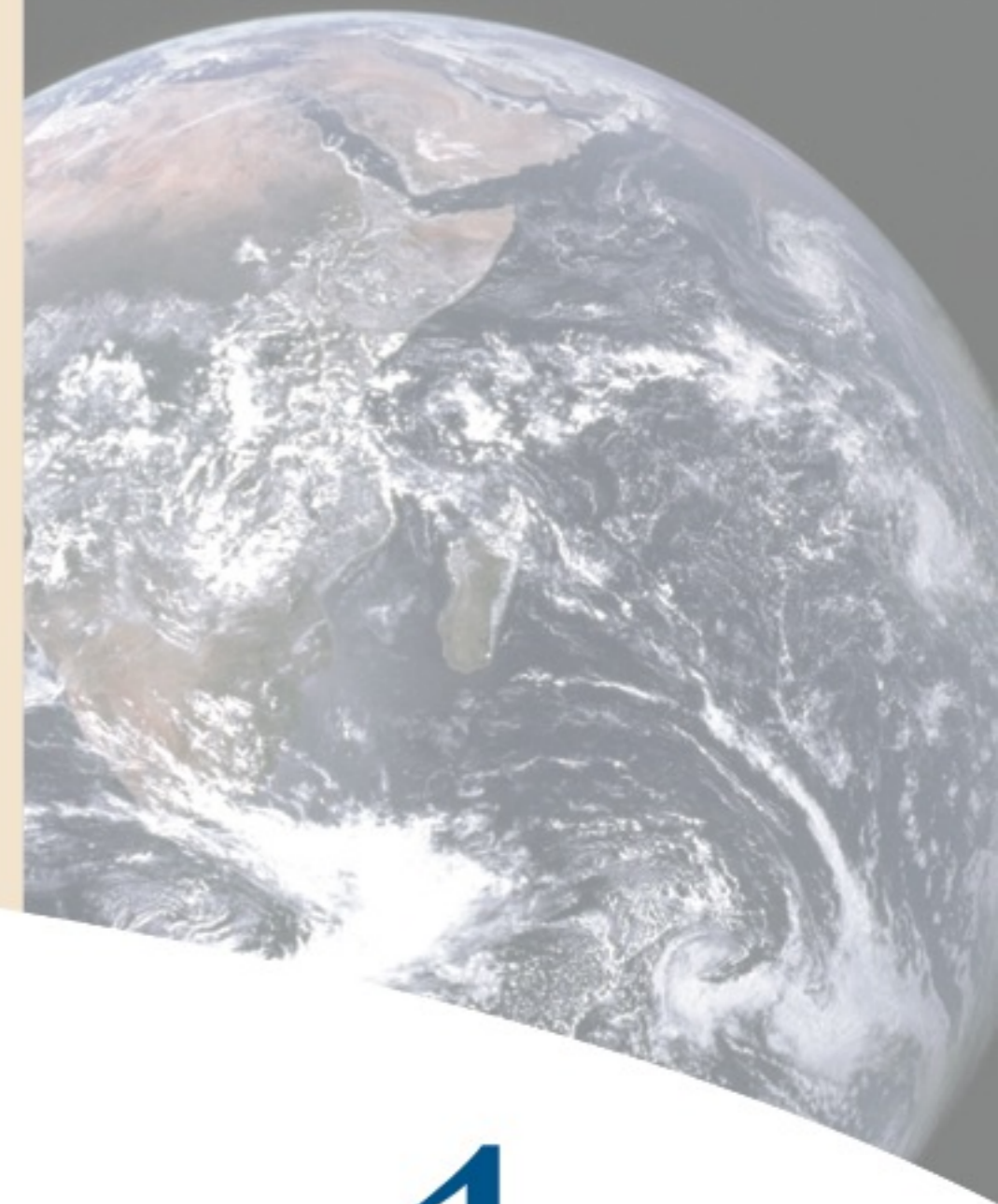






WORLD  
RELIGIONS  
TODAY





# INTRODUCTION

# 1

## Understanding World Religions in Global Perspective

In an age of **globalization**, human events reach through time and around the world to transform our personal, social, economic, and political lives. Until the modern period, the great world religions had largely divided the globe among them, with some modest overlap. But in our postmodern era, all the world's religions have members in every country or society. Just as Christians had migrated to every city in the world by 1850, today Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims are now found in significant numbers in all large American and European cities and increasingly in smaller ones. Today, anyone using the Internet can observe and even participate in live webcam services in major temples, shrines, churches, mosques, and monasteries from around the world; devotees can offer prayers, order rituals, or make monetary offerings through their websites. This is globalization.

Essential to understanding globalization in the United States is the Immigration Act of 1965, signed by President Lyndon Johnson. This act abolished the immigration system set up in 1924 and modified in 1952. The earlier system heavily favored immigration from Europe and severely restricted immigration from other parts of the world, especially Asia. The 1965 legislation dramatically changed the face of America. As of 1950 in the United States, according to government figures, about 3.6 percent of immigrants were from Asia; by the year 2000, more than 30 percent were.

In the 1950s, when people thought about religious diversity, it was limited largely to Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. In the twenty-first century the situation is

● **globalization:** in terms of world religions, the idea that all the world's religions have members in almost every country or society; and that technology affords access to all key religious sites, practices, and teachers

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◀ With the Space Age, awareness that all humans share life in a global village has come to the religions and cultures of the earth.