HRS 140, Section 1: Exploring World Religions (Fall 2015)
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Office: MND 2012 Phone: 278-5040 (during office hours only)
Office hour: Monday and Wednesday, 12:30-1:30, and by appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS: Invitation to World Religions, Brodd et. al
The Bhagavad Gita, Barbara Stoller Miller (transl.)
These texts are available for purchase or rental in the campus bookstore. An additional required text is
the Exploring World Religions Reader, which must be purchased through universityreaders.com
(ordering information to come). Other reading materials, in the form of online readings or handouts, may
also be assigned as needed.

RECOMMENDED TEXT: The Holy Bible
A Pocket Style Manual, Hacker (any edition)
You’ll need a copy of the Bible for reading assignments in our Judaism and Christianity units; if you
don’t already own one, this is a good basic version. The Hacker text is a valuable resource on grammar,
punctuation, style, and use of sources, and will continue to be helpful throughout your college career and
beyond. Our bookstore has copies in stock, or you can find used copies online for under $10.00; I

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Comparative inquiry into the nature of global religions. Hinduism,
Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam will be studied. Material and social
aspects of these religions will be considered along with primary beliefs and practices. The common
yearning to experience the divine and the numinous will be emphasized. Prerequisite: GWAR
certification before Fall 09; or WPJ score of 80+; or 3-unit placement in ENGL 109M/W; or 4-unit
placement in ENGL 109M/W and co-enrollment in ENGL 109X; or WPJ score 70/71 and co-enrollment
in ENGL 109X. Units: 3.0. Fulfills GE area C2.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: As noted in the catalog, this course is devoted to examining the religious
beliefs and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, the Chinese religions (Daoism and Confucianism),
Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We will also consider, more briefly, indigenous (primal) traditions and
Sikhism. We will explore the historical roots and current manifestations of these traditions, along with
their expression in ritual and sacred text or story. The material to be covered in the course will be
presented primarily through lecture and reading from your required texts, with classroom discussions and
an occasional video intended to enhance your grasp of the material.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Our goal is to arrive at an intellectual understanding of the major world
religious traditions, and to develop an appreciation for the nature and variety of religious experience in
the global community. We will be asking what it means to be religious, and considering the responses to
that question that have been formulated over the centuries by the major religious communities of the
world. Toward that end, we will need to cultivate an attitude of empathy toward our material; that is, we
will try, as best we can given the limits of our own religious and/or cultural presuppositions, to put
ourselves in the place of those who practice the traditions we’re studying. What this means is that we
shouldn’t be concerned with the question of whether unfamiliar religious beliefs are “true,” or whether
unfamiliar religious practices “make sense.” Rather, we should ask about the significance of those beliefs
and practices for the people who adhere to them, so that we can come to understand how those beliefs and
practices function as ways of putting a given community in touch with what it takes to be supremely
important (i.e., sacred). In other words, we don’t need to ask whether there really is a God in order to
explore the ways that various people worship God, or the gods. And since many of us in this class
undoubtedly worship different gods, or no god at all, it’s important that all of us are willing to bracket the
question of truth in religion in favor of questions of meaning. This will allow us better to understand and appreciate the diversity of human religious experience.

In addition, because this is an Advanced Study course, an important objective of the class is to improve your ability to analyze and reflect on complex issues and to write clearly and logically using standard written English. Toward that end, you are required to complete formal, out-of-class writing assignments totaling at least 5000 words over the course of the semester.

Upon successful completion of this class you should be able to:

- demonstrate a working knowledge of the conventions and methods of the academic study of religions;
- identify and differentiate the key elements of Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices that tend to characterize primal or indigenous religions;
- describe the place of religions within their historical and cultural contexts; and
- employ critical reasoning skills in the study of religious traditions through expository/analytical writing assignments based on required readings and research.

PREREQUISITES: This course is introductory in nature, and no previous study of religion is required. However, since this is designated as an Advanced Study course, you must have either passed the WPE (prior to July 2009) or received the appropriate GWAR placement (as specified in the “Catalog Description” section, above).

CLASSROOM POLICIES: The following will not be tolerated except in the case of emergencies: use of any electronic devices (laptops, tablets, cell phones, etc.) for any purpose; arriving more than five minutes late for class; leaving and re-entering the classroom; and eating, sleeping, reading outside materials, or having private conversations. In addition, and more importantly, I expect an atmosphere of respect for other students’ opinions, and an objective and empathetic response to the material we study together. Observing these guidelines will help ensure a better learning experience for all. PLEASE NOTE: If you have a documented disability and verification from the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities(SSWD), and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to provide documentation of disability to SSWD and meet with a SSWD counselor to request special accommodation before classes start. SSWD is located in Lassen Hall 1008 and can be contacted by phone at (916) 278-6955 (Voice); (916) 278-7239 (TDD only); or via email at sswd@csus.edu.

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism has become a major problem on this campus, and I will not tolerate it. You are all responsible for familiarizing yourselves with the CSUS policy regarding academic honesty, which can be found at www.csus.edu/umanual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm. In addition, you should know how to recognize and avoid plagiarism. Helpful information in this regard can be found in A Pocket Style Manual, by Diana Hacker (available on campus or at any good bookstore), and at: http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353.

I will return all plagiarized (unoriginal) work ungraded; you may, at my discretion, be allowed to resubmit the plagiarized assignment. However, in cases of clearly deliberate plagiarism, you will receive a 0 for the assignment, and will not be allowed to resubmit. Repeated instances of plagiarism will result in a failing grade in the course. I will spend some time going over my expectations in this regard before your first formal writing assignment is due, and again as needed throughout the semester.
REQUIREMENTS: All students will need to:

- Attend class. I will not keep track of your attendance, but the material you’ll be reading for this course is difficult, so the clarification offered in lectures will be crucial. Also, there may be material presented in lectures and class discussions that is not covered in reading assignments, and you will be responsible for that material, too. You will not be able to do well in this class if you don’t attend.
- Complete all assigned readings by the date for which they are listed on the syllabus. Classroom discussion of the readings is an important part of this course, and you won’t be able to participate in those discussions if you’re not prepared.
- Write short responses, of 100-200 words each, typed, to assigned questions drawn from the readings. Topics for these responses will be posted weekly on SacCT. Scoring on these assignments, which are worth up to 20 points each, will be based primarily on evidence that you’ve done the reading and given it some thought. These responses are to be written in your own words, not quoted from the textbook. Include your word count at the end of each response. Short responses will not be accepted later than the week they’re due, except in cases of extended excused absence, and are due at the beginning of class.
- Take a short quiz on each unit of study.
- Write a series of formal papers, of approximately 850 words each, in which you respond to an assigned topic. More information about these papers, including all topics, will be posted on SacCT. All papers must be turned in by the beginning of class on the due date shown on the syllabus unless other arrangements have been made with me in advance. These assignments are expected to conform to accepted standards of academic usage, and to be free of errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. Multiple and/or repeated mechanical errors will result in lower scores on your papers. Hacker’s Pocket Style Manual (available in the book store) is a good reference.

NOTE: I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the free, one-on-one help with writing available at the University Reading and Writing Center in Calaveras 128. To make an appointment or a series of appointments, visit the Reading and Writing Center in CLV 128. The Writing Center also offers tutoring for one unit of academic credit through ENGL121. For current Writing Center hours and more information, visit the website at www.csus.edu/writingcenter.

GRADING: Your final grade will be based on the following point totals:

- Short responses: 20 points each
- Quizzes: 20 points each
- Formal papers: 100 points each

Your final letter grade will be determined according to a standard distribution (i.e., 90 – 100% = A, 80–89% = B, etc.). You may email me at any time to ask about your status in the class.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: Unless otherwise noted, all reading assignments are to be completed by Monday of the week for which they are listed. Please pay careful attention to assigned page numbers. IWR = Invitation to World Religions; EWR = Exploring World Religions Reader.

Monday 8/31 – Wednesday 9/2: Introduction to course

Monday 9/7: NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)
Wednesday 9/9: The study of religion
   Read: IWR, Ch. 1
Monday 9/14 – Wednesday 9/16: Native American religions
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 2, and *EWR*, “The Spiritual Values of Native Americans”

Monday 9/21 – Wednesday 9/23: Hinduism
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 4 (pp. 83-105) and *EWR*, “Selections, The Law Code of Manu”

Monday 9/28 – Wednesday 9/30: Hinduism (cont’d.)
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 4 (pp. 106-39) and *The Bhagavad Gita*, Teachings 1-4, 7, 9-11, and 18

Monday 10/5 – Wednesday 10/7: Buddhism
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 5 (pp. 145-72) and *EWR*, “Selections, The Dhamapada” and “The Heart Sutra”
   Hinduism paper due Wednesday

Monday 10/12 – Wednesday 10/14: Buddhism (cont’d.)
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 5 (pp. 173-205)

Monday 10/19 – Wednesday 10/21: Chinese religions: Confucianism and Daoism
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 8, and *EWR*, “Selections, Tao Te Ching,” and
   http://www.anatects.org/index.php (browse)
   Buddhism paper due Wednesday

Monday 10/26 – Wednesday 10/28: Judaism
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 10 (pp. 341-76) and Genesis 1:1-2:24 and Exodus 19:1-20:14 (from the Bible)

Monday 11/2 – Wednesday 11/4: Judaism (cont’d.)
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 10 (pp. 377-95)
   Chinese religions paper due Wednesday

Monday 11/9: Christianity
   Read: *IWR*, Ch.11 (pp. 401-21) and Matthew 5-7 and Romans 3:21-28 (from the Bible)

Wednesday 11/11: NO CLASS (VETERANS’ DAY)

Monday 11/16 – Wednesday 11/18: Christianity (cont’d.)
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 11 (pp. 421-52)
   Judaism paper due Wednesday

   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 12 (pp. 459-88) and *EWR*, “Selections, the Quran and Hadiths”

Monday 11/30 – Wednesday 12/2: Islam (cont’d.)
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 12 (pp. 488-510)

Monday 12/7: Sikhism
   Read: *IWR*, Ch. 7

Wednesday 12/9: Conclusion

Islam paper due in my office (MND 2012) Monday 12/14, between 1:00 and 4:00 PM