

**HRS 140: EXPLORING WORLD RELIGIONS
FALL 2008
TTH, 4:00-5:15; SECTION 5
MENDOCINO HALL 4004
DR. PHILIP C. DIMARE**

OFFICE: Mendocino 2012

**OFFICE HOURS: MW: 12:00-2:00; TTH: 12:00-1:00; or by
appointment**

OFFICE PHONE: 278-5040

E-MAIL: dimare@csus.edu

WEBSITE: <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/d/dimarep/>

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.

Émile Durkheim

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opiate of the masses.

Karl Marx

Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness.

Alfred North Whitehead

Religion is the human attitude towards a sacred order that includes within it all being—human or otherwise—i.e., belief in a cosmos, the meaning of which both includes and transcends man.

Peter Berger

When you believe in things you don't understand, then you suffer . . .

Stevie Wonder

COURSE DESCRIPTION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES**CATALOGUE 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. **Note: Fulfills “Intensive Writing” requirement; fulfills three units of C3 General Education requirement. Prerequisite: Passing score on the WPE.**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The differences among the definitions of “religion” quoted above indicate how difficult it is to understand what exactly is meant by this term. Is religion, as experienced by human beings, truly an expression of the relationship between humanity and the sacred, or simply a “sigh of the oppressed”? With these kinds of questions in mind, this course explores how different cultures come to define the historical, cultural, and philosophical dimensions of the “religious experience.” Using both primary and secondary source material, the course focuses on the traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and other non-Western traditions, and their relationship to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

While one of the goals of this course is to arrive at an intellectual understanding of different religious traditions of the world, another is to begin to appreciate the importance of these traditions for those people who practice them. In order to do this, it will be necessary to be open to the traditions on different levels. Toward this end, we will seek to explore different traditions without forcing them to fit within the boundaries of our own religious experiences. In other words, our emphasis will not be on demonstrating which tradition is “true,” but on seeking to understand how important a given tradition is for those who adhere to it.

- Identify, explain, and analyze the ideological perspectives revealed by course materials
- Apply the techniques of formal analysis to various works within interdisciplinary contexts
- Understand and appreciate the distinction between descriptive and analytical writing and be able to use this knowledge to produce conceptually based essays
- Compare and contrast basic values and behaviors of various Western and non-Western cultures that have influenced the identity of the “World’s Religions”
- Appreciate the diversity of Religious culture

REQUIRED TEXTS:

David S. Noss: *A History of the World’s Religions*

Barbara Stoller Miller, tr.: *The Bhagavad-Gita*

Jack Kornfield: *Teachings of the Buddha*

Abdullah Yusaf Ali, tr.: *The Koran*

Michael Coogan, ed.: *The Oxford Annotated Bible*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) As an **Intensive Writing** offering, this course demands more than the normal workload from students. Students should be able to read, digest, and analyze 100-200 pages of complex material per week. Students should also expect to produce assignments that meet the University requirement for Writing Intensive courses: **not less than 5000 words (approximately 16 pages) of written work**. In this class, approximately 2/3 of this written work will be submitted during the course of the semester and 1/3 during finals week. All written work is expected to be both substantively and stylistically appropriate for college level courses. The instructor will return written assignments with extensive comments addressing both areas of concern. Should my comments not be sufficient to help the student improve his or her writing without further assistance, I recommend that students come to me for more help and/or visit the Writing Center.
- 2) Students are expected to complete all reading by the date for which it has been assigned.
- 3) All students will prepare 12 written question-and-answer assignments to be submitted on Tuesdays, beginning during the second week of the semester (see Question Due Dates). These assignments will be comprised of a question and short answer (no more than one [1] page) taken from the reading material for that week. Although assignments will be collected from all students, the instructor will choose 2-3 students each Tuesday who will “present” their questions and answers. The questions and answers will then be addressed by the instructor and the class. Each student will be required to “present” at least one time during the semester. Each of these assignments will be worth 10 points, for a total of 120 points. These assignments must be submitted in class on the day that they are due; no late assignments will be accepted by e-mail or after the due date without a valid reason. Students will receive graded short answer responses no later than one week after assignments are submitted. These short assignments constitute 1/3 of the writing requirement for the course; approximately 7-10 pages of written material.
- 4) Students will be given two in-class essay “mid-term” exams worth 50 points each. You will be given study guides for these exams one week before they are scheduled. These in-class mid-term exams will constitute 1/3 of the writing requirement for the course; approximately 5-8 pages of written material.
- 5) Students will submit a take-home essay exam (8-10 pages) exploring the material from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This assignment will be worth 80 points. The assignment will be due during finals week. You will receive a detailed essay prompt for this assignment two (2) weeks before it is due. This take-home assignment will constitute 1/3 of the writing requirement for the course; approximately 8-10 pages of written work.
- 6) I will be happy to discuss any of the course material with you; I will also be happy to read any drafts or outlines you might complete before your essays are due. Please do not hesitate to come by my office or to e-mail me.
- 7) Students must have passed the **WPE** in order to be enrolled in World Religions.

GRADING:

Questions: 120 points
 Essay exams: 100 points
 Take-home Essay: 80 points
Total Points: 300 points

EXAM SCHEDULE:

First in-class essay exam: Tuesday, September 23
 Second in-class essay exam: Tuesday, October 14
 Take-home Essay Due: Thursday, December 18

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

300-285: A
 284-270: A-
 269-264: B+
 263-249: B
 248-240: B-
 239-234: C+
 233-219: C
 218-210: C-
 209-204: D+
 203-189: D
 188-180: D-
 179-0: F

QUESTION DUE DATES:

Question 1: September 9
 Question 2: September 16
 Question 3: September 30
 Question 4: October 7
 Question 5: October 21
 Question 6: October 28
 Question 7: November 4
 Question 8: November 11
 Question 9: November 18
 Question 10: November 25
 Question 11: December 2
 Question 12: December 9

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICIES:

Cell Phones are not permitted for use in classroom during class sessions unless there is an emergency. This includes listening to messages, texting, e-mailing, etc. Turn phones to vibrate when you enter the room. If you are using a Cell Phone in the classroom during a class session you will be asked to leave the room for the rest of the session. You may use a computer in class to take notes or to check relevant course material. If you have other work to do on your computer or simply want to play games or watch videos, do those things somewhere else!

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

The Sac State Catalogue says the following about Academic Honesty:

The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of scholars and teachers. California State University, Sacramento expects that faculty, staff, and students will honor these principles, and in so doing, will protect the integrity of academic work and student grades. Students are expected to know and abide by university policy about cheating, including plagiarism. The entire document, Policies and Procedures Regarding Academic Honesty, may be found on the university's web site.

Cheating will not be tolerated in this course. If you cheat by using disallowed sources, copying from someone else's paper, or plagiarizing, you will receive a failing grade for the course. You are also subject to being expelled from the university. [University Policy Manual](#)
[Library's Plagiarism Website](#)

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). For more information please visit the [SSWD website](http://www.csus.edu/sswd/) (<http://www.csus.edu/sswd/>). They are 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.

Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after class or during my office hours early in the semester.

Student Computing Labs

Students can use any of the IRT managed student computer labs on campus. Visit the [University Labs website](http://www.csus.edu/uccs/labs/generalinfo/about.stm) (<http://www.csus.edu/uccs/labs/generalinfo/about.stm>) for information about locations, hours, and resources available.

Some Helpful Websites:

- [The APA Website](http://www.apa.org/) (<http://www.apa.org/>)
- [Purdue University Online Writing Lab](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/) – OWL (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>)
- [Sac State Library](http://library.csus.edu/) (<http://library.csus.edu/>)
- [Sac State Research Guides](http://db.lib.csus.edu/guides/) (<http://db.lib.csus.edu/guides/>)

CLASS SCHEDULE:**Week One: September 2 and 4**

Read: *History of the World's Religions*

Chapter 1: Some Primal and Bygone Religions

Chapter 2: Bygone Religions That Have Left Their Mark on the West

Discussion Topics

- Characteristics of Religion
- Mythological Language/Historical Language
- Symbolism
- Nature Religions
- Sacred Time and Space
- Sacrifice
- Shamanism

Week Two: September 9 and 11**Read:** *History of the World's Religions*

Chapter 3: Early Hinduism: The Passage from Ritual Sacrifice to Mystical Union

Chapter 4: Later Hinduism: Religion as the Determinant of Social Behavior

Discussion Topics

- Sanātana dharma
- Aryan Invasion
- The Vedic Period
- Shruti
- Smriti
- Henotheism
- The Close of the Vedic Period (Upanishads)
- Upanishads
- Atman/Brahman
- Samsara and Moksha
- Non-Vedic Texts (Ramayana, Mahabharata)
- Brahma/Vishnu/Shiva
- Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Bhakti

Question 1 Due: Tuesday, September 9**Week Three: September 16 and 18****Read:** *Bhagavad Gita* (entire text)**Discussion Topic**

- Devotional Hinduism

Study Guide for Hinduism Exam Distributed**Question 2 Due: Tuesday, September 16****Week Four: September 23 and 25****Read:** *History of the World's Religions*

Chapter 6: Buddhism in Its First Phase: Moderation in World Renunciation

Teachings of the Buddha (Selections to be read in class)**Discussion Topics**

- Life of the Buddha
- Four Sights
- Four Noble Truths
- Tathagata
- Buddha/Dharma/Sanga
- Skandhas
- Theravada Buddhism

First In-class Essay Exam: Tuesday, September 23

Week Five: September 30 and October 2

Read: *History of the World's Religions*

Chapter 7: The Religious Development of Buddhism: Diversity in Paths to Nirvana

Discussion Topics

- Rise of Mahayana Buddhism
- Bodhisattvas
- Devotional Buddhism
- Buddhism in Tibet

Question 3 Due: Tuesday, September 30

Week Six: October 7 and 9

Review of Buddhism

Study Guide for Buddhism Distributed

Question 4 Due: Tuesday, October 7

Week Seven: October 14 and 16

Read: *History of the World's Religions*

Chapter 13: Judaism in Its Early Phases: From Hebrew Origins to the Exile

Bible (Selections to be read in class)

Discussion Topics

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Monarchy
- Temple
- Exile and Destruction of the Temple

Second In-class Exam: October 14

Week Eight: October 21 and 23

Read: *History of the World's Religions*

Chapter 14: The Religious Development of Judaism

Bible (Selections to be read in class)

Discussion Topics

- Post-Exilic Judaism
- Fall of Jerusalem
- Making of the Talmud

Question 5 Due: Tuesday, October 21

Week Nine: October 28 and 30

Review of Judaism

Question 6 Due: Tuesday, October 28

Week Ten: November 4 and 6**Read:** *History of the World's Religion*Chapter 15: Christianity in Its Opening Phase: The Words and Work of Jesus in
Apostolic Perspective*Bible* (Selections to be read in class)**Discussion Topics**

- Life, Ministry and Death of Jesus
- The Apostolic Age
- The Early Church

Question 7 Due: Tuesday, November 4**Week Eleven: November 11 and 13****Read:** *History of the World's Religion*

Chapter 16: The Religious Development of Christianity

Bible (Selections to be read in class)**Discussion Topics**

- Developing "Orthodoxy"
- Christianity as an Imperial State Church
- Augustine

Question 8 Due: Tuesday, November 11**Week Twelve: November 18 and 21**

Review of Christianity

Question 9 Due: Tuesday, November 18**Week Thirteen: November 25 and 27 (note: no meeting November 27; Thanksgiving Break)****Read:** *History of the World's Religions*

Chapter 17: Islam: The Religion of Submission to God: Beginnings

Qur'ān (Selections to be read in class)**Discussion Topics**

- The World of Muhammad
- Mecca and Medina
- The Five Pillars of Islam

Question 10 Due: Tuesday, November 25**Week Fourteen: December 2 and 4****Read:** *History of the World's Religions*

Chapter 18: The Shī'ah Alternative and Regional Developments

Qur'ān (Selections to be read in class)**Discussion Topics**

- The Party of Ali
- Modern Developments

Question 11 Due: Tuesday, December 2

Week Fifteen: December 9 and 11

Review of Islam

Question 12 Due: Tuesday, December 9

Week Sixteen, Finals Week: December 15-19

Take-home Essay Due: Thursday, December 18