

HRS 140: WORLD RELIGIONS
SECTION 6: TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS, 1:30-2:45
DR. PHILIP C. DIMARE

OFFICE: BENICIA 1011

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday, 12:00-1:15; Wed. 12:00-2:00; Thursday, 4:30-5:30; or by appointment

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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

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. **Meets C3 General Education and Intensive Writing requirements.**
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 diversity of Religious culture

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Michael Molloy: *Experiencing 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 Schedule). 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: Thursday, February 22
 Second in-class essay exam: Thursday, March 15
 Take-home Essay Due: Tuesday, May 22

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

200-185: A
 184-180: A-
 179-173: B+
 172-165: B
 164-160: B-
 159-153: C+
 152-145: C
 144-140: C-
 139-133: D+
 132-125: D
 124-120: D-
 120-0: F

QUESTION SCHEDULE:

FEBRUARY 6
 FEBRUARY 13
 FEBRUARY 27
 MARCH 6
 MARCH 20
 APRIL 3
 APRIL 10
 APRIL 17
 APRIL 24
 MAY 1
 MAY 8
 MAY 15

CLASS SCHEDULE:**Week One: January 29-February 2**

Read: *World's Religions*

Chapter 1: Understanding Religion

Chapter 2: Indigenous Religions

Discussion Topics

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

Week Two: February 5-9

Read: *World's Religions*

Chapter 3: Hinduism

Discussion Topics

- Sanātana dharma
- Aryan Invasion
- The Vedic Period
- Shruti
- Smriti
- Henotheism
- The Close of the Vedic Period (Upanishads)

(week Two cont.)

- Upanishads
- Atman/Brahman
- Samsara and Moksha
- Non-Vedic Texts (Ramayana, Mahabharata)
- Brahma/Vishnu/Shiva
- Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Bhakti

Week Three: February 12-16**Read:** *Bhagavad Gita* (entire text)**Discussion Topic**

- Devotional Hinduism

Study Guide for Hinduism Distributed**Week Four: February 19-23****Read:** *World's Religion*

Chapter 4: Buddhism

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: Thursday, February 22**Week Five: February 26-March 2****Read:** *World's Religions*

Chapter 4: Buddhism (cont.)

Discussion Topics

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

Week Six: March 5-9

Review of Buddhism

Study Guide for Buddhism Distributed**Week Seven: March 12-16****Read:** *World's Religions*

Chapter 8: Judaism

Bible (Selections to be read in class)

(week Six cont.)

Discussion Topics

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

Second In-class Exam: March 15

Week Eight: March 19-23

Read: *World's Religions*

Chapter 8: Judaism (cont.)

Bible (Selections to be read in class)

Discussion Topics

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

Spring Recess: March 26-April 1, no classes

Week Nine: April 2-6

Review of Judaism

Week Ten: April 9-13

Read: *World's Religion*

Chapter 9: Christianity

Bible (Selections to be read in class)

Discussion Topics

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

Week Eleven: April 16-20

Read: *World's Religion*

Chapter 9: Christianity (cont.)

Bible (Selections to be read in class)

Discussion Topics

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

Week Twelve: April 23-27

Review of Christianity

Week Thirteen: April 30-May 4**Read:** *World's Religions*

Chapter 10: Islam

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

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

Week Fourteen: May 7-11**Read:** *World's Religions*

Chapter 10: Islam (cont.)

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

- The Party of Ali
- Modern Developments

Week Fifteen: May 14-18

Review of Islam

Week Sixteen, Finals Week: May 21-25**Take-home Essay Due: Tuesday, May 22**