Sp 2009  Exploring World Religions

Richard Shek  2022 Mendocino Hall  Hours: TR 12:30-1:30 p.m.  or by appointment
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Area:  C3
Department:  Humanities and Religious Studies  Course Number:  140
Course Title:  Exploring World Religions
Course Description:  A 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.

Prerequisites:  Passing score on the WPE

Learning Objectives:

To develop an understanding of and appreciation for the diversity of the religious experience
To identify the principal values and precepts of various religious traditions, as they are expressed in texts and in the arts
To present the contributions and perspectives of various ethnic and religious groups as they experience the numinous

Assignments:  4 quizzes (one at the end of coverage of each major tradition, except before Mid-term and Final)
1 mid-term
2 papers
1 Final

Texts:  Huston Smith, The World's Religions
  Robert Ballou, The Portable World Bible

Grading System:  Quizzes  20%
               Mid-term  20%
               Papers  40%
               Final  20%

Exams:  Quizzes test students on their mastery of the basic vocabulary
  Mid-term and Final require synthesis of knowledge and critical interpretation of major religious traditions
  Papers require students to explore common themes among religions through research on reference materials (length of each is a minimum of 2500 words, or approximately 10 pp., typed)

Other Evaluation:  Attendance and class participation in discussion
Course Outline:

1/27 General Introduction
1/29 Homo Religiosus: The religious propensities of humankind

2/3 Vedic Religion (B: 17-25, 32-38)
2/5 The Upanishadic reformation (B: 25-27; S: 12-26)
2/10 " (B: 39-58; S: 63-75)
2/12 The Bhagavad-gita (B: 27-31, 58-69)
2/17 Popular Hinduism (B: 69-91; S: 26-50)
2/19 Dissent and Reformation in the Hindu tradition
2/24 Buddha's teaching (B: 105-112, 144-148; S: 99-112) Quiz
2/26 " (B: 113-134, 142-143; S: 112-119)
3/3 Mahayana Buddhism (B: 148-155; S: 111-139)
3/5 Pre-Confucian China (B: 483-486, 492-498) Quiz
3/10 The Confucian vision (B: 486-491, 498-514; S: 154-172)
3/12 " (B: 515-529; S: 172-193)
3/17 Confucian ethics and their impact on Asia
3/19 Daoism (B: 533-574; S: 196-218)
3/24 Daoist rituals and practices First paper due
3/26 Mid-term
3/31 Spring Break
4/7 The monotheistic impulse (B: 219-230; S: 271-299)
4/9 Abraham and the Early Patriarchs (B: 235-332; S: 299-310)
4/14 The prophetic tradition (B: 333-345)
4/16 Judaic ethics and rituals
4/21 The Setting for the Rise of Christianity Quiz
4/23 Jesus' teaching (B: 385-412; S: 330-335)
4/28 Jesus' teaching reformulated (B: 412-434; S: 336-346)
4/30 Later Christian history and Christian ethics and rituals
5/5 Islam's monotheism (B: 437-469; S: 221-266) Quiz
5/7 Mohammed: The Qur'an and the Five Pillars
5/12 Later history in Islam
5/14 Islam and the modern world Second paper due

Comments: There shall be no ringing cellphones or pagers in the classroom. (They will be kept by the instructor until end of class). There shall be no food or drink in the classroom. Keep late arrivals to a minimum, and no leaving of the classroom during exams. There shall be no make-up exams or late papers without compelling reasons or advance arrangement with the instructor.