

Religions of the World – REL 2250

Fall 2017 Term I - Tuesdays 6-10:15 PM

Instructor: Cassie Lipowitz

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Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual life. ~ Buddha

Doubt isn't the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith. ~Paul Tillich

The truth is a snare: you cannot have it, without being caught. You cannot have the truth in such a way that you catch it, but only in such a way that it catches you. ~Soren Kierkegaard

Faith brings us to truth; philosophy makes us grasp it; ethics makes us practice it; and ritual makes us one with it. ~Jagmanderlal Jaini

The history of religions reaches down and makes contact with that which is essentially human: the relation of man to the sacred. ~ Mircea Eliade

NDNU CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

REL2250 Religions of the World (CDiv) (3) Focuses on a critical survey of world religions, exploring the beliefs, rituals, sacred texts, and ethical ideals of representative religious manifestations of the past and present. It covers characteristic traits and patterns in tribal, imperial, naturalistic, mystical, and national religions. It also examines the role assigned to women by world religions and the importance given to building a just and peaceful society. The amount of work required for upper-division credit will differ in both quantity from that required for lower-division credit. Fulfills Core Curriculum Religious Studies requirement.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the earliest expressions of conscious awareness, our ancestors long ago gazed up into the vast expanse of starry sky and questioned the ultimate meaning of their existence: *Why are we here? From whence does life come and what happens when we die? Who or what created us and for what purpose? Is the earthly reality all there is, or is there another sacred reality that calls us to return? How are we to live in harmony with the 'will' or 'wish' of this sacred reality while on earth?* This course will examine how various peoples have defined God or the sacred, and will consider the cultural, historical, philosophical, ethical, and social aspects or expressions of this encounter between human beings and the divine. This semester, we will explore and examine the religious traditions of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, as well as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In considering these traditions, a comparative approach will be encouraged, wherein a sense of openness towards various faith traditions may be cultivated.

TEXTBOOKS

- William A. Young, *The World's Religions: Worldviews and Contemporary Issues*, Fourth Ed. (ISBN: 0205917615)
- Harry R. Moody, *The Five Stages of the Soul* (ISBN: 9780385486774)

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Engage the diverse belief systems of the world's major religious traditions (Mission ILO)
2. Describe, compare and contrast the ethical systems of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Critical Thinking ILO)
3. Critically analyze the underlying metaphysical assumptions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Critical Thinking ILO)
4. Analyze and evaluate the relationship of self to society in Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Critical Thinking ILO)
5. Critically evaluate issues and problems that arise in relation to the social, psychological, and ethical dimensions of the world's religions (RS PLO)

GRADING

Attendance and class participation	30%
Reflection papers	35%
Final paper	35%

**Total points possible = 1000

A= (1000-900); B= (899-800); C= (799-700); D= (699-600); F= (599-0)

If at any time you are concerned about your grade, consult with the instructor.

Attendance and Class Format: ***Attendance and Class Format:*** Your presence and participation in class is vitally important, as it furthers not only your own education, but also the education of others. Intensive classes require a stringent absence policy since even once absence may significantly affect achievement of course learning objectives. With only 28 class contact hours as opposed to the traditional 45 contact hours, all class time is critical. A student who misses more than one class period or the equivalent (four accumulated hours) **must withdraw** from the class and will be assigned a failing grade for the course unless officially dropping the class. It is the student's responsibility to initiate the drop or withdrawal. There are no exceptions.

As the instructor, I promise to do all I can to create a lively and engaging class environment. In order to include various learning styles and opportunities, class sessions will generally include lecture, small group work, class discussion, as well as video clips and films.

Assignment Policy: The intensive program penalizes late work. Late assignments will be marked down. ***Late assignments will not be accepted more than 2 weeks past the due date.*** If you are absent for one class, you must complete the reflection paper for that class session and submit it online via the Moodle course page by the due date. Please note that the very first class has required reading and a writing assignment **(the first Reflection paper must be submitted during the first class, or may be submitted beforehand on Moodle).**

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is a cornerstone of our values at NDNU. If any words or ideas used in an assignment submission do not represent your original words or ideas, you must cite all relevant sources and make clear the extent to which such sources were used. Words or ideas that require citation include, but are not limited to, all hard copy or electronic publications, whether copyrighted or not, and all

verbal or visual communication when the content of such communication clearly originates from an identifiable source. **First offense of plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment. Second offense will result in an F for the class.** Consult the NDNU Student Handbook regarding consequences of misrepresenting your work.

Privacy and Confidentiality: One of the highlights of the NDNU academic experience is that students often use real-world examples from their organizations in class discussions and in their written work. However, it is imperative that students not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. Students must be mindful of any contracts they have agreed to with their companies.

Disability Services: If you have a learning disability or other circumstance that requires accommodations in this class, you must bring it to the attention of Disability Services to arrange for possible accommodations. Disability Services has recently become part of Counseling, Health, and Disability Services, located in New Hall E18 and New Hall E19. The main number for Counseling, Health and Disability Services is 650-508-3714. The Disability Services Specialist is Alice Wong and she may be contacted directly at awwong@ndnu.edu or 650-508-3670.

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Reflection Papers: Students will turn in a total of 7 (seven) **2-3 page** reflection papers based on the assigned readings, to be submitted in class on the day they are due, or on Moodle. Prompts for the reflection papers will be posted on the Moodle course page. The purpose of writing the reflection papers is to assist you in clarifying and refining your ideas as you engage with the readings. Writing the papers will also better prepare you to engage in class discussions. Have fun with these—be creative and reflective!

Final Paper: This assignment, due on the last day of class, will require students to visit a place of worship **outside their own faith tradition** and write a **7-8 page** paper reflecting on the experience, and also incorporating the ideas and concepts we discussed this semester. A detailed prompt will be distributed in class. **You must consult with the instructor about your paper topic (in class or via email) no later Tuesday, September 26.**

Workload: Intensive classes at NDNU stipulate 3 hours of work (per unit) each week outside of class. For a 3 unit class, this means 12 additional hours a week should be spent on assignments. The distribution of weekly instruction/study for this course should follow (approximately) the following model:

Distribution of Average Weekly Study/Instruction (total = 16 hours):

Classroom Instruction	4
Text Readings	5
Weekly Writing Assignments	5
Term Paper and Site Visit Research/Writing	2

NOTES

- Please be respectful during class. **Turn off cell phones or switch them to silent.** Although we live in an electronic age where texting and facebooking have become the norm, please be mindful of the class community and refrain from such activities during class time.

- Keep copies of all your written work (hard copies or electronic copies on your computer) in case something is lost.
- Professional Studies Program Blog: <http://ndnuprofessionalstudies.wordpress.com/>

SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to revision. Any major changes will be discussed with the students.

Topic	Reading Assignment
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8/29 - Introduction to the course

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| • What is Religion? | Young, Chapter 1 |
| • The Epic of Gilgamesh as Spiritual Quest | Moody, Chapters 1 & 2 |
| • Ancient Mesopotamian Religion | |
| • Discussion of <i>The Five Stages of the Soul</i> | |

Reflection Paper #1 Due

9/5 – Hinduism

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| • Vedic Religion | Young, Chapter 3 - Hinduism |
| • The Upanishads: from Outer Ritual to Inner Meaning | Moody, Chapter 3 |
| • The Bhagavad Gita | |
| • The Four Desires | |
| • The Four Stages of Life | |
| • The Four Paths to <i>Moksha</i> | |

Reflection Paper #2 Due

9/12 - Buddhism

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| • Life Story of the Buddha | Young, Chapters 4 & 8 - |
| • Buddhism | |
| • The Four Passing Sights & The Four Noble Truths | Moody, Chapter 4 |
| • The Eightfold Path | |
| • The Five Skandhas | |
| • Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism | |

Reflection Paper #3 Due

9/19 - Chinese Traditions - Daoism and Confucianism

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| • Laozi | Young, Chapters 6 & 7 - Confucianism & |
| • Daoism | |
| • <i>Daodejing</i> | Moody, Chapter 5 |
| • Philosophical Daoism and <i>wu-wei</i> | |
| • <i>Zhuangzi</i> | |

- Confucius and His Vision for Society

Reflection Paper #4 Due

9/26 - Judaism

- One God
- Genesis: Two Creation Accounts
- Exodus, Prophets, Exile, and the Book of Job
- Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist

Young, Chapter 10, Judaism
Moody, Chapter 6

Reflection Paper #5 Due

Paper Topic DUE

10/3 - Christianity

- Life, Ministry, and Death of Jesus
- Comparative Study of the Four Canonical Gospels
- Early Varieties of Christianity (Gnosticism, etc)
- Developing “Orthodoxy”
- Council of Nicea
- Roman Imperial Christianity
- Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestantism

Young, Chapter 11, Christianity
Moody, Chapter 7

Reflection Paper #6 Due

10/10 - Islam

- The Life of Muhammad
- The Qur’an
- The Five Pillars
- Sufism
- Islam and Modern Developments

Young, Chapter 12, Islam
Moody, Chapter 8

FINAL PAPER due in class