

Introduction to Religions

Religious Studies 130EA
DePauw University - Fall 2009
12:30 -1:30 MWF – JSC 111

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to religions and to their academic study. In this course we will survey some of the core teachings, practices and institutions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, Taoism, Confucianism, Islam and Christianity. Our twin goals will be to secure a basic understanding of the worlds of meaning that are created-, expressed-, and sustained by these religions and to learn how to reflect critically upon the function of religion in the lives of individuals and communities. We will begin the semester by reading selections from a classic theoretical text in the academic study of religion, Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy*. Berger will help us to orient ourselves toward a critical and analytical approach to religious phenomena cross-culturally. We will proceed by introducing ourselves to a number of religious traditions through primary and secondary literature as well as audiovisual material – the latter to get a sense of the ritual and material dimensions of religious expression globally. Most important will be the close reading and discussion of representative primary texts in English translation for each of the traditions under consideration. Over the course of the semester we will be introduced to a variety of methodological issues in the academic study of religion and we will address them as they arise naturally from our discussions of the material under consideration. By the end of the course students will have developed a *vocabulary* for understanding religious phenomena cross-culturally and with an interdisciplinary focus.

Requirements

Class-time will be devoted almost exclusively to engaged discussion. Students will be expected to familiarize themselves with all material covered in the assigned readings. For students to participate meaningfully in discussions, reading assignments must be read before class. Student discussion facilitators will be assigned to lead discussion groups for particular classes.

The bulk of the grade (60%) will be distributed evenly over three exams. The final will be synthetic and cumulative but only in the sense that you will be expected to remember the BIG concepts from earlier portions of the course. I will identify these concepts and terms for you throughout the semester and you will be provided with a study sheet before each exam. The exams will always consist of one or two short essay questions and some mix of the following: short identification, fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice, and/or matching.

Class participation will account for 20% of the final grade. Participation includes attendance and active participation in all discussions, providing quality feedback to the ideas of others and the demonstration

of adequate listening skills. Informal discussion will be evaluated based upon the ability to demonstrate good listening skills as well as active, keen and insightful contributions to conversation.

In order to facilitate discussions and to make sure that everybody is doing the reading and pulling their weight in the discussion groups I will give five quizzes over the course of the semester. Your best four quizzes will be counted. We will drop your lowest score. Each of the four quizzes will account for 5% of the final grade.

Grading Considerations:

Class Participation:

'C' range: The student meets the basic requirements of participation. This student is usually prepared and participates once in a while but not regularly. This student's contributions relate to the texts and the lectures and offer a few insightful ideas, but do not facilitate a discussion. Failure to fulfill satisfactorily any of these criteria will result in a grade *below* a 'C'.

'B' range: This student participates consistently in discussion. This student comes to class well prepared and contributes quite regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. This student refers to the materials discussed in lecture and shows interest in other students' contributions.

'A' range: This student is fully engaged and highly motivated. This student is well prepared, having read the assigned texts, and has thought carefully about the texts' relation to issues raised in class. This student's ideas and questions are substantive (either constructive or critical); they stimulate class discussions. This student listens and responds to the contributions of other students.

Grade distribution: Exam I: 20%; Exam II: 20%; Final Exam: 20%; Quizzes: 20%; Participation: 20%

Academic Integrity Policy

It goes without saying that students will be expected to live up to the highest standards of academic integrity in this course. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please re-read the section on academic integrity in your *Student Handbook* or come and see me if you have any questions in this regard.

Writing manuals that you may find useful in this class and other classes at DePauw include Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, Fourth Edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004) and Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Required Books:

Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Anchor, 1990)
Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (Harper San Fran, 1991)
Prabhavananda and Manchester (trans), *Upanishads* (Signet, 2002)
Barbara Stoler-Miller (trans), *Bhagavad Gita* (Bantam, 1986)
Gil Fronsedale, *Dhammapada* (Shambhala, 2006)
Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind* (Weatherhill, 1973)
Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius* (Vintage, 1997)
Gia Fu Feng and Jane English (trans), *Tao Te Ching* (Vintage, 1997)
Sokyo Ono, *Shinto: The Kami Way* (Tuttle, 2004)
M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *Qur'an* (Oxford World Classics, 2008)
Joseph Tylenda, *The Imitation of Christ* (Vintage, 1998)

The books for this course may be purchased at Fine Print Books on Washington Street.

Semester Schedule:

Week 1

August 26: **Introductory Remarks: What is Religious Studies?**

Reading: None (first day of class)

August 28: **Why Study the World's Religions?**

Reading: Smith, pp. 1-11

Week 2

RELIGION AND COSMIZATION

August 31: **Religion and World Construction**

Reading: Berger, pp. 3-28

September 2: **Religion and World Maintenance**

Reading: Berger, pp. 29-51

September 4: **The Historical Milieu of 'The World's Oldest Religion' – Vedic Hinduism**

Reading: None

Week 3

THE ORIGINS OF HINDU SOTERIOLOGY

September 7: **Human Desire and Paths to Liberation in Ancient India**

Reading: Smith, pp. 12-50

September 9: **The Nature of Self (Atman) and the Absolute (Brahman)**

Reading: *Upanishads*, pp. 13-41

September 11: **The Way of the Sannyasi: Meditation, Renunciation and Purification**

Reading: *Upanishads*, pp. 63-112

Week 4

DEVOTIONAL HINDUISM (Dualism/*dvaitavada*)

September 14: **Hindu Stages and Stations of Life**

Readings: Smith, 50-75; *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 1-18 and 147-154

September 16: **Karma, Discipline, Action and Knowledge**

Reading: *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 21-90

September 18: **Hindu Theism and the Idea of 'God'**

Reading: *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 91-146

Week 5

THERAVADA BUDDHISM

September 21: **The Historical Buddha and the Four Noble Truths**

Reading: Smith, pp. 82-119

September 23: **The Path of the Elders**

Reading: *Dhammapada*, pp. xix-xxx and 1-52

September 25: **Sayings of the Buddha**

Reading: *Dhammapada*, pp. 53-107

Week 6

MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

September 28: **The Spread of Buddhism and the Rise of the Mahayana**

Reading: Smith, pp. 119-128 and 139-153

September 30: Review Day

October 2: **EXAM I**

Week 7

CHRISTIANITY

October 5: **Introductory Remarks**

Readings: Smith, 317-362

October 7: **Christian Monasticism**

Readings: *The Imitation of Christ*, pp. 3-46

October 9: **World Renunciation**

Readings: *The Imitation of Christ*, pp. 47-72

Week 8

TAOISM

October 12: **The Idea of the Tao – Philosophical and Religious Context of an Ancient Religion**

Readings: Smith, pp. 196-219

October 14: **Lao Tzu and the Mysticism of the Tao Te Ching**

Readings: *Tao Te Ching*, Poems/Chapters 1-40

October 16: **Politics, Compassion and Knowledge in Taoism**

Readings: *Tao Te Ching*, Poems/Chapters 41-81

Week 9

October 19, 21 23: **(NO CLASS - FALL BREAK)**

Week 10

CONFUCIUS and CONFUCIANISM

October 26: **Confucius and the Warring States Period**

Reading: Smith, pp. 154-194

October 28: **The Confucian Worldview (Philosophical, Practical and Religious)**

Reading: *Analects*, pp. 13-69

October 30: **The Analects**

Reading: *Analects*, pp. 102-122 (books 4-6) and 153-161 (book 11) and 171-179 (book 13) and 202-217 (books 16 and 17)

Week 11

ZEN BUDDHISM

November 2: **No Class** (Instructor at American Academy of Religion Conference – Montreal)

November 4: **Introduction to Zen**

Reading: *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, pp. 1-84

November 6: **Meditation and Liberation from the Zen Buddhist Point of View**

Reading: *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, pp. 85-170

Week 12

November 9: **Religion and the Problem of Evil**

Reading: Berger, pp. 53-80

November 11: Review Day

November 13: **EXAM II**

Week 13

November 16: **The Way of the Kami – Mythology and Shrines**

Reading: Ono, *Shinto: The Kami Way*, pp. 1-49

November 18: **Shinto: Festivals and Politics**

Reading: Ono, *Shinto: The Kami Way*, pp. 50-112

November 20: **Religion and the Problem of Alienation**

Reading: Berger, 81-104

Week 14

November (23, 25 and 27: **NO CLASS – CONFERENCE and THANKSGIVING BREAK**)

Week 15

ISLAM

November 30: **The Life and Times of Muhammad**

Reading: Smith, pp. 221-268

December 2: **The Life and Times of Muhammad II**

Reading: Film Viewing of *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*

December 4: **The Life and Times of Muhammad III**

Reading: Film Viewing of *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*

Week 16

December 7: Five-Pillars Islam and the “Orthodox” Tradition

Reading: *Qur'an*, Suras 1,4,8,9,14,15,17,18,21,22, 23, 24, 28, 32

December 9: Islamic Doctrine

Reading: *Qur'an*, Suras 35, 42, 45, 47,59,63,64,65,72,75,94,109,110, 111, 112, 113, 114

December 11: Religion and Secularization

Reading: Berger, pp. 105-126

Week 17

FINAL EXAM – Thursday, December 17th from 8:30-11:30 a.m.