



## Philosophy 151- Introduction to World Religions

**Instructor:** Jon Brammer  
**Phone:** (860) 892-5769- voicemail available  
**E-mail:** [jbrammer@trcc.commnet.edu](mailto:jbrammer@trcc.commnet.edu)

Philosophy 151 is an introductory survey course designed to expose students to the teachings and traditions of a wide variety of faiths. These include, but are not limited to Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hindu traditions, indigenous religious practices, and emerging faiths. In addition to foundational information about each tradition, we will be focusing on a number of themes: defining “religion”, theory vs. practice, moral codes, gender roles, asceticism, science and religion, and contemporary issues related to religious expression. The eclectic and ecumenical approach we will be using, combining anthropological, philosophical, and sociological perspectives, should allow us to investigate all of these issues in some depth. Students will have the opportunity to explore their own cosmologies and cosmogonies in any way they feel to be appropriate. The goal of the course is not to discredit or judge any belief system, but rather to provide an understanding of each in context.

### Course Objectives:

After completion of PHL 151, students should be able to:

- Identify types of religious traditions both in this country and around the world
- Recognize important differences and similarities amongst new and enduring belief systems
- Compare the moral/ethical teachings of major religious groups
- Articulate personal religious beliefs as one system amongst a plurality of other traditions
- Communicate effectively about personal views of religiously impacted social issues

### Required Texts/Stuff:

Living Religions, most recent edition, by Mary Pat Fisher

An Anthology of Living Religions, most recent edition, by Mary Pat Fisher and Lee W. Bailey

Ability to access a computer/the Internet daily during the course of the term

### Grading and Due Dates:

*Grading*- The grading for this course is based on evaluation in the four categories below. I will be posting descriptions of all the assignments as needed; reader response guidelines and research project guidelines will be available from the first week of class. There will instructions regarding the content you should include in discussion postings on the discussion board page in Blackboard.

Research project (exploring a tradition not your own) -----	300	points
Mid-term and final exams -----	200	points
Response papers (4) -----	200	points
Discussion board postings -----	250	points
Resource contributions -----	50	points

Letter grades are then generated at the end of the term based on a strict percentage scale. Grades with an attached "+" or "-" will be given for those point totals which fall within the top or bottom 2% of each grade category (there is no "A+"). For example, a student with 860 points would receive a straight "B" grade. A different student, who had accumulated only 820 points, would receive a "B-" (820= the lowest 2% of the "B" category or  $.82 \times 1000 = 820$ ).

*Due Dates-* Due dates are included in the syllabus and are generally not flexible. Late papers will *not* be accepted unless a student is experiencing/has experienced a personal tragedy or some other *extreme* situation. In such cases, try to speak to me privately *before* the fact, if possible.

### **Discussion Board Guidelines:**

You will be expected to post at least three times every week to the course discussion board. One posting should be an original response to one of the topic threads that is available for the week's content; another should be a substantive response to the posting of someone else in the class; the third posting is your choice- it can be another original response, another reply, or a posting on a topic not covered by the threads that I have listed.

Try to be creative, articulate, and respectful in your postings. Substance is important and extensive summary is discouraged. Feel free to disagree with opinions presented by authors we read, by me, or by other students in the course. However, all disagreements should keep to the facts and not turn into personal attacks of any kind. There are a few potential discussion board behaviors that will NOT be tolerated:

- Profanity, racial slurs, or other derogatory language
- Divulging unique personal information (i.e. SS number, personal e-mail, phone number, etc...) about yourself or another student
- Plagiarized postings from other web sites or other discussion boards
- Rants or monologues, especially those not related to the subject of the week

I will be giving more information on discussion board postings as the course progresses. As always, if you have any concerns about this aspect of the course, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### **Writing Papers:**

*Submitting papers-* I will accept paper submissions either directly via e-mail or through the digital drop box in the Blackboard environment. If you send an e-mail to me directly, please be sure you get some acknowledgement from me indicating that I have received your paper. If you do not get one, I did not receive it!

*MLA format-* All out of class assignments must be typed and double-spaced with realistic margins according to MLA format. Any up-to-date English/writing reference will have a section on how to use this set of writing conventions. If you have questions about the style, please contact me as soon as possible, and I can set you up with a few good resources.

*Returned Papers-* Generally, all graded copies of papers will be returned one week after the due date. I am more concerned about content than grammatical troubles, but papers that are not carefully proofed will receive point deductions accordingly. Returned papers will have comments inserted using MS Word "reviewing" toolbar conventions, so you will need a version of that program to view your returned documents.

*Computers-* Try to get into the habit of using a word processing program when you initially compose your work and save to a separate digital storage device. It will make revisions more convenient, and it will also give you experience using the technology. All papers should be proofed thoroughly *by a human!* Computer spell-checks and grammar checks are notoriously fallible! You can also take advantage of the writing tutors in the Writing Center by making a face-to-face appointment or submitting a paper via e-mail at [TRWritingCenter@trcc.commnet.edu](mailto:TRWritingCenter@trcc.commnet.edu)

## General Policies:

*Plagiarism*- Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's words or ideas in your writing. Conscious plagiarism is an unacceptable academic behavior that will result in a "0" for the plagiarized assignment, with no re-write possibilities. Any repeat offense will result in a failing grade in the course. Plagiarism by omission or "unconscious" plagiarism will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

All students will be asked to review the information on the [TRCC Writing Center web site](#) related to plagiarism and submit a completed [post test](#) indicating knowledge of the basic aspects of plagiarism and plagiarism prevention.

*Withdrawal policy*- A student who finds it necessary to discontinue a course once class has met must provide written notice to the registrar. No punitive "W" grades are assigned to any withdrawal requested before the unrestricted withdrawal deadline for the semester. Withdrawal requests received after this deadline must bear the signature of the instructor. No withdrawals are permitted after the last class preceding the final exam. Students who do not obtain an official withdrawal, but simply stop attending classes, run the risk of receiving an "F" grade for the course

## Revisions to Syllabus:

The information contained in the syllabus is subject to revision at my discretion. I will inform all of those who are enrolled in the course if any changes are made.

## Reading and Assignment Schedule for Philosophy 151:

### Week 1

#### Readings/ Assignments Due

Living Religions Chapter 1- The Religious Response

Anthology Selections- Bailey, Freud, Marx, Tillich, Campbell

Living Religions- Chapter 2- Indigenous Traditions

Anthology Selections- The Essence of Cosmic Man, Seeing With the Native Eye

**Reader Response #1 due by the end of the week**

### Week 2

#### Readings/ Assignments Due

Living Religions-Chapter 8- Judaism

Anthology Selections- both Genesis accounts, Abraham's covenant, Eye for an Eye, Frankl, Ten Commitments, Not Commandments

Living Religions- Chapter 9- Christianity

Anthology Selections- Beatitudes, Good Samaritan, Mother Teresa, The Rise of the Mega-church

**Reader Response #2 due by the end of the week**

### Week 3

#### Readings/ Assignments Due

Living Religions-Chapter 10- Islam

Anthology Selections- People of the Book, Righteousness, Jihad, God in a World of Muslims and Christians

Supplementary Reading Packet

### Week 4

#### Readings/ Assignments Due

Living Religions- Chapter 5- Buddhism

Anthology Selections- Discovering Universal Emptiness, Love, Kindness and Universal Responsibility, Precepts for an Engaged Buddhism

**Take midterm exam**

### **Week 5**

#### Readings/ Assignments Due

Living Religions- Chapter 7- Shinto

Supplementary Reading- Shinto creation myths

Living Religions- Chapter 6- Taoism and Confucianism

Anthology Selections- Analects of Confucius, Confucianism and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Supplementary Reading packet- selections from the Tao Te Ching

**Reader Response #3 due by the end of the week**

### **Week 6**

#### Readings/ Assignments Due

Living Religions- Chapter 3- Hinduism

Anthology Selections- I am the Beginning and the End, Duties of the Four Castes, Yoga Sutras,

Untouchability, Hindu-ness

**Reader Response #4 due by the end of the week**

### **Week 7**

#### Readings/ Assignments Due

Living Religions- Chapter 4 Jainism

Anthology Selections- On Non-Violence, On Restraint, The blind Man and the Elephant

Living Religions- Chapter 11- Sikhism

Anthology Selections- Guru Nanak at Mecca, The Sikh Gurus Vision of an Ideal Society

### **Week 8**

#### Readings/ Assignments Due

Living Religions- Chapter 12- New Religious Movements

Anthology Selections- TM Today, After the Founder's Death

Supplementary Reading- new religious movement packet

**Take final exam**

**Final research paper due by the end of the week**