

PHL 151

Introduction to World Religions



Instructor: Jon Brammer
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Class Time: W 5:30 PM to 8:15 PM
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Phone: 892-5769
Wiki Page: <http://trccreligiousstudies.pbwiki.com/>

Course Description:

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 external perceptions. 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. All 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.

Required Text/Stuff:

Living Religions, 7th edition, by Mary Pat Fisher

An Anthology of Living Religions, 2nd edition, by Mary Pat Fisher and Lee W. Bailey

Thumb-drive, flash memory, diskette or some other portable computer storage device.

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



Attendance, Grading, and Due Dates:

Attendance- I will be checking attendance for the first couple of meetings, but after that, it is up to you to attend regularly. Because most of the main themes about various traditions will be discussed in class, it is to your advantage to attend regularly. We will also be doing in-class writings on a regular basis that I will use to determine attendance marks. One missed class will probably not result in any kind of huge deficit, but excessive absences (two or more) will most likely impact your work negatively. If you miss more than three classes without a compelling reason, you will not receive a passing grade in the class. If you miss a course, please see me on returning if you want copies of lecture slides, handouts, etc.

Grading- The grading for this course is flexible and will be decided during the first day of class. The categories below indicate all the aspects that you will be graded on. The weight that is assigned to each one is up to the class as a whole. There are only five limitations: 1) the point total for response papers must be 160, 2) no category can be worth less than 50 points, 3) fractional totals or those not rounded to the nearest ten points are not acceptable, 4) attendance and participation can't be more than 100 points, and 5) the total number of points must equal 500. Please remember that if one category is given fewer points, then another category must be weighted more heavily.

Research project (exploring a tradition not your own) -----	_____	points
Mid-term and final exams -----	_____	points
Response papers (8) -----	160	points
Class participation and discussion -----	_____	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 430 points would receive a straight "B" grade. A different student, who had accumulated only 410 points, would receive a "B-" (410= the lowest 2% of the "B" category or .82x500=410).

A=	450-500 points
B=	400-450 points
C=	350-400 points
D=	300-350 points
F=	below 300 points

Due Dates- Due dates are included in the syllabus and are not generally 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, please speak to me privately *before* the fact, if possible. **All students have one "grace period" to use at their discretion** with any of their writings except the research project. The grace period allows you to turn in the paper *any time before the next class meeting*. **If you wish to invoke your grace period, please cut on the dotted line and attach the appropriate quarter-sheet to your essay (see below).**

Please remember: It is your responsibility to keep up with assigned readings and paper due dates as presented in the syllabus. Check with me or a classmate to keep up with syllabus changes.



Writing Papers:

MLA format- All out of class assignments must be typed and double-spaced with realistic margins according to MLA format. I will outline this format in class prior to your first written assignment. 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 see me.

Returned Papers- Generally, all graded copies of papers will be returned one class 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.

Computers- It is *strongly recommended* that you use a computer in the writing process (either your personal machine or one in a campus computer lab), as it will greatly reduce the time you spend on revision. Try to get into the habit of using a word processing program when you initially compose your work and save to a separate diskette frequently. 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



Campus Policies:

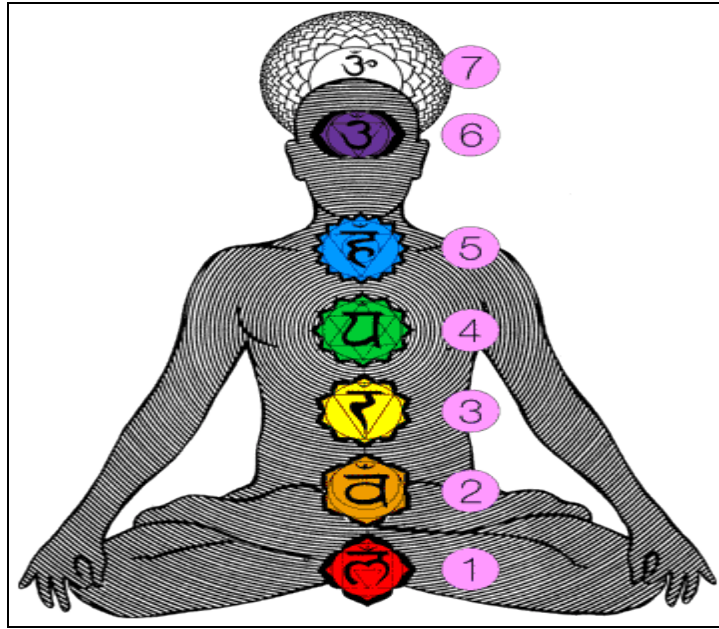
Plagiarism- Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's words or ideas in your writing. **Conscious plagiarism is an unacceptable academic behavior that will result in a "0" for the plagiarized assignment, with no re-write possibilities. Any repeat offense will result in a failing grade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

Withdrawal policy- A student who finds it necessary to discontinue a course once class has met must provide written notice to the registrar. Withdrawal forms are available at the Registrar's office on the Thames and Mohegan sites. 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

Students with disabilities- If you have a hidden or visible disability that may require special accommodations, please see me as soon as possible. If you have not already done so, please be sure to register with Chris Scarborough in order to find out what services are available for you.

Revisions to Syllabus:

The information contained in the syllabus is subject to revision at my discretion. I will inform the class of any changes that are made. If you miss a class, contact me or talk to a classmate upon your return to verify that you have the most up-to-date information.



Reading and Assignment Schedule for Philosophy 151- fall 2008

Week 1

Wednesday- 9/3

Readings/ Assignments Due

None

In Class

Introduction to the course, active reading strategies, writing responses, syllabus quiz, themes, course ground rules, what is religion?

Week 2

Wednesday 9/10

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR-Chapter 1- The Religious Response, ANTH- Marx, Tillich, TBA
Reader Response #1 due by end of class

In Class

Ways of studying religion, materialistic, functional and faith perspectives, ultimate reality, exploring the "big questions", research assignment detailed

Week 3

Wednesday 9/17

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR- Chapter 2- Indigenous Sacred Ways, ANTH- The Great Vision, The Essence of Cosmic Man

In Class

Guest speaker (?), animism, Native American traditions, modern borrowings for other movements

Week 4

Wednesday 9/24

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR-Chapter 8- Judaism, ANTH- both Genesis accounts, Martin Buber
Reader Response #2 due by end of class

In Class

Moral codes and behavioral codes, Biblical conflicts, literal vs. metaphorical interpretations, video, foundations of Christianity, modern Judaism

Week 5

Wednesday 10/1

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR- Chapter 9- Christianity, SR- Pontifical Biblical Commission, ANTH- Beattitudes, Good Samaritan, Mother Teresa

In Class

History of church, perspectives on Christianity, differing view on the virtuous life, proselytizing, impact on western civilization,

Week 6

Wednesday 10/8

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR-Chapter 10- Islam, SR- Shaheen and Harris, ANTH- "People of the Book", "Righteousness" and "Jihad" Reader response #3 due by end of class

In Class

"Pillars of Islam", women's roles, tradition vs. teaching, Sheehan article discussion, modern Islam, introduction to matrix use

Week 7

Wednesday 10/15

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR- Chapter 5- Buddhism, ANTH- Discovering Universal Emptiness, Zen and the Koan

In Class

Asceticism, mysticism, meditation practice, Buddhist tenets, schisms/branches of Buddhism, make midterm exam

Week 8

Wednesday 10/22

Readings/ Assignments Due

Study for midterm exam

In Class

Take midterm

Week 9

Wednesday 10/29

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR-Taoism, SR- Selections from the Tao Te Ching Reader Response #4 due by end of class

In Class

Review the midterm, symbolism and balance, ascetic ideals, "environmental" religion, Buddhist connections, PP slides

Week 10

Wednesday 11/5

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR- Chapter 6 and 7- Confucian teachings and Shinto, SR- Excerpts from the analects Reader Response #5 due by end of class

In Class

Animistic religious traditions, Shinto/Buddhist multiplex, review midterm, Shinto ceremony video; analects discussion, "filial piety", incorporation of multiple traditions in China

Week 11

Wednesday 11/12

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR- Chapter 3- Hinduism, ANTH- Devotion to the Lord, Desire to Know Brahman

In Class

Variations of "Hinduism", polytheistic monotheism, Brahman/atman, timeline, sources of teachings, main terminology, more ascetic traditions

Week 12

Wednesday 11/19

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR- Chapters 4 and 11- Jainism and Sikhism, ANTH- Respect for Life, The Sikh Vision of an Ideal Society
Reader Response #6 due by end of class

In Class

Buddhist and Islamic connections, the guru, practice and traditions

Week 13

Wednesday 11/26

Thanksgiving Recess- no class meeting

Week 14

Wednesday 12/3

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR- Chapter 12- New Religious Movements, ANTH- TM Today, After the Founder's Death

In Class

New directions in religious pluralism, scientology, Raelians, Yoda, other
"faiths", assign RR#7

Week 15

Tuesday 12/10

Readings/ Assignments Due

LR- Chapter 13- Religion in the 21st Century, ANTH-Religion, UN Declaration, Interfaith Dialogue
Reader Response #7 due by end of class

In Class

Making final exam, exploring your own cosmology and cosmogony,
peer review work with research project, wrapping up themes

Week 16

Wednesday 12/17

Readings/ Assignments Due

Final copies of research projects due

In Class

Final exam

Grace Period Slip

(Please give me this piece of paper when you turn in your draft.)

This sheet entitles me to one grace period of one class session. I am not using this for my final research paper and I realize that once this period is used for the semester, I *do not* get another one!

Name: _____

Today's Date: _____

Assignment Description and due date:

**Research Project Guidelines
(PHI 151- Introduction to World Religions)**

Exploring an Unfamiliar Tradition

Research Paper Due Date: _____

The purpose of doing a research project like this is obvious: it gives you a chance to explore a piece of the course content in which you are interested, and it gives you direct exposure to a set of "foreign" practices/beliefs. Your research effort should combine at least two of the common modes of gathering information:

- Traditional Research- Every research effort should contain enough background scholarship so as to make it intelligible to a novice reader. Think of your audience as your classmates; what would they know or not know about the subject you are discussing? Please remember that I am NOT looking for grocery lists of facts about a particular faith or tradition. I will expect you to choose a specific question or "angle" that fits into the length boundaries mentioned below.
- Direct experience of another tradition- This can be done in a number of ways, but the easiest and most straightforward would be to find a place of worship where lay-visitors are welcome. Attend and observe the services/practices at least three times (or the equivalent of six hours). It is up to you how much you wish to participate if that is allowed or even encouraged. Keep notes regarding your experiences and incorporate those accounts into your write-up. You can also experience something first-hand by practicing an aspect of a tradition that appeals to you (i.e. meditation, fasting, keeping Kosher, etc...).
- Reported Critiques- Another way to explore an unfamiliar tradition is to talk to people who are involved in the practice and let them tell a story about what they see, do, and believe. Use any of the "religion in public life" or "living religions" sections from the text as models; you can find examples on pp 67, 115, 130, and 167, just to name a few.

Combining these resources will help you to paint a complete picture of the topic you wish to explore. You can present a very broad perspective by supplementing traditional research with direct experience and personal interviews.

All papers should be 5-8 pages in length. More length will not automatically result in any kind of grade bonus. Slightly shorter papers will also not be automatically penalized.

All papers should be done in MLA format with reasonable margins, fonts and spacing. I will also expect you to document your outside sources in text and on an appropriately organized works cited page. If you are unfamiliar with the MLA format, you can go to this web site http://wps.ablongman.com/long_faigley_penguinhb_1/19/5091/1303505.cw/index.html for basic information about research in the humanities. Links from that site will also take you to examples of citations in text and works cited pages. You can also see a sample MLA-style research paper by going to this site and hitting the "PDF" file link: <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities/sample.html>

In your final submission, please include any or all of the following. I will expect to see AT LEAST the first item on this list:

- Rough draft(s) with evidence of revision
- Original journal entries or notes
- Any supplementary information you have collected in terms of pamphlets or brochures printed by the institution you are researching
- Multi-media pieces like video or audio recordings, computer programs, etc.

Please DO NOT include any of the following:

- A cover sheet
- Print copies of your research articles or text/books
- Any wrinkled, torn, or biologically stained pages
- Bizarre paper colors or inks

If you have any questions about how to go about finding resources or generating topic ideas, please come talk to me sooner rather than later!

Grading for this research project will be divided into the following categories:

- Research quality
- Mechanical/grammatical competence
- MLA documentation (in text/works cited)
- Formatting and physical presentation
- Content and discussion