

COURSE: RELIGION AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY
CLASSROOM:

RE 10360
WE 99

INSTRUCTOR: Karma Lekshe Tsomo
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DESCRIPTION:

This course provides an introduction to the world's religious traditions. It introduces the basic philosophical tenets and religious practices of a diversity of religious systems. First, students explore the nature of religious studies and survey the varieties of religious experience. Next, taking an anthropological approach, they trace the historical roots and cultural adaptation of the world's religious traditions. Finally, it explores how these traditions are being understood and adapted in the contemporary period by people the world over to address issues of social concern. Through selected readings, video presentations, and fieldwork, students develop an informed appreciation of the varieties of religious belief and practice as they evolve in dynamic relationship strikingly different civilizations.

The course surveys Native American, African, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese religious traditions, as well as those that arose in the Middle East: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In surveying these traditions, it examines issues of philosophical concern, religious expression, cultural adaptation, and psychology, with special reference to women's issues, ethics, social engagement, and ecumenical dialogue.

Regular class attendance, active participation in discussions, and completion of readings on time are expected. A series of short reflection papers (2 to 3 pages), quizzes, and a final paper (10-15 pages) are required to complete the course. Students are encouraged to bring their own background and experience to bear upon the perennial questions of the human experience. Last date for withdrawal from the class is March 2.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Matthews, Warren. *World Religions* (Third Edition). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS:

Sharma, Arvind, ed. *Women in World Religions*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987.

Selections from Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), and Ninian Smart, *Worldviews*.

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CLASS SCHEDULE:

January 12: **Introductory Remarks and Discussion**

January 14: **Religion as a Cultural System**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 2-18.

January 19: **Religions of Tribes and City-States: the Americas**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 19-52.

January 21: **Religions of Tribes and City-States: Africa**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. pp. 53-79.

January 26: **Religions of India: Hinduism**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 81-105.

First Reflection Paper Due

January 28: **Religions of India: Hinduism (con't)**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 105-26.

February 2: **Religions of India: Buddhism**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 127-57

February 4: **Religions of India: Buddhism (con't)**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 157-77; *Women in World Religions*, 105-33

February 9: **Religions of India: Jainism and Sikhism**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 178-206

Second Reflection Paper Due

February 11: **Religions of China**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 207-235

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February 16: **Religions of China** (con't)

Readings: *Women in World Religions*, pp. 135-81

February 18: **Religions of Japan**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 235-53

February 23: **Religions of Japan** (con't)

Readings: Carl Becker, "Living and Dying in Japanese Culture" (handout)

Third Reflection Paper Due

February 25: **Ancient Religions of the Middle East**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 257-77

March 2: **Judaism**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 279-328

March 4: **Christianity**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 329-52

March 9: **Christianity** (Con't)

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 352-84

Fourth Reflection Paper Due

March 11: **Islam**

Readings: *World Religions*, pp. 385-430

March 16: **Contemporary Issues in Religion: Women**

Readings: *Women in World Religions*, pp. 1-34

March 18: **Contemporary Issues in Religion: Bioethics**

Final Paper Due