

RE103: Religions and the Human Community
CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY OF HONOLULU
FALL SESSION

TIME: 8-9:20 a.m., Tues./Thurs.
INSTRUCTOR: Regina Pfeiffer
PHONE: 735-4700 (on campus: X700)
E-MAIL: rpfeiffe@chaminade.edu

COURSE

TEXTBOOKS: Molloy, Michael. *Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change, Second Edition*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 2001

Trussel, Richard Curran. *Study Guide to Accompany Experiencing the World's Religions, Second Edition*.

CD-ROM *Study Tool*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to the historical, philosophical and spiritual foundations of the major religious traditions of the world-- Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The course will examine the lives of their founders, their basic teachings, the historical development of their communities and institutions, and their current status in the world. Using an experiential approach, and the classroom as a sacred space for personal spiritual growth, this course also endeavors to create a more universal understanding and appreciation of one's own tradition amidst this great cultural variety, in order to foster a more harmonious global community.

OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the important elements of the major religions-- their myth, symbols, ritual, doctrine, moral codes and artistic expression;
- recognize the differences and commonalities among the religious traditions;
- understand the religious issues and conflicts in the modern world;
- appreciate more their own religious backgrounds and that of the Chaminade community;
- reflect on their own beliefs, feelings and attitudes towards different religious perspectives, correlating and contrasting them with what they are learning.

**Organizational Themes:
Marianist Educational Philosophy and Diversity**

Organizational themes refer to underlying structural links that contribute to the choice of content, the pedagogy selected for participation of the teacher/learner and student/teacher in bringing the content to life, and fulfillment of the course objectives within a broader frame of education and building community.

1. The first set of organizational themes around which the course is constructed is drawn from the "Characteristics of Marianist Universities."
 - ❖ Educate for formation in faith;
 - ❖ Provide an integral quality education;
 - ❖ Educate for family spirit;
 - ❖ Educate for service, justice and peace; and
 - ❖ Educate for adaptation and change.
2. The second major organizational theme is diversity and the complex issues that arise when we look at religions as cultural institutions and artifacts. Diversity themes are developed in relation to the content of the course as well as the in relation to the student/learners who are participants in the course.

Two explicit outcomes arise from these organizational themes:

1. The students will incorporate into their essays, journals and term project an awareness of the Marianist educational characteristics and how they impact on their reading of the sources and themes for the course and their own personal philosophy and practice in regard to religion and religious communities.
2. Students will develop an awareness and deeper appreciation for the diversity of theories and experiences that are at the origins of religious communities and traditions, and discuss the impact of ethnic and religious diversity on the study of religion during this course.

Course Methodology

Instruction will consist of lectures, film/video, group discussions and presentations. Students will be expected to participate in the group discussions and presentations.

REQUIREMENTS:

Students are to come to each class prepared by having read the assigned readings, completed any other homework assignments and being ready for in-class activities.

GRADING:

Grading will be based upon regular class attendance, class work, homework, journals, term project, tests, participation, and effort. Papers must be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font only with 1-1/2 inch margins. Style must be consistent with the *Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers*.

Attendance: More than three unexcused absences may result in one grade reduction. Excessive absences may result in failure of the course.

Extra-Credit: Students may submit up to three extra-credit assignments for additional points toward final grade. Requirements: two-page reflection/review paper on an extracurricular, intercultural activity or service attended, pertinent films or enrichment reading. These extra credit options may not be used to fulfill any of the other requirements for the course, especially journal entries.

Note: It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor of any specific special needs or difficulties that one may have in order that appropriate strategies for the completion of the work may be mutually developed.

CATEGORIES:

Class Participation and attendance
Essays
Journal:
Tests:
Group Presentation:
Term project:

WEIGHTING:

15%
15%
20%
30%
10%
10%

100%

A: 93-100%; B: 83-92%; C: 73-82%; D: 63-72; F: 62% and below

Class participation and attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes. The student is responsible for contacting the instructor regarding the absence. Participation includes preparing readings, discussion and in-class writing assignments given at the discretion of the instructor.

Essays:

There are three homework essays. Due dates are listed in the course outline. These essays must be typed, double-space using 12 point type.

Journal:

The purpose of the journal is to enhance one's awareness of the sacred in everyday life. There are three parts to fulfilling this.

- 1a. Collect newspaper clipping, magazine article, or other information regarding current religious issues. or
- 1b. Use pictures, images, drawings, poetry, music, art work, paintings and other creative works to express your own meaning of religion and religious experience in your life. or
- 1c. Select from the study guide a reflection exercise from the chapter reading current at the time of the entry. Respond to the reflection question.
2. Date your journal entry.
3. Write a short paragraph expressing your understanding of the significance of the entry to your study of the world's religions or respond to the reflection question you have selected.

Journals will be collected twice during the semester. Ten entries are due each time. You may put together a comparable video/multi-media presentation.

Tests:

There will be three tests based on the classroom discussions and reading materials. The tests are not cumulative and will consist of material from text, lectures and video.

Group Presentation:

Each group is to select a religious tradition. Prepare a participative seven-minute presentation of a food, ritual or art associated with it. Share the story or symbolism with the rest of the class. The group will be required to do some research in order to acquaint the rest of the class symbolism or meaning associated with the food, ritual or art.

Term project:

The following are options to choose from for the term project. Select one.

- ◆ Service opportunity;
 - ◆ Contact Br. Tom Spring for a service learning project.
- ◆ Attendance at a service other than one's own religion;
 - ◆ Attend a service in a religion that is new for you. Describe the service. If possible, interview the minister and ask about the ritual elements that were part of the service. Compare and contrast this service with your own.
- ◆ Creating a new religion;
 - ◆ In creating this new religion, develop the primary symbols, rituals and stories that describe the sacred and the relationship between the sacred and humanity.
- ◆ Planning an imaginary pilgrimage that involves visiting at least five religious sites;
 - ◆ Explain the purpose of visiting these five sights. What significance do these sites have for the pilgrim? What prayers or rituals would be included in this pilgrimage?
- ◆ A project of the student's design with prior approval from instructor.

Students are to write a 7-10 page paper describing the activity or topic selected.

LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT:

Student's work will be evaluated for:

- knowledge of the subject matter from textbooks, class presentations, discussions, videos, research, outside class activities;
- ability to apply the knowledge to understand current issues in society;
- understanding of the subject matter from different viewpoints;

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision)

Reading assignments are for the following class.

Week I: Introduction

Aug. 28: Introduction and overview

Reading assignment: pp. 1-25

Aug. 30: What do we mean by religions? Why should we study religions?

Video: *Pillars of Faith*

Reading assignment: pp. 27-58

Week II: Oral Religions and Hinduism

Sept. 4: Oral religious traditions

Video: *The Power of the Myth*

Reading assignment: pp. 59-102

Sept. 6: Vedic religion, caste system

Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Yogas

Reading assignment: pp. 167-188

Week III: Hinduism, cont.; Jainism and Sikhism

Sept. 11: Popular religion

Video: *The Long Search: 300 Million Gods*

Sept. 13: Jainism and Sikhism

Video: *Ahimsa*

Sept. 15: Keaiwa Heiau in Aiea: meet at 8:30 a.m. Henry Hall Courtyard

Week IV: Test I

Sept. 18: Test Review

Term Project/Service activity must be selected by today.

Sept. 20: Test I

Write a two-page essay comparing and contrasting techniques of non-violence found in Hinduism, Jainism and contemporary society. Due: Sept. 27

Reading assignment: pp. 105-164

Week V: Buddhism

- Sept. 25: Life of the Buddha, basic teachings
Sept. 27: Theravada and Mahayana: Chinese and Japanese
Video: *Footprint of the Buddha*

Reading assignment: pp. 191-209

Week VI: Buddhism, cont.; Taoism

- Oct. 2: Tibetan Vajrayana
Video: *Compassion in Exile*
Oct. 4: Taoism and early Chinese religion
Due: Journals: first 10 entries

Reading assignment: pp. 209-235

Week VII: Taoism, cont.; Confucianism and Shinto

- Oct. 9: Taoism and Confucianism

Reading assignment: 237-263

- Oct. 11: Shinto

Week VIII: Test II

- Oct. 16: Test Review
Oct. 18: Test II

Reading assignment: pp. 265-318

Oct. 19: Temples in downtown Honolulu: meet at 8:30 a.m. Henry Courtyard

Two-page Essay question: What are some key elements of rituals in the religions studied thus far? What are some similarities have you noticed in your personal ritual life either in your religious tradition or in your family? Due: Oct. 25

Week IX: Judaism

- Oct. 23: Origins, Hebrew scriptures
Oct. 25: Rabbinical Judaism, Reform
Video: *The Chosen*

Week X: Judaism, cont.; Christianity

- Oct. 30: Judaism and the Holocaust: Group Presentations
Video: *Out of the Ashes*
Nov. 1: Blessed Chaminade: Group Presentations

Reading assignment: pp. 321-354

Week XI: Christianity

Nov. 6: Early Christianity, Orthodox tradition: Group Presentations

Reading assignment: pp. 355-361

Assignment: Write a two-page essay on one of the Christian and Marianist values listed above and compare it with a similar value in one of the other religious traditions. In what way do you feel you have, or could integrate this particular Christian and Marianist value in your life to the betterment of the human community?

Due: Nov. 13

Nov. 8: Medieval

Video: *From Jesus to Christ*

Reading assignment: pp. 362-373

Nov. 10 – Christian Churches in downtown Honolulu: meet at 8:30 a.m.

Week XII: Christianity, cont.

Nov. 13: Reformation: Group Presentations

Essay due

Nov. 15: Film: *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*.

Week XIII: Christianity, cont.

Nov. 20: Film: *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*

Nov. 22: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving

Reading assignment: pp. 405-455

Week XIV: Islam

Nov. 27: Muhhamad, Qur'an, Five Pillars

Nov. 29: Sufism, modern Islam

Video: *Rumi*

Due: Journals (second half: 10 entries)

Reading assignment: pp. 457-539

Week XV: New Religious Movements

Dec. 4: Religion and the future: modern challenges

Dec. 6: Test Review

Week XVI: Final Exam

Dec. 11 Final Exam: 8-10 a.m.