

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY OF HONOLULU

Religion 380 Religion and the Meaning of Existence (3)  
Fall Accelerated Evening Term  
October 5 - December 16, 1998

SYLLABUS

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Prerequisite: None  
737-3012 - office

**Course Description:** An examination of the ways in which various religious traditions answer the question, "What is the meaning of existence?" Students will gain an understanding of the multiple, varied, and complex ways in which the world's religious traditions approach the question of human existence; explore the responses of these traditions to fundamental existential concerns including the purpose of existence, the nature of the self, the meaning of human suffering, and the nature of death; and examine how religious concepts of meaning influence cultural views regarding human relations, knowledge, and nature. Key existential problems will be explored within the context of four principal relationships: divinity to human; divinity to nature; humans to nature; and human to human.

**Course Objectives:** Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- ▶ Describe the ways in which the world's major religious traditions approach the question of meaning and human existence.
- ▶ Discuss similarities and differences in the ways in which specific religious traditions understand the meaning of human existence.
- ▶ Define key terms and concepts related to the discussion of religious meaning.
- ▶ Discuss the influences and contributions of religious views of meaning upon human culture and society.
- ▶ Discuss the teachings of various religious traditions regarding key existential concerns including human purpose and the nature of self, suffering, and death.
- ▶ Discuss religious views of knowledge and nature.
- ▶ Discuss issues related to the nature of religious experience.
- ▶ Discuss contemporary problems related to religious views of meaning and existence.

**Class Format and Activities:** This course is offered online utilizing e-mail, web board, and other internet technologies and resources. Students are required to have access to a computer which is connected to the internet prior to registration. Students are also expected to be familiar with basic internet technology including sending and receiving e-mail and attachments, web board postings, navigating the World Wide Web, performing searches, and downloading files. Regular weekly e-mail communication with the instructor and the submission/completion of all required assignments is important to the successful completion of the course. Collaborative electronic communication between classmates concerning course content is encouraged.

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There are two required in-persons meetings; an orientation meeting held at the beginning of the term and a final meeting, at which a final examination will be administered, at the conclusion of the term. Orientation and final meetings are held on the Chaminade University of Honolulu campus at hours designated in advance.

Specific weekly course assignments, as described in the course schedule, are to be completed by the student. Weekly course assignments typically include: (1) a reading assignment, and (2) a discussion group posting. In addition, students are required to prepare and submit a written course paper on a topic preapproved by the instructor, take two mid-term examinations, and take one comprehensive final examination. Students may also be required to submit additional written assignments and/or quizzes as directed by the instructor. Written assignments are due to the instructor via e-mail by midnight on the Saturday which concludes the academic week. Students are expected to complete all assignments on time and are encouraged to contact the instructor directly with any questions, or for clarification of assigned tasks, prior to due dates.

Course papers are due on the date indicated in the course schedule, should be in double space format, in correct form, and of five to eight pages in length. A list of options and possible topics for course papers will be provided and specific paper topics require the prior approval of the instructor.

**Text:** Monk, Robert C., et al. Exploring Religious Meaning. Fourth Edition. Prentice-Hall, 1994.

**Grading:** Satisfactory performance entails the successful completion of the following: (1) weekly discussion group postings concerning topics provided by the instructor (pass/fail); (2) two mid-term examinations; (3) the submission of one written paper on an approved topic of five to eight pages in length; and (3) one comprehensive final examination. The weight of the various elements comprising the overall course grade is summarized as follows:

▶ Discussion Group Postings	20% (pass/fail)
▶ Two Mid-Term Examinations	30%
▶ Course Paper	20%
▶ Final Comprehensive Examination	30%
Total	100%

Grades will be calculated as follows:

90 - 100 = A
80 - 89 = B
70 - 79 = C
60 - 69 = D
0 - 59 = F

All grades will reflect the standards set forth in Chaminade's 1997-98 General Catalog (see pg. 44). As indicated in the catalog, an "A" signifies outstanding scholarship and unusual intellectual initiative; a "B" signifies superior work; a "C" signifies a competent grasp of the subject matter; a "D" signifies inferior work; and an "F" indicates failure to grasp the minimum subject matter.

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**Religion 380 - Religion and the Meaning of Existence (3)**  
**Fall Accelerated Evening Term**  
**October 5 - December 16, 1998**

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**WEEK ONE:           October 5-10, 1998**

**Orientation Meeting:**  
Chaminade University  
Eiben Hall  
October 10, 1998  
1-4 PM.

**WEEK TWO:           October 11-17, 1998**

**Assignment One:**  
Religion and Religious Meaning:  
Definitions of Religion; Religious Meaning.  
▶ Read Text, Chapter One.  
▶ Supplemental reading.  
▶ Complete discussion group posting.

**WEEK THREE:        October 18-24, 1998**

**Assignment Two:**  
Religious Traditions:  
Overview of World Religions.  
▶ Read Text, Chapter Two.  
▶ Supplemental readings and tradition outlines.  
▶ Complete discussion group posting.

**WEEK FOUR:         October 25-31, 1998**

**Assignment Three:**  
Experiencing Religion:  
Religious Experience; Elements of Religious Experience.  
▶ Read Text, Chapters Three and Five.  
▶ Complete discussion group posting.

**WEEK FIVE:         November 1-7, 1998**

**Assignment Four:**  
The Divine, part one:  
Understanding the Self; Sin and Guilt.  
▶ Read Text, Chapters Nine and Eleven.  
▶ Complete discussion group posting.  
  
▶ **Complete First Mid-Term Exam**  
**and return to instructor by midnight,**  
**Saturday, November 7th.**

**Note: Course Paper topics due to instructor for approval by midnight, Saturday, November 7th.**

**WEEK SIX: November 8-14, 1998**

**Assignment Five:**

The Divine, part two:  
Death and the Self; Salvation and Redemption.  
▶ Read Text, Chapters Twelve and Thirteen.  
▶ Complete discussion group posting.

**WEEK SEVEN: November 15-21, 1998**

**Assignment Six:**

Religion in Sociocultural Context:  
Interpersonal Relations; Ethical Concerns.  
▶ Read Text, Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen.  
▶ Complete discussion group posting  
  
▶ Complete Second Mid-Term Examination and return to instructor by midnight, Saturday, November 21st.

**WEEK EIGHT: November 22-28, 1998**

**Assignment Seven:**

Religious Knowledge:  
Interpretations and Verification of Religious Knowledge;  
Authority and Tradition.  
▶ Read Text, Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen.  
▶ Complete discussion group posting.

**WEEK NINE: November 29 - December 5, 1998**

**Assignment Eight:**

Contemporary Issues in Religious Meaning:  
▶ Supplemental reading as assigned.  
▶ Complete discussion group posting.  
▶ Submit course paper to instructor.

**Note: Course Papers due to instructor by midnight, Saturday, December 5th.**

**WEEK TEN: December 6-12, 1998**

**Assignment Nine:**

Course Review:  
▶ Supplemental reading.  
▶ Complete discussion group posting.  
  
▶ Final examination, Saturday, December 12, 1998.

**Students are expected to complete and submit all assignments on time.**

**Expectations:** With the possible exception of documented emergencies, there will be no extensions given on assignment due dates or the final examination without the prior approval of the instructor. Students who fail to submit assignments or comply with other requirements are advised to withdraw from the course in order to avoid a final course grade of "F". Grades of "Incomplete" will only be given in cases of documented extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control.

As subjects examined during this course may touch upon topics, beliefs, and/or issues considered sensitive by some students, it is imperative that all students demonstrate courtesy and respect concerning the views, opinions, and beliefs of others.