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**CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY****Religion 38090 - Religion and the Meaning of Existence (3)****Fall Accelerated Evening Session  
October 4 - December 16, 1999****Robert Mitchell  
Instructor****Web Page: <http://www.iqthost.com/rmitchell>****E-mail: [RE38090@aol.com](mailto:RE38090@aol.com)****SYLLABUS**

**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 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 page, web board, and other internet technologies and resources. Students are required to have access to a computer that 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 informational searches on the internet, and transmitting 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.

There are two required in-person 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 web board discussion question. In addition, students are required to prepare and submit two reflection papers on topics assigned by the instructor, take one mid-term examination, prepare and submit one written Course Paper on a topic preapproved by the instructor, and take one comprehensive final examination. Students may also be required to submit additional written assignments and/or quizzes from time to time as determined and directed by the instructor. Written assignments are due to the instructor via e-mail by the due dates stated in the Course Schedule; no late submissions will be accepted. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor directly with any questions, or for clarification of assigned tasks, prior to due dates.

**Text(s):** Monk, Robert C., et al. Exploring Religious Meaning. Fifth Edition. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1998.

Lyden, John. Enduring Issues in Religion. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1995.

**Reading Assignments:** In order for students to participate effectively in Web Board discussions, prepare for examinations, and prepare written assignments, it is expected that each student read assigned readings during the time period indicated on the Course Schedule.

**Recommended Resource:** It is recommended that students refer to the following resource for any clarification needed regarding terms and concepts presented in the text or course materials.

Crim, Keith, Gen Ed. The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions. Harper and Rowe, Publishers, San Francisco, 1989.

**Study Guides:** The instructor will provide students with two Study Guides, one covering course materials presented during week's one through five, and one covering course presented addressed during week's six through ten. Students are responsible for all items appearing in the Study Guides.

**Course Web Page:** Course materials and access to the Web Board are available through the Religion 38990 Web Page located at: <http://www.iqthost.com/rmitchell>. Students are required to read and assume responsibility for all course materials, requirements, assignment schedules/deadlines, and resources published on the Web Page. Contact the instructor immediately if there are any aspects of the Syllabus or other course documents that require explanation or further clarification.

**Web Board Participation:** Web Board-based class discussions are utilized as a means of stimulating and encouraging thoughtful reflection concerning the topics, themes and subject matter covered in the course. Regular weekly participation in web board discussions is required. In the event that technical difficulties arise disrupt access or utilization of the web board system, the instructor may elect to utilize e-mail to conduct discussions and maintain dialogue.

**Online Chat:** The instructor may opt to implement Online Chat sessions during the term. Participation by students in Online Chat sessions is recommended but optional and not required.

**E-Mail Communications:** Students are to sign and provide course identification on all messages, assignments and other communications directed to the instructor. Students are encouraged to maintain the same e-mail address throughout the term. Notify the instructor promptly should a change in e-mail address be necessary.

**Technical Assistance:** In the event that technical questions or difficulties arise, students are encouraged to contact the Chaminade Computer Lab for assistance. The Computer Lab may be reach by telephone at 735-4819.

**Reflection and Course Papers** are due to the instructor via e-mail or facsimile on the dates indicated in the Course Schedule. All papers should be double-spaced with all references cited properly. For information concerning proper formats and citations, consult the "MLA Handbook."\* Reflection Papers are to be between two and three pages in length, and the Course Paper should be between six to eight pages in length, including the bibliography. All papers must represent original thought and research, and must be written in a first person singular voice. Please see the "Reflection and Course Paper Requirement" web page for further details and instructions.

\* The MLA Handbook is available for reference use in the Sullivan Library, and is for sale through the Chaminade University Bookstore. In addition, the Purdue Online Writing Lab is an excellent online writing resource, including MLA handouts and a link to the MLA web site, that may be reached at: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

**Examinations:** There will be two examinations during the course; one mid-term examination and one final examination. The mid-term examination will be transmitted for completion by each student via e-mail and the final examination must be attended and completed by each student in person on the date and time assigned in the Course Schedule. No make-up examinations will be allow for the final examination.

**Grading:** Excellence in this course requires not only academic mastery of course content, but also personal reflection upon the relevance of issues regarding religious meaning to the human

community. Minimum satisfactory performance entails the successful completion of the following: (1) weekly discussion group postings concerning topics provided by the instructor (pass/fail); (2) two reflection papers (pass/fail); (3) one mid-term examination; (4) the submission of one written paper on an approved topic of five to eight pages in length; and (5) one comprehensive final examination. The weight of the various elements comprising the overall course grade is summarized as follows:

Discussion Group Postings	10% (pass/fail)
Reflection Papers (2)	15% (pass/fail)
Mid-Term Examination	20%
Course Paper	20%
Final Comprehensive Examination	35%
Total	100%

Grades will be calculated as follows:

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

All grades will reflect the standards set forth in Chaminade's 1998-99 General Catalog. 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.

**Expectations:** Religion 38090 is an upper division course taught during an accelerated session. Consequently, the course necessitates an extensive amount of independent reading, research, writing, discussion and critical reflection on behalf of each student in order to satisfactorily complete course requirements.

**Deadlines:** Students are expected assume responsibility for knowing, observing and meeting assignment deadlines as described in the course schedule. Late or make-up assignments will not be accepted by the instructor, except under extraordinary documented circumstances, such as military deployment or serious illness. It is the students' responsibility to provide the instructor with verifiable documentation for any extraordinary circumstances that prevent the submission of assignments on time, and to present a plan to complete missed deadlines and/or assignments missed to the instructor for approval.

**Incomplete Grades:** As indicated earlier in this Syllabus, Incomplete grades will not be issued except in extraordinary circumstances and in no event unless the majority of work has been completed to the satisfaction of the instructor.

**Regular Participation:** 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.

**Mutual Consideration and Respect:** 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.

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This page was last updated on 10/07/99.

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