



**CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY**

**Religion 38090 - Life After Death in World Religions (3)**

**Winter Accelerated Undergraduate Session  
January 10 - March 22, 2000**

**Robert Mitchell  
Instructor**

**Prerequisite:** English 102  
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**Web Page:** <http://www.iqthost.com/rmitchell>  
**Web Board:** acad.chaminide.edu:8080/~10

**SYLLABUS**

**Course Description:** An examination of the ways in which the world's major religious traditions approach and resolve questions concerning the possibility, nature and meaning of life after death. Student gain an understanding of the classical responses of Buddhism, Chinese religions, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism to questions concerning the meaning of death and the nature of survival beyond death. An emphasis is placed upon an understanding of the multiple, varied, and complex ways in which religious beliefs about life after death influence and inform the customs, practices, and ethical behaviors of particular cultures. The course will utilize online teaching methodologies to guide the student's academic and practical field learning.

**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, understand and resolve questions concerning the possibility of survival after death;
- Discuss similarities and differences in the ways in which specific religious traditions understand the meaning of human death and life beyond death;

- Define key terms and concepts related to the discussion of life after death in the world's major religious traditions;
- Discuss the manner in which the world's major religious traditions influence a society's beliefs, customs, rituals, and other death-related practices including burial, bereavement, and ancestor veneration;
- Discuss the manner in which a society's religious beliefs and customs related to life after death influence its understanding of the purpose and meaning of human existence, and;
- Discuss contemporary issues and problems, such as Near-Death Experience, as they pertain to the beliefs and views of the world's religious traditions.

**Class Format and Activities:**

This course is offered online utilizing e-mail, web page, web board, and 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 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 Field Research 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.

Course Schedule: Students are encouraged to contact the instructor directly with any questions, or for clarification of assigned tasks, prior to due dates. No late submissions will be accepted.

**Text(s):** Coward, Harold, ed. Life After Death in World Religions. New York: Orbis Books, 1997.

Parkes C.M., P. Laungani, and B. Young, eds. Death and Bereavement Across Cultures. New York: Routledge, 1997.

**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 a Study Guide covering course materials. Students are responsible for all items appearing in the Study Guide.

**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 reached by telephone at 735-4819.

**Field Research Paper:** The course Field Research Paper is due to the instructor via e-mail or facsimile on the date indicated in the Course Schedule. Papers should be double-spaced with all references cited properly. For information concerning proper formats and citations, consult the "MLA Handbook."\* The course Field Research Paper should be between six to eight pages in length, written in the first person singular voice, and including the bibliography. Please see the "Field Research Paper Requirements" 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 allowed 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) one mid-term examination; (3) the submission of one written paper on an approved field research subject of five to eight pages in length; and (4) 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)
Mid-Term Examination	20%
Course Paper	30%
Final Comprehensive Examination	40%
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 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 to 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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