-course syllabus: philosophy 370 (call# 10750)
duke 116
spring 2010
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course description.
this course entails a study of the great ancient religious systems of the world, including ancient egypt, mesopotamia, canaan, greece and rome. it reviews some of the various ancient religions that have endured into the present world, including hinduism, buddhism, jainism, confucianism, taoism, zoroastrianism, judaism, taoism, and christianity, islam, native american religions and neopaganism.

course goals:
- to explore world religions we will look at “how” we look: from the henotheism of antiquity to hellenic euhemerism to interpretatio graeca of the greeks to the view of religions as “pre-logical science” to the subconscious in the cogitations of freud to the sociology of durkheim to the cosmology quests of eliade to the post-modern aversion to comparison at all;
- to summarize briefly the origins, doctrines, scriptures, and rituals of major living religions;
- to explore the world of homo religiosus - ‘religious man’
- to understand & compare religious cosmologies and mythologies;
- to profile religious heroes and founders such as moses, jesus, krishna, muhammad, zarathustra, confucius; gotama buddha, mahavira and handsome lake, and reflect on why their movements took the shape that they did;
- to compare how major living religions answer basically the same questions from social ethics to theodicy to the nature of the transcendent to the existence (or not) of an invisible world;
• to try and perceive similarities or relationships between religious universals, such as Torah, Wisdom, Maat, Tao, Dike, Gnosis, Truth, etc.

Student Learning Outcomes

• The student will demonstrate independent study ability and discipline;
• The student will demonstrate reading, comprehension, and critical analysis ability;
• The student will review and restate fundamental characteristics of the world’s major religions;
• The student will be competent to discuss how most religions deal with subjects such as suffering, evil, moral duty, higher consciousness, justice, injustice, ritual;
• The student will be able to discuss the founders and/or the historical and philosophical origins of these religions;
• The student will be able to discuss each religion’s cultural roots, but universal appeal;
• The student will better understand their own religious faith in a global context.

Students with Disabilities

Students in this course who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should meet with an advisor in the Learning Enrichment Center as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that may be necessary to ensure full participation in the successful completion of course requirements.

Academic Integrity Policy

The mission of APU includes cultivating in each student not only the academic skills that are required for a university degree, but also the characteristics of academic integrity that are integral to a sound Christian education. It is therefore part of the mission of the university to nurture in each student a sense of moral responsibility consistent with the biblical teachings of honesty and accountability. Furthermore, a breach of academic integrity is viewed not merely as a private matter between the student and an instructor but rather as an act which is fundamentally inconsistent with the purpose & mission of the entire university. A complete copy of the Academic Integrity Policy is available in the Office of Student Life, the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs, and online.

• Expectations for this course and consequences for violations are consistent with those outlined in the academic integrity policy.
• Students found guilty of plagiarism or of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Provost and the Dean of Students, and a memorandum of the plagiarism event will be placed in the students permanent file in the Provost’s office.
Required Texts
*Coursepack* by C. Michael Robbins

Some Recommended Texts for Book Review
(See below pp 6-8 for list and summaries.)

Reserved Readings (E-Readings)
“Introduction” and “The World at War” (Chapter One) from *Satan and the Problem of Evil* by Gregory A. Boyd, 2001.
“Globalization, Religion and Evangelicalism” in *Crux* (June 2002) Vol XXXVIII No.2 by Donald M. Lewis.

Coursepack Readings

Reading Notebook; Lecture Notebook; Grading Scale; Absences; Book Reports; Late Work.

The Reading Notebook
Single-space; 12 point font; 1” margins (when possible considering the format of notes you select).
Format: I am flexible here. Some of you may outline; others not. I am not flexible about neatness and orderliness. These notebooks MUST be formatted in a way that I can read & follow, and that you can re-use at some future date.
If you type notes, bind them before handing them in.
Notes must be in the order in which readings are assigned.
Notes must be cogent, readable, organized.
Major points from the readings must be retrievable from the notes.
Readings must be clearly titled and subtitled, all references to readings must include page number.
Each reading (major section) must be followed by your own “Reflection” on the material.
Reflections on this material are **critical** if you want an “A” or “B”. Consider the reading and reflecting as an intellectual journey that you are documenting and giving some literary form. Your grade will reflect the degree of completion of these things and the depth of perception of your reflections. Typing preferred but not required. However, if I cannot read your writing easily, I will easily stop trying, and you will get an “F” on the Notebook.

**Due: Week 8 & 14.**

The **Lecture Notebook** is for lecture notes only. It is not optional and will be submitted for a grade. Notes must be dated, in order, titled, (somewhat) cogent, detailed, bound and legible. Typing not required. **Due: Week 14.**

**Grading Scale:**

**A: Superior.** It is impossible to get an ‘A’ for the course if you do not get an ‘A’ on the **Reading Notebook.** An ‘A’ notebook is:

1. complete (all readings done, summarized, reflected on),
2. the quality of the summaries is consistently sufficient in detail to account for the argument or review of the assignments,
3. the quality of the reflections is superior in
   - comprehension
   - incisive objective (‘it’) scrutiny
   - incisive subjective (‘you’) scrutiny
   - creative synthetic assessment (‘course’)

**B: Above Average.**

1. complete (all readings done, summarized, reflected on),
2. the quality of the summaries is consistently sufficient in detail to account for the argument or review of the assignments,
3. the quality of the reflections is noteworthy in
   - comprehension
   - incisive objective (‘it’) scrutiny
   - incisive subjective (‘you’) scrutiny
   - creative synthetic assessment

**C: Average**

1. 80-100% complete (readings, summaries, reflections),
2. the quality of the summaries is usually sufficient in detail to account for the argument or review of the assignments,
3. the quality of the reflections is good in
   - comprehension
   - incisive objective (‘it’) scrutiny
   - incisive subjective (‘you’) scrutiny
   - creative synthetic assessment

**D: Below average**
[1] 60-80% complete (readings, summaries, reflections),
[2] the quality of the summaries is sometimes sufficient in detail to account for the argument or review of the assignments,
[3] the reflections show little quality in
  • comprehension
  • incisive objective (‘it’) scrutiny
  • incisive subjective (‘you’) scrutiny
  • creative synthetic assessment
F: Less than 60% complete.

I cannot emphasize too much that you need to work weekly on this project, completing around 60-100 pages per week.

Absences: Lectures represent the synthesis part of this course. Consequently attendance is critical, as the treatment of the materials is climacteric and strategic.

Excused absences:
  • for sickness (hospital bill required)
  • absences permitted due to sports, drama, music & other extra-curricular activities with dated and signed excuse slip from the supervising coach / teacher, or an email from them to me.
  • an e-mail to me on the day of absence (this is important)

Book Report: On a Recommended List book, or one approved by me.
Length: 4-6 pages.
Mechanics: 1” margins on all 4 sides; Font: Size 12, Times New Roman; 1½ space lines.
Format: Introduction, Summary, Reflection/interaction/critique. Please turn in a final copy, not a rough draft (i.e. do your own proof-reading).
Due: (last day of class).
Copy: What you give me is a copy, as I will not hand them back.

Additional Comment on Van Voorst’s Anthology of World Scriptures
  1. Summary/reflection combination on EACH individual reading in EACH chapter. Because there are many sections in each chapter, it is OK for you to combine some sections into one ‘Summary-Reflection’ provided they are of a similar or related theme.
  2. In each of Van Voorst’s chapters there is a general Introduction to each Religion. This is not required reading, though it is recommended. Sometimes he gives very useful information that Smith does not.
  3. Exceptions to the omissions in #2 above are the following Chapters: 4 (Jainism); 9 (Zoroastrianism);

Course Requirements.
1. Weekly Readings/Reflections Notebook (70% of grade).
2. Book report. (10% of grade).
3. Lecture Notebook / Attendance / Participation. (20% of grade).
Brief Notes on Recommended Texts

This is a rather odd bit of history writing. In reading it one learns not only quite a lot about American history but also Native American spirituality.

A classic in religious philosophy. Otto treats here the sacred or numinious in religion; the sense of the terror of the Divine, the otherness of the Holy. It is a contemplation of the emotional & non-rational in religion, whereby we are caught up in awe & reverence as we experience a mysterium tremendum et fascinosum. Advanced, but worth the time.

Finegan leads the student through Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Zoroastrian, Canaanite, Greek, Roman, Gnostic, Mandaeans and Manichaean religions, devoting roughly 20-30 pages to each. An excellent introduction to these religious systems from antiquity. The book has 20 pages of excellent bibliography. Highly recommended.

Brief introductions to the Mystery Religions of the Greco-Roman period, along with an anthology of sacred texts of the mysteries. Highly Recommended.

An excellent historical discussion of the world dominance of Persia with constant reference to the role of Persia in the history of Israel. Highly recommended.

An excellent discussion of Islam, including chapters on Muhammad, the Quran, the historical roots of Islam, ancient relations between Islam, Christianity and Judaism, mysticism, philosophy, and the Islamic Empire. Excellent introduction to Islam, and a good supplement to Smith.

Most of the religions that we examine in this class lay between 1200 BCE and the Modern Period. This text by the renowned master of Ancient Mesopotamia discloses Sumerian theology of the 4th-2nd millennia BCE. For those who are intrigued by and drawn to the rich religious traditions of Mesopotamia, and are curious regarding the theological parallels between the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Hebrew Scriptures, this would be a good read. Highly recommended.

Satan and the Problem of Evil by Gregory Boyd, 2001. Pages: 357 (plus Appendices)
Our class has in many ways highlighted the distinctiveness of cosmological dualism. This book by Boyd, part of which is required reading for the course, is a creative thought-provoking treatise on the dualism of Christianity as a solution to the problem of evil. Highly recommended.

Riley’s book is a new and ingenious study of the relation of Christianity to the many religious streams of tradition that preceded it and contributed to it. His study goes far towards explaining how Christianity was understood and practiced by early Christians. Very simply put, the book is like a course in Ancient Religion 101, and was described by his wife Susan as “everything you need to know about everything.” Highly recommended.


A collection of essays by specialists on the lives and legacies of these religious founders. Not easy reading, but very thought provoking and rewarding. For advanced readers. The Chapters are between 100-120 pages, and I would accept a review of any two of the chapters sufficient for this assignment.

**Life along the Silk Road** by Susan Whitfield, Univ of CA Press, 2001.

The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang tells the saga of the seventh-century Chinese monk Xuanzang, one of China's great heroes, who completed an epic sixteen-year-long journey to discover the heart of Buddhism at its source in India. Eight centuries before Columbus, this intrepid pilgrim traveled 10,000 miles on the Silk Road, meeting most of Asia's important leaders at that time. In this revised and updated edition, Sally Hovey Wriggins, the first Westerner to walk in Xuanzang's footsteps, brings to life a courageous explorer and devoutly religious man. Through Wriggins's telling of Xuanzang's fascinating and extensive journey, the reader comes to know the contours of the Silk Road, Buddhist art and archaeology, the principles of Buddhism, as well as the geography and history of China, Central Asia, and India. The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang is an inspiring story of human struggle and triumph, and a touchstone for understanding the religions, art, and culture of Asia. (Editors Intro)


Almost 600 pages long, and so I would accept a review of part of the book. It is a very broad and sweeping book that is raising questions among linguists and archaeologists!


"A balanced description and evaluation of the two century old debate dealing with the origins of the Indo-Aryan speaking peoples of South Asia. [Bryant] presents both sides of the issue, that is the traditional western, linguistic, and philological consensus of immigration from Central Asia, and the more recent Indian position that denies any immigration and that asserts an indigenous South Asian origin. He probes for loopholes on both sides of the argument and presents the multi-faceted evidence from linguistics, archaeology, texts, etc. in an even-handed manner. As such, the book not only is an important and very welcome introduction into recent Indian historical thought but also a valuable heuristic tool in re-evaluating many of the unspoken or un-reflected presuppositions on both sides."--Michael Witzel, Harvard University

"The problem of Indo-Aryan origins has vexed scholars in both India and the West for well over a century and has touched every nerve of both academic and political discourse, so much so that many in the West have automatically dismissed any arguments to come 'out of India'[this book] investigates how these two worlds of scholarship came into being and systematically exposes the logical weaknesses of most of the arguments that support the consensus f either side. This is not only an important work in the field of Indo-Aryan studies but a long overdue challenge for scholarly fair play."--J.P. Mallory, Queen's University of Belfast

"...[A] groundbreaking book. ...[Bryant] does an extraordinary job of showing the ambiguity and uncertainty of both linguistic and archeological evidence for either a migration of indigenous presence of 'Aryans' in India (little has been convincingly proved or disproved). ... A must get for libraries and must read for interested scholars."--*Religious Studies Review*

The book is ca. 400 pages long, but is of critical interest for the study of comparative religions. I would accept a review of a 200 page portion of the text.

A good text on this subject.

An excellent study, but too long for a book review here, so I would accept a review of 5 of his chapters related to religion (chs 19-23, equaling ca. 150-200 pages). Trigger reviews 7 of the most developed and documented civilizations: Egypt, Mesopotamia, Shang China, Aztecs, Maya, Inca, Yoruba.

The focus of this book is the interplay between ancient astronomy, meteorology, physics and calendrics. It looks at a set of popular instruments and texts (parapegmata) used in antiquity for astronomical weather prediction and the regulation of day-to-day life. Farmers, doctors, sailors, and others needed to know when the heavens were conducive to various activities, and they developed a set of fairly sophisticated tools and texts for tracking temporal, astronomical, and weather cycles. For the first time the sources are presented in full, with an accompanying translation. A new and comprehensive analysis explores questions such as: What methodologies were used in developing the science of astrometeorology? What kinds of instruments were employed and how did these change over time? How was the material collected and passed on? How did practices and theories differ in the different cultural contexts of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome? (Editors Intro; Very Expensive)

This volume is a study of the relationship between philosophy and faith in Søren Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments. It is also the first book to examine the role of Socrates in this body of writings and it illuminates the significance of Socrates for Kierkegaard's thought in general. Jacob Howland argues that in the Fragments, philosophy and faith are closely related passions. A careful examination of the role of Socrates in Fragments demonstrates that Socratic, philosophical eros opens up a path to faith. At the same time, the work of faith—which holds the self together with that which transcends it, the finite with the infinite, and one's life in time with eternity—is essentially erotic in the Socratic sense of the term. Chapters on Kierkegaard's Johannes Climacus and on Plato's Apology and related dialogues shed light on the Socratic character of the pseudonymous author of the Fragments and the role of "the god" in Socrates' pursuit of wisdom. Howland also analyzes the Concluding Unscientific Postscript and Kierkegaard's reflections on Socrates and Christ in his unpublished papers. (Product Description)

Sorry if this book doesn't seem to fit in here, but I am such a fan of both Socrates and Kierkegaard that I couldn't resist.

**Syllabus**

**Abbreviations:**

**Books:**
AWS=Anthology of World Scriptures (370 pp);
WR=The World’s Religions (391 pp);
BES=Black Elk Speaks (274 pp);

**Reserve Readings:**
RR1: “In Comparison a Magic Dwells” (19 pp)
RR2: “Methodologies, Comparisons and Truth” (10 pp)
RR3: “Religious Evolution” (26 pp)
RR4: “Journey to the East: Pantheistic Monism” (19 pp)
RR5: “Introduction” and “The World at War” (37 pp)
**RR6:** “Circles and the Cross: Reflections on Neo-paganism, Postmodernity, and Celtic Christianity” (15pp)  
**RR7:** “Global Theology: John Hick” (22pp)  
**Coursepack Readings:**  
**ENR:** “Encountering Navaho Religion” (27pp)  
**SR:** “The Sermon on the River” (36pp)  

Total Required Reading: @ 1400 pages, or 110 pages / week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Rdg</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1,2 | What is Religion?  
What is Worldview?  
Theodicy  
Religions in Contact in History  
Comparison | Syllabus  
RR1  
RR2 | Quiz over Syllabus 1/11 |
| 3 | Scriptures  
Heroes/Founders  
Religious Evolution | AWS Ch. 1  
WR Ch. 1  
RR3 | |
| 4 | Hinduism | AWS Ch. 2  
WR Ch. 2  
RR4 | |
| 5 | Buddhism, Jainism | AWS Ch. 3,4  
WR Ch. 3 | |
| 6 | Sikhism  
Catch Up | AWS Ch. 5 | |
| 7 | Confucianism | AWS Ch. 6  
WR Ch. 4 | |
| 8 | Taoism | AWS Ch. 7,8  
WR Ch. 5 | Reading Notebook Due |
| 9 | Zoroastrianism | AWS Ch. 9 | |
| 10 | Judaism & Christianity | AWS Ch. 10  
WR Ch. 7 | |
| 11 | Movie | AWS Ch. 11  
WR Ch. 8 | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Easter Vacation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/6,8</td>
<td>• Teacher Evaluations 😊</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Islam</td>
</tr>
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<td>• AWS Ch. 12</td>
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<td>• WR Ch. 6</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>• Islam</td>
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<td>4/13,15</td>
<td>• ENR, SR</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• WR Ch. 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>• Native American Religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/20,22</td>
<td>• New Religious Movements</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• New Age Religion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Pluralism</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>• Read Notebook &amp; Lecture Notebook Due</td>
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<td>4/27,29</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>grade sheet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>• Finals Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/3-7</td>
<td>• Book Review Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Student Information Sheet

Name: (please print)

Phone #: (Residence) (Work)

e-mail:

Major:

Class Standing: Sr. ___ Jr. ___ Soph. ___ Fresh. ___

What classes in Bible, Religion, and Philosophy have you taken?

Write for me 2-3 page biography filled please with useful things to know about you and turn it in a week from today.