Comparative Religions

Course Syllabus: Philosophy 370-01 (Call# 1676)
Fall 2008
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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, 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 Focus: The Student will …

- demonstrate independent study ability and discipline;
- demonstrate reading, comprehension, and critical analysis ability;
- review and restate fundamental characteristics of the world’s major religions;
- become competent to discuss how most religions deal with common problems such as suffering, the soul, death, Truth and existence \textit{ex-carnum};
- be able to discuss the founders and/or the historical and philosophical origins of these religions;
- be able to discuss each religion’s cultural roots, but universal appeal;
- 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

### Recommended Texts


### 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

Only Reflections on the reading are required for the Reserved Readings.

For the Smith textbook both Notes and Reflections are required.

For the Van Voorst textbook, a short Reflection on his Introduction to each religion, noting things you learn from him that are not in Smith. Then a Reflection on each individual Scripture excerpt that he provides. Please provide his Titles and Subtitles so that I can follow your work.

Notes & Reflections must be compiled and bound in the order in which readings are assigned for the final submission of your journal.

Notes & Reflections must be cogent, readable & organized.

Major points from the Smith readings must be retrievable from the Notes.

Notes must be clearly titled and subtitled, references to text must include page number.

Each reading must be followed by your own Reflections on the material.

Reflections on this material are critical to your grade (if you want an “A” or “B”).

Consider the reading and reflecting as a spiritual, intellectual and cultural 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.

Due dates will be discussed in class.

The Lecture Notebook is for lecture notes only. Please use a spiral notebook large enough for the semester’s notes. It is not optional and will be submitted for a grade. Notes must be dated, properly titled, cogent and detailed. Typing not required. Due Dec 2.

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 (doctor’s note required).
- absences due to sports, drama, music & other extra-curricular activities must include a dated & 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, or as close to it as possible.

Book Report: On Black Elk Speaks, or one of the books on the Recommended list.

Length: 4 pages.

Mechanics: 1” margins on all 4 sides; Font: Size 12, Times New Roman; 1 ½ 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: Please give me a copy, as I will not hand them back.
(a) **Deadlines**  (b) **Late Assignments**  (c) **Attendance**

(a) **Deadlines** for all writing assignments are non-negotiable. What you have, even if incomplete, must be submitted on the date due. Your grade for the project will be based upon the quality of what you submit, minus the value of whatever is left incomplete, which is the professor’s determination. Frequent reasons given for tardy work is computer crash or printer malfunction. It is therefore recommended that you make frequent back-ups of data, and that you print well in advance lest you be caught unawares at 6 A.M. with an incapacitated printer.

(b) A **late assignment** is one in which the student was **physically unable** to deliver to class on time. The precise parameters of such “physical inability” are, for example, hospitalization, or comparable emergency or health critical situation. Notification and confirmation should be given to the professor as soon as possible, and its acceptability is entirely at the discretion of the professor. Grade adjustment and terms of submission are also at the discretion of the professor. If you find yourself in this situation contact me as soon as possible.

(c) **attendance:**

- How to be safe: come to class, and if you don’t, be honest with me in all aspects about the absence; and aggressive and responsible in acquiring information about the missed class session.
- Class roster must be signed by all present, each class period; if you are not signed in, you are counted absent. There are no exceptions, and you cannot sign for someone else.
- An excused absence may be due to an incapacitating sickness or a University sponsored event in which the student has a critical part (sporting event, drama, music performance, etc). The student plus a supervisor (e.g. coach, music teacher, drama coach) must email the professor about an event & prior to it (preferably) to legitimate the absence. In the case of sickness, the student must email the day of the absence or within one day of the absence plus provide the professor with a doctor’s note to legitimate the illness. It is the responsibility of the student to inquire about missed material.
- 0 absences: ½ score credit (e.g. “B” to “B+”; this is the only extra credit offered)
- 2 absences are allowed with no penalty 😊
- 3 absences: best grade “B.”
- 4 absences: best grade “C.”
- 5 Absences: best grade “D.”
- 6 absences: “F.”

Attendance is critical in my class. My lectures do not repeat the reading material, but are rather a synthesis.
**Course Requirements.**
1. Weekly Readings Notebook (70% of grade).
2. Book report. (10% of grade).
3. Lecture Notebook. (10% of grade).
4. Class Participation & Preparation (10% of grade).

**Brief Notes on Recommended Texts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Publication Dates</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Idea of the Holy, by Rudolf Otto, 1917, 1958. Pages: 230</td>
<td>Rudolf Otto</td>
<td>1917, 1958</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>A classic in religious philosophy. Otto treats here the <em>sacred</em> or <em>numinous</em> in religion; the sense of the <em>terror</em> of the Divine, the <em>otherness</em> of the Holy. It is a contemplation of the emotional &amp; non-rational in religion, whereby we are caught up in awe &amp; reverence as we experience a <em>mysterium tremendum et fascinosum</em>. Advanced, but worth the time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Islam, by Alfred Guillaume, 1954, 1956. Pages: 200</td>
<td>Alfred Guillaume</td>
<td>1954, 1956</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Treasures of Darkness. A History of Mesopotamian Religion, by Thorkild Jacobsen, 1976. Pages: 238</td>
<td>Thorkild Jacobsen</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>Most of the religions that we examine in this class lie 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satan and the Problem of Evil by Gregory Boyd, 2001. Pages: 357 (plus Appendices)</td>
<td>Gregory Boyd</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The River of God, by Gregory J. Riley, 2001. Pages: 237</td>
<td>Gregory J. Riley</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Rivers of Paradise. Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus and Muhammad as Religious Founders, ed. by David Noel Freedman &amp; Michael J McClymond, 2001. Pages: 681</td>
<td>David Noel Freedman &amp; Michael J McClymond</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>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.</td>
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Syllabus

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

Reserve Readings:
RR1: “In Comparison a Magic Dwells” (19pp)
RR2: “Methodologies, Comparisons and Truth” (10pp)
RR3: “Religious Evolution” (26pp)
RR4: “Journey to the East: Pantheistic Monism” (19pp)
RR5: “Introduction” and “The World at War” (37pp)
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.

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<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Rdg</th>
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<td>What is Religion? What is Worldview? Theodicy Religions in Contact in History Comparison</td>
<td>Syllabus RR1 RR2</td>
<td>Quiz over Syllabus 9/9</td>
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<td>Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Catch Up</td>
<td>AWS Ch. 5</td>
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<td>Additional Notes</td>
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<td>7/10/14,16</td>
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<td>AWS Ch. 6, WR Ch. 4</td>
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<td>AWS Ch. 7,8, WR Ch. 5</td>
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<td>9/10/28,30</td>
<td>Zoroastrianism</td>
<td>AWS Ch. 9</td>
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<td>10/11/4,6</td>
<td>Judaism &amp; Christianity</td>
<td>AWS Ch. 10, WR Ch. 7</td>
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<td>11/11/13</td>
<td>Movie ?</td>
<td>AWS Ch. 11, WR Ch. 8, RR5</td>
<td>Submit Notes for Check</td>
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<td>12/11/18,20</td>
<td>Teacher Evaluations &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>AWS Ch. 12, WR Ch. 6</td>
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<td>13/11/25</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>ENR, SR, WR Ch. 9</td>
<td>Notebook &amp; Lecture Notebook Due</td>
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<td>14/12/2,4</td>
<td>Native American Religions, New Religious Movements, New Age Religion</td>
<td>RR6, RR7</td>
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<td>15/12/25</td>
<td>Finals Week</td>
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Student Information Sheet

Name: (please print)

Phone #: (Residence) (Work)

email:

Major:

I am a Sr.____ Jr.____ Soph.____ Fresh.____

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

What would you like me to know about you?

What religions are you familiar with?