MW 608 MW 708 MS 674 Introduction to World Religions

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Recommended Citation
I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, students study the origin, history, and basic tenets of each of the major religious traditions of the world--Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shinto, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism. Students learn basic religious study skills, and engage in research projects in one or more of these religions.

II. TEXTBOOK


III. ASSIGNMENTS

1. Class attendance
2. Four written exercises (10 percent each)
3. Read the texts
4. Two exams (30 percent each)

IV. CLASS SCHEDULE

Feb. 12- What is religion? Why study religion?
    Noss, Chap. 1. Muck, Chap. 1

Feb. 14 - Three Views of Religion (Exercise #1 - A Three View Visit - Due March 14)
    The Religious Studies Attitude
    Muck, Chaps. 2, 3

Feb. 19 - Hinduism: History
    Noss, Chap. 3

Feb. 21 - Hinduism: Beliefs
    Noss, Chap. 4
Feb. 26 - Buddhism: History
  Noss, Chap. 6

Feb. 28 - Buddhism: Beliefs
  Noss, Chap. 7

Mar. 5 - Jainism
  Noss, Chap. 5

Mar. 7 - Determining a Religious Studies Event
  Muck, Chap. 4 (Exercise #2 - Isolate An Event - Due April 16)

March 12 - Sikhism
  Noss, Chap. 8

March 14 - Taoism
  Noss, Chap. 9  EXERCISE #1 DUE

March 19 - Confucianism
  Noss, Chap. 10

March 21 - Shinto
  Noss, Chap. 11

March 26 - How To Talk To Someone About Religion
  Muck, Chap. 5 (Exercise #3 - Interview - Due April 30)

March 28 - FIRST EXAM

April 2, 4, 9, 11 - No Classes - Spring Break

April 16 - Roots of Western Religions: A Different View
  Noss, Chap. 2; Muck, Chap. 6; EXERCISE #2 DUE

April 18 - Zoroastrianism;
  Noss, Chap. 12

April 23 - How to Compare and Contrast Religions
  Muck, Chap. 7 (Exercise #4 - Compare/Contrast - Due May 2

April 25 - Judaism: History
  Noss, Chap. 13
April 30  - Judaism: Beliefs and Practices
   Noss, Chap. 14  EXERCISE #3 DUE

May 2  - Islam: History
   Noss, Chap. 17  EXERCISE #4 DUE

May 7  - Islam: Beliefs
   Noss, Chap. 18

May 9  - Islam in America

May 14 - Truth in Religion
   Muck, Chap. 8

May 16 - FINAL EXAM
V. EXERCISES

Exercise #1 - A Three View Visit. Write three, one page (typewritten, double spaced) descriptions of a religious service you have attended recently. One of the descriptions should be from the insider’s stance, one from a reporter’s stance, and one from a specialist’s stance (for the latter, choose the viewpoint of the psychologist, the sociologist, or the philosopher). See Muck, Mysterious Beyond, pp. 31-43. Due March 14.

Exercise #2 - Isolate a Religious Event. Choose a religious subject of interest to you. Using the library, write a description of the time period of the subject (its beginnings and history, and what time period your study focuses on), the context of the subject (the role it played or plays in its culture), and the function and importance of the subject in its particular religious system. Four to five typewritten, double spaced pages. See Muck, Mysterious Beyond, pp. 59-69. Due April 16.

Exercise #3 - Interview. Interview a classmate or friend about a religious topic. Plan on a twenty minute interview, and then write up the results in a five page paper. Include in the paper a statement of the interview time, location, and subject, and a description both physical and biographical of the interviewee. End with a transcript or summary of the interview itself, in question and answer format.
The topic of the interview could be one of many different things. Consider the following set of questions, based on issues raised in James McClendon’s book, Biography As Theology (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), as one possibility:
What are your main spiritual and theological images? (For example, if the subject is a Christian, you might ask her or him to consider Jesus:
Is your mental image of Jesus on the cross? In Gethsemane?
Preaching? etc.
How do these key images apply to your life?
How do your images apply to your religious community’s life?
What parts of your religious tradition are most important to your spiritual life? Give examples.
What parts of your tradition are not so important to your spiritual life? Example?
Feel free to try some different approach to the interview.
See Muck, Mysterious Beyond, pp. 71-81. Due April 30.

Exercise #4 - Compare and Contrast. Do a religious studies comparison along the lines described in Muck, Mysterious Beyond, pp. 97-109. Four to five typewritten, double spaced pages. Due May 2.