COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description

203 -- Comparative Religion. (3) The religious experience of varied persons and groups, East and West, in traditional and contemporary settings.

Course Description

Comparative Religions is an introductory course designed to begin the student’s inquiry into the academic study of religion and the major faith systems of the world through a comparative approach. As you study the religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, you will learn about their foundations, what they believe, and how they express their beliefs.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course you should be able to:

(1) discuss the beliefs and practices of the five major world’s religions;
(2) understand the impact religious beliefs have had in history;
(3) comprehend how understanding religion can help you understand significant events in the world;
(4) compare the seven components of a religious worldview in the five religions;
(5) discuss how religious beliefs are practiced and experienced; and,
(6) analyze religious beliefs and practices as they are reflected in film.

Course Lectures

You will find PowerPoint presentations with lectures posted on Blackboard.

Texts

Huston Smith's *The Illustrated World's Religions*

Film Texts

Films will play an integral part of this course and are therefore considered as texts. You will learn to view film in much the same way as you read a text, however, you will be doing so through the lens of religious studies. There are a limited number of the films available in the library, however, it is suggested that you subscribe to one of the online rental companies, such as Netflix.com, cafedvd.com, or Blockbuster.com for the duration of the course. These three have all of the films you are required to view, therefore, **there can be no acceptable excuse for you not being able to view a film.** Your textbook is inexpensive, so the additional amount that it will cost you to subscribe to one of these should not pose an economic hardship. All of them offer two weeks free.

Blackboard and Web Access

You will need a computer with reliable Internet access to take this course. Because there
are no class meetings, Blackboard is an indispensable part of the course and you will find the following posted:

- Power Point Presentations with lectures
- Selected sections of the sacred texts of the various religions
- A discussion board for you to discuss the various religions with others taking the course and with your Instructor. Also use it to post any questions you have.
- Information about the films you will view
- "Important Terms" that you are to define/describe as they are defined/described in the PowerPoint Presentations, the textbook, or the film. This is for your benefit to help you study; you do not submit these to the Instructor.

A “Helpful Chart” to help you study for tests and to use to take the exam. You do not submit the chart to the Instructor; it’s for your benefit.

- Film analysis sheets – these are also to help you study for the tests and exam and you do not submit them to the Instructor.

**Course Expectations and Requirements**

1. We will correspond through email. If you prefer a different email address than that posted on Blackboard, you will need to change the one listed.
2. Because this is a web-based class, we will not have any class meetings.
3. Scholastic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in a 0. You are encouraged to study with other students, to discuss what you are learning, and to view and discuss films together. You are not to share information about the tests or to collaborate on a test. The test are NOT open book; you may not use anything other than a mouse or a finger pad on a laptop to take the tests.
4. You will need to complete your work according to the schedule in this syllabus. It doesn’t matter if a test is open beyond what the schedule says – sometimes that is done on purpose. You MUST use the dates in this syllabus. If you fail to meet a deadline for a test, you will have to email me and I will arrange for you to have a make-up test…students don’t like my make-up tests!
5. Before emailing me with a question, you need to be sure the answer is not in this syllabus or posted as an announcement on Blackboard.
6. It is expected that since you are taking a distance learning course you are an intelligent, mature, self-motivated student. All of the material necessary to succeed is being provided; what you learn is entirely up to you.
7. Please remember that this is a 3 hr. credit course. You can expect to spend as much time on this course as if you were taking it in a classroom.
8. You will find a Helpful Chart under Course Documents on Blackboard. You need to save it in landscape. What you put in your chart can be handwritten or typed using a small font in order to get more information into the squares. You may use only 2 front pieces of paper. You are allowed to use this Chart to take your exam. It is not intended to take the place of studying as you will not have time to look for answers to all of the questions; it is to serve as a reminder and to help you if you are stuck on a question. It will be most helpful if you fill it out as you study each religion.

**Course Grade**
You grade will consist of a test on the course introduction, a test for each of the five world religions, and a final exam. Your tests and final exam are posted on Blackboard. They will consist of multiple choice and true false questions. Should you have to take a make-up test (Heaven forbid!), it will be an essay test. The tests are not open book. The questions will appear one at a time and you will not be allowed to re-visit any of the questions. You are also limited to the amount of time you have to take each test and you may only open a test once. The tests and the exam have equal weight in determining your final grade.

The grading scale for the course is: A = 90-100; B+ = 88-89; B = 80 – 87; C+ = 78-79; C = 70-77; D+ = 68-69; D = 60-67; F = 0-59.

Should you have a computer problem during a test, do not panic. Send me an email and we'll see what we need to do to fix the problem. You will be saving each of your answers as you go along so that should help.

**Availability of the Instructor**

I am always available by email, which I check several times a day. If you do not receive a response to an email with two days, then you can assume I did not receive it and you should send it again.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**Introduction**

**Religious Doctrines and Beliefs**

**Assignment**

1. Read Smith, Chapter I, “Point of Departure.”
2. Read “Definitions of Religion” posted on Blackboard.
3. View/Listen to “Course Introduction” posted on Blackboard.
4. When you have finished the assignment and mastered the material, you will be ready for the test. The test is available on Blackboard. Please remember that your tests are NOT open book, you may only open a test one time, and you have a limited amount of time in which to complete the test. The test must be completed by Oct. 26th.

**Hinduism**

**Assignment**

1. Read Smith’s chapter on “Hinduism”
2. View/Listen to the lecture on Hinduism posted on Blackboard.
3. Read selections from the Hindu sacred texts posted on Blackboard.
4. Fill in the "Helpful Chart" for Hinduism
5. Read the information sheet posted on Blackboard on Gandhi
6. View the film Gandhi paying special attention to any of the seven components of a religious worldview and religious practices and experiences you see in the film
7. After you have completed these assignments and studied the material, you are ready for your test on Hinduism posted on Blackboard. Once again, the test is NOT open book, you may only open it one time, and there is a time limit in which to complete it. The test must be completed by Nov. 2nd.
Buddhism

Assignment
1. Read Smith’s chapter on “Buddhism”
2. View/Listen to lectures on Buddhism
3. Read selections from the sacred texts
4. Fill in the “Helpful Chart” for Buddhism
5. Read the information sheet posted on Blackboard on Kundun
6. View the film Kundun paying special attention to any of the seven components of a religious worldview and religious practices and experiences you see in the film
7. After you have completed these assignments and studied the material, you are ready for your test on Buddhism. The test must be completed no later than Nov. 9th.

Judaism

Assignment
1. Read Smith’s chapter on “Judaism”
2. View/Listen to Lecture on Judaism
3. Read selections from the sacred texts
4. Fill in the “Helpful Chart” for Judaism
5. Read the information sheet posted on Blackboard on Fiddler on the Roof
6. View Fiddler on the Roof paying special attention to any of the seven components of a religious worldview and religious practices and experiences you see in the film
7. After you have completed these assignments and studied the material, you are ready for your test on Judaism. The test must be completed no later than Nov. 16th.

Christianity

Assignment
1. Read Smith’s chapter on “Christianity”
2. View/Listen to Lecture on Christianity
3. Read selections from the sacred texts
4. Fill in the “Helpful Chart” for Christianity
5. Read the information sheet posted on Blackboard on The Mission
6. View the film The Mission paying special attention to any of the seven components of a religious worldview and religious practices and experiences you see in the film
7. After you have completed these assignments and studied the material, you are ready for your test on Christianity. Test must be completed no later than Nov.30th.

Islam

Assignment
1. Read Smith’s chapter on “Islam”
2. View/Listen to Lecture on Islam
3. Read selections from the sacred texts on Blackboard
4. Fill in the “Helpful Chart” for Islam
5. Read the information sheet posted on Blackboard on The Message
6. View The Message paying special attention to any of the seven components of a religious worldview and religious practices and experiences you see in the film
worldview and religious practices and experiences you see in the film
7. After you have completed these assignments and studied the material, you are ready for your test on Islam. Test must be completed no later than Dec. 7th.

Exam Preparation
Complete your Helpful Chart. Your Helpful Chart needs to be saved in landscape and you may use a small font in order to get more information into the squares. You may use only 2 front pieces of paper. You are allowed to use this Chart to take your exam.

Final Exam – Dec. 10th
Your final exam is accumulative; you must know the basic components of religion and have an understanding of the various religious practices and experiences in each of the religions you have studied. It is important that you be able to compare/contrast the seven components and the religious experiences and practices of five major world religions. When you have reviewed all of your material and are ready to take your exam, you will find it posted on Blackboard. You may use your filled-in “Helpful Chart” to take the exam. The exam is due no later than midnight, Dec. 10th.