

Bergen Community College
Division of Arts & Humanities
Department of Philosophy & Religion

Course Syllabus

PHR-120 Introduction to Religion

Basic Information about Course and Instructor

Semester and year:
Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary: [optional]
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

PHR-120 Introduction to Religion is a study of major themes in religious and theological thought. Topics of discussion include the nature and existence of God; the relationship between God, humanity, and the universe; human nature and the human condition; religious responses to the problems of human existence; and the relationship between religion and society.

3 lectures, 3 credits

General Education Course – Humanities Elective

Student Learning Objectives: As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to

1. describe the role of religious inquiry in the human search for knowledge and meaning and its contribution to the formation of our most fundamental values;
2. analyze critically the relationship of religion to culture and society;
3. differentiate the study of religion from other disciplines;
4. take an empathetic yet critical approach to the study of religion and the religious state of mind;
5. view religion from a variety of perspectives, such as the sociological, philosophical, or psychological;
6. explain the relevance of religious studies with reference to the major problems of contemporary culture;
7. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;
8. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on philosophical issues; and
9. participate actively in discussions of philosophical ideas and issues (re: SLOs 1-6).

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, the course will be based on the reading and discussion of primary and secondary sources, the basic principles and methods of logical reasoning will be introduced, the techniques of scholarly research and writing will be reviewed, and students will be required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

Learning Assessment

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Philosophy Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through various means of assessment, such as the "Suggested Means of Assessment" listed below.

Student Learning Objective	Suggested Means of Assessment
1. describe the role of religious inquiry in the human search for knowledge and meaning and its contribution to the formation of our most fundamental values;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments
2. analyze critically the relationship of religion to culture and society;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments • Graded class presentations
3. differentiate the study of religion from other disciplines;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments • Graded class presentations
4. take an empathetic yet critical approach to the study of religion and the religious state of mind;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments • Graded class presentations
5. view religion from a variety of perspectives, such as the sociological, philosophical, or psychological;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments • Graded class presentations
6. explain the relevance of religious studies with reference to the major problems of contemporary culture;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments • Graded class presentations
7. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing assignments* • Graded class presentations
8. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on philosophical issues; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Writing assignments
9. participate actively in discussions of philosophical ideas and issues (re: SLOs 1-6).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graded class discussions

*Writing assignments for the purpose of assessing student success on SLO 5 will include research and writing projects, possibly including term papers, in which a student identifies an information need, accesses and evaluates appropriate resources, and uses the information effectively and ethically for a specific purpose.

Course Content

Along with PHR-120, Bergen's course offerings in Religion include PHR-121 Religions of the World, PHR-122 Women and Religion, PHR-124 The Christian Scriptures, PHR-125 The Hebrew Scriptures, PHR-126

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1/31/05; revised 12/5/13; updated, 1/18/14

The Islamic Scriptures, and PHR-127 The Buddhist Scriptures. Most students who enroll in BCC Religion courses choose PHR-120 or PHR-121. Some of these students will take both of these courses. It is especially important that PHR-120 have a distinct identity from PHR-121. Although most instructors in PHR-120 will include some discussion of specific religious traditions, PHR-120 should not be essentially a comparative study of religion. Rather, PHR-120 is an introduction to the discipline of religious studies and to major themes and issues in religious thought.

Special Features of the Course (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, web enhancement via a parallel course website, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy learning in the course; etc.

Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)

Because PHR-120 is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

Grading Policy

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the final grade. A student's research and writing work will count at least fifty percent (50%) of the final grade.

Attendance Policy

BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

Attendance Policy in this Course:

[To be designated by the instructor]

Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

There are many introduction to religion texts available. Most instructors will likely want to build their course around some general introductory level text book. However, it is strongly recommended that instructors also choose a reader or one or two classic texts about religion to be used in conjunction with the textbook. Because religious studies are inevitably multicultural, texts should be chosen which are not limited solely to a Western tradition. Two departmentally-approved standard texts are the following:

Gary Kessler, *Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases* (McGraw-Hill, 3d ed., 2007), ISBN-13: 978-0073386591. (Must be supplemented with primary source materials to be selected by the instructor. The course should not be based exclusively on the Kessler text.)

James C. Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred* (Prentice-Hall, 6th ed., 2008), ISBN-13: 978-0136003809. (Must be supplemented with primary source materials to be selected by the instructor. The course should not be based exclusively on the Livingston text.)

Further, an instructor may wish to build the course around one particular critical approach to religion, say, the philosophy of religion, or the sociology of a religion, or religion and literature. If so, appropriate primary sources should be chosen. One instructor based his section of PHR-120 on the following four paperback books: Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*; William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What is Man?*; and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*.

Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements [optional but recommended]

<p><u>Examples:</u> Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty. ADA statement. Sexual Harassment statement. Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology. Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.</p>

Student and Faculty Support Services [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

Student and Faculty Support Services

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 psimms@bergen.edu
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/4787.aspx
The Tutoring Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/pages/2192.aspx
The Writing Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/1795.aspx
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-131	201-612-5270 http://www.bergen.edu/oss
BCC Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

Special Note on the Tutoring Center

The Henry and Edith Cerullo Learning Assistance Center encompasses the Tutoring Center, the English Language Resource Center, and the Writing Center. The website of the Learning Assistance Center is located at www.bergen.edu/pages/2192.asp. Tutoring services are available for this course in the Tutoring Center. I strongly recommend that you make use of those services as we progress through the course. As listed above, the Tutoring Center is located in Room L-125, and its phone number is 201-447-7908.

Include the following statement on Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club

Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club

Logos usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, but sometimes also on different days and at different times. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of philosophy, you should find the meetings and other activities of the Philosophy & Religion club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy & Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor, Professor Jennifer Lyden (L-326, 201-493-3540, jlyden@bergen.edu). (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)

Include a Course Outline and Calendar [can be combined in a single syllabus section]

The Course Outline and Calendar must include all of the following elements:

- A daily or (at least) weekly schedule of topics to be covered.
- Dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. (This does not mean that all evaluation of students must be in groups and at the same time. Exams and other means of assessment can be listed as "to be scheduled individually.")
- Due dates for major assignments – e.g., when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due.
- Any required special events must be included in the outline/calendar, e.g., a lecture by a visiting speaker, a dramatic or musical performance, a field trip.
- Designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic (see sample below).
- A note to students stating that the course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Sample Format for Combined Course Outline and Calendar

Note to Students: The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topics & Assignments	Learning Objectives
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

Note: This section of the departmental syllabus is under revision in order to bring it into conformity with the BCC policy on the layout and content of syllabi for general education courses.