

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

Course Syllabus

PHR-121 Religions of the World

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-121 Religions of the World is a comparative study of the history, basic beliefs, and characteristic practices of such major religious systems as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism [Daoism], Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Some attention will also be given to the religions of the ancient Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean peoples, to ancient and modern tribal religions, and to contemporary sectarian and cultic movements.

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. identify and analyze the basic perspectives and characteristic practices of the major religions of the world;
2. define, summarize, and analyze the major similarities and differences between various religious world-views;
3. use critical thinking methods appropriate to the interpretation and appraisal of religious ideas to analyze and evaluate the ways in which various religions approach life and its problems;
4. analyze the relationships between religion and other aspects of human culture such as science, philosophy, art, and politics;
5. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;
6. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on religious issues; and
7. participate actively in discussions of religious ideas and issues (re: SLOs 1-4).

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, the course is based on the reading and discussion of both primary and secondary sources in the field of comparative religion; the essential principles of critical thinking are introduced; techniques of scholarly research and writing are reviewed; students are given the opportunity and are

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encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are 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. identify and analyze the basic perspectives and characteristic practices of the major religions of the world;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay examinations• Quizzes and objective tests• Writing assignments
2. define, summarize, and analyze the major similarities and differences between various religious world-views;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay examinations• Quizzes and objective tests• Writing assignments• Graded class presentations
3. use critical thinking methods appropriate to the interpretation and appraisal of religious ideas to analyze and evaluate the ways in which various religions approach life and its problems;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay examinations• Quizzes and objective tests• Writing assignments• Graded class presentations
4. analyze the relationships between religion and other aspects of human culture such as science, philosophy, art, and politics; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay examinations• Quizzes and objective tests• Writing assignments• Graded class presentations
5. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing assignments*• Graded class presentations
6. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on religious issues; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay examinations• Writing assignments
7. participate actively in discussions of religious ideas and issues (re: SLOs 1-4).	<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

Unlike the course, "Introduction to Religion" (PHR-120), "Religions of the World" (PHR-121) attempts a systematic survey of some of the major religious traditions of the world, at least including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. If time permits, the course gives some attention also to Daoism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, and various primal (tribal) religions.

The coverage of each religion, though obviously it cannot be complete, should at least present a representative sampling from each faith tradition. Some attention should be paid to ritual, personal spirituality, major beliefs, and historical evolution in each religion. The balance struck will vary with each instructor and will likely vary with each religion treated. The treatment should be non-sectarian, objective, and impartial, i.e., presenting, so far as possible, a sympathetic account of the religions which would be considered fair by members of that religion (some of whom may be members of the class).

Class use of primary source passages, especially from the scriptures of each faith, is strongly recommended. The selective use of videos (in-class or library assignments) is quite valuable as conveying the full-blooded reality of the religions, showing that they are living systems experienced by real people, not mere collections of abstract and strange-seeming doctrines.

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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.

Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

Recommended Texts: The current editions of any of the following texts are appropriate for use in PHR-121.

B. H. Earhart (ed.), *Religious Traditions of the World*.

Mircea Eliade & I. P. Couliano, *The Eliade Guide to World Religions*.

Robert S. Ellwood and Barbara A. McGraw, *Many Peoples, Many Faiths: Men and Women in the World's Religions*. Current departmentally-approved text.

L. M. Hopfe, *Religions of the World*.

Warren Matthews, *World Religions*.

David S. Noss, *A History of the World's Religions*.

Arvind Sharma (ed.), *Our Religions*.

Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience*.

_____, *The World's Religions*.

Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (paperback ed.).

These texts should be used in conjunction with primary and significant secondary source materials. A useful anthology is Gary E. Kessler, *Ways of Being Religious* (Mayfield). Kessler's book can, in fact, be used as the sole text for PHR-121. The current departmentally-approved anthology is *Scriptures of the World's Religions*, ed. J. Fieser & J. Powers (McGraw-Hill). Also acceptable: *Anthology of World Scriptures*, ed. Van Voorst (Cengage).

Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)

Because PHR-121 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, site visit reports, 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.

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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 in the course syllabus.

Attendance Policy in this Course:

[To be designated by the instructor]

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 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			

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12			
13			
14			
15			

See the Sample Course Outline and Calendar below.

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

[with designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic]

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)	Topic/Activity/Assignments	Student Learning Objectives
1-2	Sep 3, 5, 10, 12	<u>UNIT I: THE NATURE OF RELIGION</u> <u>Required Reading:</u> G. Cronk, "Notes on the Nature of Religion" (Online Anthology, 1-10) Site Visit Report assigned as of 9/3/13 – due 10/27/13 Research Paper assigned as of 9/3/13 – due 12/1/13 <u>Syllabus Comprehension Test & Test on the Nature of Religion</u> – see the test schedule under the "Quizzes" link in the "Activities" section of the course menu on left side of the course website.	3-4, 6-7
3-4	Sep 17, 19, 24, 26	<u>PART II: HINDUISM</u> <u>Required Reading:</u> Smith, Chapter 2* Selections from the Upanishads (Online Anthology, 23-36) <u>Recommended Readings:</u> Hymns from the Rig Veda (Online Anthology, 11-22) The Laws of Manu (Online Anthology, 37-62) The Bhagavad-Gita (Online Anthology, 63-78) Sep 25: 11:55 PM deadline for completing Student Information Survey <u>Test on Hinduism</u> – see the test schedule under the "Quizzes" link in the "Activities" section of the course menu.	1-7
5-6	Oct 1, 3, 8, 10	<u>PART III: BUDDHISM</u> <u>Required Readings:</u> Smith, Chapter 3 Early Buddhist Texts (Online Anthology, 135-56) <u>Recommended Reading:</u> D.T. Suzuki, Manual of Zen Buddhism (Online Anthology, 175-200) <u>Test on Buddhism</u> – see the test schedule under the "Quizzes" link in the "Activities" section of the course menu. Oct 13: Notify Dr. Cronk of your plans for your Site Visit Report	1-7
7-8	Oct 15, 17, 22, 24	<u>PART IV: DAOISM</u> <u>Required Reading:</u> Smith, Chapter 5 The Dao De Jing (Online Anthology, 233-42) <u>Recommended Readings:</u> Selections from the Chuang Tzu (Online Anthology, 342-64) <u>Test on Daoism</u> – see the test schedule under the "Quizzes" link in the "Activities" section of the course menu. Oct 27: Site Visit Report due	1-7

*All page references to "Smith" are to Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (current paperback ed.).

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Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity/Assignments	Student Learning Objectives
9-10	Oct 29, 31 Nov 5, 7	<p><u>PART V: JUDAISM</u> <u>Required Readings:</u> Smith, Chapter 7 Selections from the Hebrew Bible (Tanach) (Online Anthology, 265-92) <u>Recommended Readings:</u> Tract Aboth from the Talmud (Online Anthology, 293-304) Solomon Schechter, "The Dogmas of Judaism" (Online Anthology, 305-18) <u>Test on Judaism</u> – see the test schedule under the "Quizzes" link in the "Activities" section of the course menu.</p>	1-7
11-12	Nov 12, 14, 19, 21, 26	<p><u>PART VI: CHRISTIANITY</u> <u>Required Readings:</u> Smith, Chapter 8 The Gospel According to Saint John (Online Anthology, 339-58) <u>Recommended Readings:</u> Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God (Online Anthology, 359-60, 361-4) Thomas à Kempis, The Imitation of Christ (Online Anthology, 365-84) <u>Test on Christianity</u> – see the test schedule under the "Quizzes" link in the "Activities" section of the course menu. Dec 1: Research Paper due Thanksgiving Weekend (Nov 27-Dec 1)</p>	1-7
13-14	Dec 3, 5, 20, 12	<p><u>PART VII: ISLAM</u> Required Reading: <u>Required Readings:</u> Smith, Chapter 6 Selections from the Koran (Qur'an) (Online Anthology, 385-400) <u>Recommended Readings:</u> Selections from A Manual of Hadith (Online Anthology, 401-34) Al-Ghazali's Confessions (Online Anthology, 435-48) <u>Test on Islam</u> – see the test schedule under the "Quizzes" link in the "Activities" section of the course menu.</p>	1-7
15	Dec 17, 19	Final Review & End of Course	1-7

The foregoing Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.