

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

HUM 216 Introduction to World Religions Sample Course Outline Panama Program

Catalog Description: The study of the principal world religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and indigenous traditions) in their cultural contexts.

Course Description:

Introduction to World Religions will teach students key concepts and elements of religious studies in general as well as introducing them to the basic vocabulary, beliefs and practices of some of the world's major religious traditions. In this class we will take a historical approach to the study of world religions and carefully consider the development of religious traditions in their historical and cultural context. The study of world religions and the ability to think critically about religious traditions is an important tool for understanding both the history of human civilizations as well as one's own society and culture. By the end of this course, students also should be able to compare and contrast how different religious traditions provide humans with a framework to find meaning for life's questions.

This course fulfills both a (H) Humanities General Education requirement and a (CD1) Cultural Diversity requirement.

General Education and Cultural Diversity Outcomes:

1. **Practice and develop critical thinking skills.** In part, this will be (explicitly) modeled during class discussions and/or group discussion sessions. Key elements of critical thinking include: identifying the question or problem, analyzing evidence and developing arguments, integrating knowledge and demonstrating an awareness of multiple points of view, and drawing conclusions based upon reasons, arguments, and evidence.
2. **Practice and develop effective communication skills.** In the course of studying world religions, students will also be introduced to key elements of effective communication including clear articulation (oral and written), strategies for clear organization of arguments and evidence, demonstration of analysis and/or synthesis of the concepts and/or evidence, and use of appropriate conventions and style. Student progress in this area will be assessed through in-class assignments, class discussions and critical analysis of differing religious traditions and ideas.
3. **Understand and appreciate cultural diversity.** Students will be exposed to a variety of social systems, cultures and subcultures through the student of world religions. This curriculum encourages an appreciation and understanding of the realities of a racially and culturally diverse world. In particular, students will:
 - learn to recognize some of the ways that social and cultural systems develop out of adaptation to environmental and historical circumstances

- learn that members of different cultures may hold different views of the same issues and how to communicate that understanding in a manner sensitive to this diversity
- learn strategies to evaluate pertinent information and assertions for relevance, bias, stereotyping, manipulation and completeness.

Humanities General Education Goals (H). Students will be expected to learn how to:

1. communicate an understanding of vocabulary, concepts, materials, techniques, and methods of intellectual inquiry within the arts and/or humanities
2. describe and evaluate texts using primary and secondary materials
3. analyze and synthesize texts, recognizing the diversity of cultures and historical contexts

Assessment:

Student progress towards all these General Education (HCD1) goals will be assessed on the basis of tests, writing assignments, and class discussions.

Objectives for Humanities 216:

Upon successful completion of the course, student will be able to:

- 1) Identify fundamental concepts of religion and religious studies
- 2) Understand the points of view found within the major religions and identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- 3) Identify and explain the key concepts and vocabulary of the religions covered in this course.
- 4) Demonstrate awareness of their biases towards any particular religion and how their perceptions of specific religions have changed as a result of this class.
- 5) Analyze, interpret and evaluate religious phenomena as both a product of, and influence on, the cultures of which they are a part.

Required Text:

World Religions Today, 5th ed., by John Esposito, Darrell Fasching, and Todd Lewis. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). ISBN 978 019 999959-0

Some additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.

TENTATIVE TOPICS AND READINGS

I. Introduction to basic questions about religion:

Introduction to the study of world religions (chapter one)

Indigenous religions (chapter two)

II. Monotheistic religious traditions

Judaism through the classical period

Read chapter three, pp. 77-114

Judaism and modernity

Read chapter three, pp. 114-143

The origins of Christianity

Read chapter four, pp. 147-175

Christianity from medieval to postmodern

Read chapter four, pp. 175-214

The Formation of Islam

Read chapter five, pp. 219-269

III. Non-monotheistic religions of eastern origins

Brief review and **Unit Test**

Introduction to South Asian Religions: Hinduism

Read chapter six, pp. 307-334

Post-classical Hinduism and Sikhism

Read chapter six, pp. 334-392

Buddhism in the Formative Era

Read chapter seven, pp. 399-420

Buddhism through the modern age

Read chapter seven, pp. 420-485

Introduction to East Asian Religions: Confucianism, Daoism, Shinto,

Buddhism through the classical era

Read chapter eight, pp. 487-524

East Asian religions to the contemporary age.

Read chapter eight, pp. 524-575

Wrap up and review.

Unit Test