Unification Theological Seminary

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Course Title: World Religions
Course Number: LTR 5141

Course Description

This course will be an introduction to the many "Paths of Faith" which have evolved over the course of the millennia. Each civilization has elaborated its own unique vision of a perfect society; experienced its own unique vision of God or Gods; devised its own liturgical, theological, symbolic, artistic, musical and mystical traditions; and labored to preserve the vitality and purity of its unique path. Many of these paths remain vibrant today while others have faded. This course will survey some of the major paths that still inspire millions of people today.

Course Outcomes

1. to explore the history, and the spiritual and cultural richness of world religions
2. to learn to respect people who practice religions different than our own
3. to understand the complex interplay between religion and culture
4. to cultivate the ability to calmly and intelligently discuss different world religions
5. to better understand the many religious conflicts that plague our world
6. to appreciate the themes of continuity and change in religions

Course Requirements and Grading

1. class attendance and weekly writing exercises --- 25% of final grade
2. mid term test --- 25% of final grade
3. final exam --- 25% of final grade
4. research paper --- 25% of final grade

Weekly Writing Exercises

The first half hour of each class will be devoted to writing an essay on the topic discussed in the previous class, field trip, or an assigned reading. Since many students are new immigrants, the goal of this essay is to improve writing skills. The students will be permitted to use their class notes, texts, and dictionaries. The essay will be corrected by the teacher and returned to the student.
This is an in-class writing exercise to improve your writing skills, IT IS NOT A TEST.
The topics of the writing exercises will also be the essay questions for the tests.

Field Trips

New York City is filled with monuments, museums, neighborhoods, and sites of importance to American labor history. During the course of the semester we will visit some of these sites. If the field trip is scheduled during class time, attendance is required, the material will be on the test, and attendance will be taken.
If the trip is scheduled at another time, attendance is optional. Extra credit will be given.

Field trips will be of two kinds: Class trips held during class time and Individual trips held at student's convenience. Students are expected to document their Individual trips with photographs of the house of worship.

Research Paper

All students will be required to write a research paper. The paper must be tem pages in length, typed with normal font and margins. A research paper outline will be distributed and students will be required to follow this outline. All topics must be approved by the professor.
Papers will be due ONE WEEK BEFORE THE FINAL EXAM or earlier. If the paper requires corrections, this will allow the student time to make any changes recommended by the professor. Revised papers will be submitted on the day of the final exam. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty that occurs when a student passes off someone else's work as their own. This can range from failing to cite an author for ideas incorporated into a student's paper, to cutting and pasting paragraphs from different websites, to handing in a paper downloaded from the Internet. This includes buying or submitting a paper written by a third party. All are considered forms of "plagiarism" and a violation of the Seminary's academic integrity policy. Instances of plagiarism may be reported to the Vice President of Academic Affairs for disciplinary action. Possible disciplinary actions include probation, suspension or withdrawal.

The first instance of plagiarism in this course, the student must repeat the assignment. If the student plagiarizes again, the student will receive an "F" for the course.

Textbook

Huston Smith, *The World's Religions,* Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1991.
ISBN 9780061660184. Available online and in bookstores: $15.
Printed chapters from *Introduction to the Scientific Study of World Religions*. Ronald J. Brown. Sacred City Books, Elmhurst, Queens, 2013 will also be used as basic texts.

Bibliography

Armstrong, Karen, *A History of God*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1993.
Eck, Diana L., *A New Religious America*, Harper, San Francisco, 2001.
Hopfe, Lewis M., *Religions of the World*, Macmillan College Publishing Company, New York, 1994 edition.
Huntington, Samuel P., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* A Touchstone Book, New York, 1996.
James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Collier Books, New York, 1961.
Lessa, William A. and Evon Z. Vogt, *Reader in Comparative Religion, An Anthropological Approach*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1979.
Magida, Arthur J. ed., *How to Be a Perfect Stranger, A guide to Etiquette in Other People's Religious Ceremonies,* Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont, 1996.
Novak, Philip, *The World's Wisdom: Sacred Texts of the World's Religions,* Harper, San Francisco, 1995.
Parrinder, Geoffrey, *Encountering World Religions*, Crossroad, New York, 1987.

Schedule

Topic 1: Introduction to the scientific study of world religions
Where do religions come from? What is a religion? How did and do religions evolve over time? Why is the study of religion important, even crucial, today, even for atheists? What is the "Clash of Civilizations" prophesied by Samuel P. Huntington?
Reading: "Introduction to the Scientific Study of World Religions," part 1, by Dr. Ronald Brown

Topic 2: Methodology used in the Scientific Study of World Religions
Yes, religions can be scientifically studied. They can be disassembled into their constituent parts (Building Blocks), defined and redefined, arranged and assembled into what is called a "religion."
Reading: "Introduction to the Scientific Study of World Religions," part 2, by Dr. Ronald Brown

Topic 3: What makes New York City religious history unique?
The diversity among the Dutch and English colonial settlers. The example of Flushing, Queens as the first example of American religious diversity. Attitudes toward Jews and Catholics. The American Revolution and Constitution – Separation of Church and State and freedom of religion.

Topic 4: The Evolution of Judaism from Abraham to 70 AD.
The Mesopotamian origins of Judaism. The emergence of a Jewish people. Survival in a hostile world as the reason for the Jewish dietary, dress, and marriage laws. The conquest of Palestine and the construction of Jerusalem and the temple. The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD. The end of "Temple Judaism."

Topic 5: Judaism from 70 AD to the Present.
Diaspora Judaism and the question of Jewish survival. Adaptation to Diaspora conditions. Rabbinical Judaism and synagogues as the focus of Diaspora Judaism. The emergence of sacred language and rituals. Diversity of Diaspora Judaism. The rise and flowering of "Synagogue Judaism."

Topic 6: The Emergence of Hinduism.
The conditions in India/Pakistan before the Aryan invasion. The conflict between the settled urban and rural Indus Valley Civilization and the nomadic Aryan invaders. The Hindu accommodation – religious pluralism. The evolution of the Hindu Caste System.

Topic 7: The Emergence of Confucianism.
Confucianism as an ideology, social system, or religion. The goal of Confucianism – a peaceful, prosperous, well-run empire. Human society as the ultimate goal of human existence. Is there a "God" in Confucianism? The social system of Confucianism.

Topic 8: The Evolution of Christianity from the time of Christ to Martin Luther.
The situation in Israel/Palestine during the time of Christ. The personality of Jesus. The challenge of the Roman Empire. The spread of Christianity and the conversion of the Greek, Egyptian, and Roman empires. The rise of northern Europe.

Topic 9: The Evolution of Christianity from Martin Luther to the Present.
The adaptation of Christianity to the changing circumstances of the age of nationalism. The invention of the printing press, spread of education, rise of commerce, and globalization. The spread and adaptation of Christianity to Latin America, Africa, and Asia. American Christianity. The future of Christianity.

Topic 10: The Evolution of Islam from the Prophet Mohammed to the present.
The Arabian background of Islam and the personality of the Prophet. Jewish, Christian, and pagan Arabian influences. The unification of political and religious leadership. The spread of Islam from Arabia into Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

Topic 11: The Five Pillars of Islam.
The fundamental teachings of Islam, the Five Pillars. What do they mean? What is their function?

Topic 12: The Religions of Africa.
The Spread of Christianity and Islam into Africa. Confrontation with indigenous African religions. Africanized Islam – the Mourids of Senegal. Africanized Christianity – the celestial Church of Christ of Nigeria. Voodou and other religious hybrids.

Topic 13: Class trip to synagogue service.

Topic 14: Class trip to mosque religious service.

Topic 15: Final Class Session – Word Religions in the news today.
Class discussion on religions in the news; Israel-Palestine, India-Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Abortion, Gay Marriage, the American Religious Right, Terrorism.

Week 16: Final exam

Additional optional field trips to religious services will be organized to further the students´ appreciation of diverse religious services.

The above class schedule is subject to changes.