



Fall Semester 2009

Philosophy 1304: Comparative Religion

Credit Hours: 3

Prerequisite: ENGL 1301, Composition & Rhetoric I *strongly suggested*

Course Delivery Method: Lecture/Lab

Professor:

Mr. Tony J. Howard.
Spring Creek Campus
J243
2800 E. Spring Creek Pkwy
Plano, Texas 75074

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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 10:00am-12:00pm
Mondays 4:00-6:00pm

Sections:

S03	TR	2:30-3:45pm	B112
S70	M	7-9:45pm	B111

Texts:

Keown, Damien. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
Knott, Kim. *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
Manning, Christen & Phil Zuckerman. *Sex & Religion*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2005.
Ruthven, Malise. *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
Solomon, Norman. *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
Woodhead, Linda. *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.

Note: Please do not attend class without bringing the assigned text(s). Copies may be found on reserve in the Library, but you must still acquire your own as soon as possible.

Course Description & Objectives:

The course offers an introduction to the five major living religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We will briefly examine the history of each tradition, but our primary focus will be phenomenological, the *lived experience* of each tradition as it grapples with such matters as the nature of God, the origin of evil, human responsibility, morality, and mortality. Upon successful completion of the course, you should have a working knowledge of the basic tenets of each tradition and should be able to express that knowledge through engaging class discussions and through critical writing. *This is a reading and writing intensive course, and it presumes college-level competency; your writing will be evaluated not only for content but also for clarity.*

Attendance and Late Work Policy:

Naturally, a higher ratio for success exists for those students who attend classes faithfully, participate fully, and complete assignments punctually. Learning to think critically and to write well comes from sharing our various responses to the material assigned, but if students are absent or unprepared, everyone suffers; so please come to class with the texts in hand and with the assignments read. If absent, please consult with a classmate regarding material missed. *Please do not contact me after the absence and ask, "Did I miss anything important?"* Most of your professors like to think what goes on in their classes is 'important,' and we do not like to repeat ourselves unnecessarily.

If attendance becomes a problem, however, you should discuss the situation with me *as soon as possible*. You have my office phone number and email address. Please do not wait until days after a series of absences and then expect a sympathetic ear. In general ***I do not accept late work nor allow makeup work*** unless you were hospitalized or otherwise incapacitated due to circumstances beyond your control. ***I do not offer extra credit***; everyone has the same opportunity to learn the material.

Please note you may repeat this course only once after receiving a grade, including W. If you drop the course before the census date—Tuesday 8 September 2009--you will not be penalized in regard to the repeat policy. If you withdraw from the course after the census date, a grade of W will be posted to your transcript and count as one attempt toward the repeat policy. **The last day to drop is Friday 16 October 2009.** Students who have stopped attending classes but have not officially withdrawn in the Registrar's Office by then will receive an "F" on their transcripts. Also note that students enrolled in Texas colleges/universities may drop a *maximum* of six courses (eighteen credit hours) during their *entire* college career.

Attending college is your *choice*; please make the most of it. I will offer everyone my utmost attention and will respect every point of view that is considerately expressed and seriously presented. Professors and students alike enjoy academic freedom, which gives us the opportunity to grow and learn from one another by allowing us the *freedom* to speak our minds without reservation. Show an interest, and I will go out of my way to deepen that interest; show apathy, and I will likely repay in kind.

Course Requirements:

Essay Exams (50%) You will be asked to write two formal, out-of-class essay exams (typed, double-spaced, using MLA format): one covering Oriental religions (Hinduism and Buddhism) and one covering the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Grading standards for college-level writing appear later in the syllabus.

Reading Quizzes (10%) Classes will sometimes begin with a reading quiz based on the day's assignment in order to assess how closely you are reading the text. These quizzes will range from the simple multiple-choice to the more involved short essay response. **Although I do not accept late quizzes nor allow makeups, at the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz grade.**

Response Paper (20%) Toward the end of the semester you will be asked to complete a five-page response paper (typed, double-spaced, using MLA format) on one of the following books:

Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*

Shalom Auslander, *Foreskin's Lament: A Memoir*

Pema Chodron, *When Things Fall Apart*

Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse, *What Makes You Not a Buddhist*

Philip Gulley & James Mulholland, *If Grace is True: Why God Will Save Every Person*

Christopher Moore, *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal*

Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*

Randy Klassen, *What Does the Bible Really Say About Hell*

Elaine Pagels, either *The Gnostic Gospels* or *Beyond Belief*

Mary Roach, *Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife*

Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*

J.S. Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*

Brad Warner, *Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies, & the Truth About Reality*

Alan Watts, *The Book on the Tabu Against Knowing Who You Are*

The response paper should demonstrate that you have read the book carefully and understand the author's thesis or theme. Some summary will be expected, but the bulk of the paper should be analytical, reflecting your evaluation of the book's strengths and weaknesses. Has the writer expressed him/herself clearly? What is particularly engaging about the work? Where do you most agree or disagree with the writer's position and why? These are just a few of the questions you might address. Again, *do not merely summarize the book; instead, respond to it.* Quote some passages that you find particularly meaningful and explain *why* they are meaningful. Would you recommend the book to someone? Why or why not? The Writing Center exists at each campus to help you with organization and editing, but don't procrastinate.

Final Exam (20%) During the scheduled final exam period, you will be asked to complete an objective comprehensive final. Please bring scantron & pencils.

Scale: A = 90>, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = <60

Plagiarism Policy: Other than sources documented and cited according to MLA format, all work submitted for a grade must be your own original work. Submitting another's words as your own is plagiarism and will result in a zero for the work involved. Further, the College may initiate disciplinary proceedings against students accused of academic dishonesty. Quote carefully and document fully in order to avoid even the *appearance* of plagiarism. Please section 508B in *English Simplified* for further information regarding plagiarism.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance: It is the policy of Collin County Community College to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals who are students with disabilities. This College will adhere to all applicable Federal, State and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the faculty member and/or the Services for Students with Disabilities at 972.881.5950 in a timely manner to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

Grading Standards for College-Level Writing

Closely graded work will indicate your strengths and weaknesses. I provide specific guidelines for matters of style and substance, and I encourage students to strive for clarity of expression in addition to depth of thought. **Clear writing mirrors clear thinking.** For additional help with writing, consider the free tutoring available in the Writing Centers on each campus. Also, the college offers free tutoring throughout the semester; phone 972.881.5128 for assistance.

Superior (A = 90-100, B = 80-89)

Note: Although "A" and "B" papers possess many of the same features, the style, originality and level of excellence of the "A" paper are exceptional.

Preparation: The student adapts his thinking to the form and requirements of the assignments, and develops his paper through preliminary outlines and drafts.

Contents: The paper contains a significant and central idea clearly defined and supported with concrete, substantial, and consistently relevant detail. The superior paper displays freshness and originality of perception; it moves through its ideas with an inevitability organic to its central idea.

Development: The paper engages attention and interest at the beginning, progresses by ordered and necessary stages, and ends with a conclusion that supports the bulk of the essay without being repetitive. Development is economical, original, well proportioned, and emphatic; paragraphs are coherent, unified and properly developed; transitions between main ideas are effective and logical.

Sentence Structure: Sentences are unified, coherent, forceful, and varied to promote a lively and interesting rhythm.

Diction: The language is distinctive, fresh, economical, and precise.

Grammar and Punctuation: (See the handout on the Basics of grammar and punctuation.) Correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics reflect clear and effective thinking.

Appearance: The superior paper is carefully proofread and correctly documented. It is typed or word-processed according to MLA style.

Average (C or 70-79)

The "C" paper is clear, competent, and controlled, but its style and originality are undistinguished.

Preparation: The paper contains evidence of at least one preliminary draft. The topic and content are clearly and competently adapted to the assignment.

Content: The central idea is apparent but too general, too familiar, or too limited. It is supported with concrete detail, though that detail may be occasionally repetitious, irrelevant, or sketchy.

Development: The plan of the paper is recognizable, but not developed or not consistently fulfilled. The essay might be disproportionately developed or exhibit an inappropriate emphasis. Transitions are clear but too abrupt, mechanical, or monotonous. The paragraphs are unified, coherent, and usually well developed.

Sentence Structure: The sentences are competent, but many lack force, variation in structure, or effective rhythm.

Diction: The language is appropriate to the paper's purpose, subject, and audience; it is not overly formal, abstract, or colloquial.

Grammar and Punctuation: Deviations from standard grammar, punctuation, spelling, or mechanics damage the paper's clarity and effectiveness.

Appearance: The "C" paper conforms to the guidelines established for the superior paper.

Unsatisfactory (D = 60-69, F = <60)

Though "D" and "F" papers may share the same faults (such as inadequate development or absence of a discernible thesis), the "F" paper exhibits an obvious breakdown in style and structure. A plagiarized paper will receive a zero.

Preparation: The student's ideas do not relate to the specific assignment, and there is little evidence of a preliminary draft.

Content: The central idea is missing, confused, superficial, or unsupported by concrete and relevant detail. Content is obvious, contradictory, or aimless.

Development: The essay has no clear and orderly stages and fails to emphasize and support the central idea. Paragraphs are typographical rather than structural; transitions between paragraphs are missing, unclear, ineffective or rudimentary.

Sentence Structure: Meaning is thwarted by sentences which are incoherent, incomplete, fused, monotonous, rudimentary, or redundant.

Diction: The level of language is inappropriate to the subject.

Grammar and Punctuation: Frequent mistakes in basic grammar, spelling, and punctuation obscure the ideas.

Appearance: An illegible presentation is always a liability.

Student Profile for PHIL 1304: Comparative Religion

Name _____ Birth date _____

Address _____
Street City Zip Code

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email Address _____

College ID # _____ What is your major? _____

Have you taken ENGL 1301? _____ When, Where? _____

What other courses are you taking this semester besides PHIL 1304?

Why are you taking PHIL 1304?

Please list five adjectives that describe you well; then choose one of them and write an in-depth paragraph describing why it fits you.

Religious Profile (Anonymous)

What is your religion? _____

Which terms best describe you? Circle all that apply:

Jewish Christian Muslim Hindu Buddhist
Agnostic Atheist Born-Again Fundamentalist Evangelical
Charismatic Pagan Liberal Conservative Moderate Radical

Other _____

Do you feel the need to convert others to your religion? Yes No

Do you believe in an afterlife? Yes No
(If “yes,” briefly explain)

Which of these statements best describes your approach to the Bible?

____ The Bible is literally true, the infallible, immutable Word of God, no if’s, and’s, or but’s.

____ The Bible was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, but it is not *literally* true in all respects. Some parts are to be taken as symbolic, open to interpretation.

____ The Bible is a work of poetry and myth, full of wisdom but not divinely inspired.

____ I have no opinion on the matter.

Do you feel religion and politics should be kept separate? Yes No

In whom or in what do you place your “ultimate trust”? Briefly explain

Calendar of Assignments for PHIL 1304.S70
Mondays 7:00pm – 9:45pm B111
Fall 2009

Reading assignments should be completed by the date assigned. Depending on how quickly you read and assimilate the material, each assignment should require an average of two hours for completion (excluding the essays, of course, which will require an additional commitment). Please try to budget your time wisely between employment, recreation, and education. For example, *if you work full-time (40 hours per week), you should not be enrolled for more than nine hours of college credit.* Be realistic, not sociopathic.

Monday 8/24: Introduction to course; Video: Joseph Campbell, *The Message of the Myth*

Monday 8/31: Hinduism (Knott, Chapters 1 – 6)

Monday 9/7: Labor Day Holiday

Monday 9/14: Hinduism (Knott, Chapters 7 – 9); Manning, Chapter 1 (“Sex & Religion: an Introduction”)

Monday 9/21: Hinduism (Manning, Chapter 2: Rita Sherma, “Hinduism”); Video: *330 Million Gods*

Monday 9/28: Hinduism Handout: Mahatma Ghandi, “I Am But a Seeker After Truth”; **Buddhism** (Keown, Chapters 1 – 2)

Monday 10/5: Buddhism (Keown, Chapters 3 – 6)

Monday 10/12: Buddhism (Keown, Chapters 7 – 9); Video: *Japan, Land of the Disappearing Buddha*

Friday 10/16: Last day to drop courses with a grade of “W.”

Monday 10/19: Buddhism (Manning, Chapter 3: Alan Sponberg, “Buddhism”); **Oriental Religion Essay assigned. Judaism** (Solomon, Introduction – Chapter 3)

Monday 10/26: Judaism (Solomon, Chapters 4 – 9; Manning, Chapter 5: Barbara Geller, “Judaism”)

Monday 11/2: Christianity (Woodhead, Introduction & Chapters 1 – 2); **Oriental Religion Essay due.**

Monday 11/9: Christianity (Woodhead, Chapters 3 – Conclusion)

Monday 11/16: Christianity (Manning, Chapter 6: Anthony LoPresti, “Christianity”);
Response Paper Due.

Monday 11/23: Islam (Ruthven, Chapters 1 – 6);
Abraham Religions Essay assigned.

Monday 11/30: Islam (Manning, Chapter 9, Larry Poston, “Islam”)

Monday 12/7: Abraham Religions Essay due & Final Exam

**Calendar of Assignments for PHIL 1304S03
Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:30-3:45pm B112**

Tuesday 8/25: Introduction to course.

Thursday 8/27: Video: Joseph Campbell, *The Message of the Myth*

Tuesday 9/1: Hinduism (Knott, Chapters 1 – 3)

Thursday 9/3: Hinduism (Knott, Chapters 4 – 6)

Tuesday 9/8: Hinduism (Knott, Chapters 7 – 9)

Thursday 9/10: Hinduism (Manning, Chapter 1 (“Sex & Religion: an Introduction”))

Tuesday 9/15: Hinduism (Manning, Chapter 2: Rita Sherma, “Hinduism”)

Thursday 9/17: Hinduism Video: *330 Million Gods*

Tuesday 9/22: Hinduism Handout: Mahatma Ghandi, “I Am But a Seeker After Truth”

Thursday 9/24: Buddhism (Keown, Chapters 1 – 2)

Tuesday 9/29: Buddhism (Keown, Chapters 3 – 4)

Thursday 10/2: Buddhism (Keown, Chapters 5 – 6)

Tuesday 10/6: Buddhism (Keown, Chapters 7 – 9)

Thursday 10/8: Buddhism Video: *Japan, Land of the Disappearing Buddha*

Tuesday 10/13: Buddhism (Manning, Chapter 3: Alan Sponberg, “Buddhism”);
assignment of Oriental Religion Essay.

Thursday 10/15: Judaism (Solomon, Introduction & Chapters 1 – 3)

Friday 10/16: Last day to drop courses with a grade of “W.”

Tuesday 10/20: Judaism (Solomon, Chapters 4 – 6)

Thursday 10/22: Judaism (Solomon, Chapters 7 – 9); **Oriental Religion Essay due.**

Tuesday 10/27: Judaism (Manning, Chapter 5: Barbara Geller, “Judaism”)

Thursday 10/29: Christianity (Woodhead, Introduction & Chapters 1 – 2)

Tuesday 11/3: Christianity (Woodhead, Chapters 3 – 4)

Thursday 11/5: Christianity (Woodhead, Chapters 5 – 6)

Tuesday 11/10: Christianity (Woodhead, Chapters 7 – Conclusion)

Thursday 11/12: Christianity (Manning, Chapter 6: Anthony LoPresti, “Christianity”);
Response Paper Due

Tuesday 11/17: Islam (Ruthven, Chapters 1 – 2)

Thursday 11/19: Islam (Ruthven, Chapter 3); **assignment of Abraham Religions Essay**

Tuesday 11/24: Islam (Ruthven, Chapters 4 –6)

Thursday 11/26: Thanksgiving Holiday

Tuesday 12/1: Islam (Manning, Chapter 9, Larry Poston, “Islam”)

Thursday 12/3: Abraham Religions Essay due

Thursday 12/10: PHIL 1304P03 Final Exam (2:30-4:30pm)