

Course Information

Course Number: PHIL 1304
Course Name: Introduction to World Religions
Institution: TBD
Section: TBD
Semester: TBD
Time: TBD
Location: TBD
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Information

Instructor: Professor Hill, M.A.
Email: Hill.Justin.Andrew@gmail.com
Office Hours: F, TBD, via Zoom
Website: HillJ.net
Annotations: HillJ.net/annotations/
Lectures: HillJ.net/teaching/phil-1304/

Communication Expectations

Email or LMS are preferred. LMS messages will send me extra notifications, so it may be faster. I will try to respond within 24 hours, but please allow up to 2 business days (48 hours, M-F) for a response. Please plan ahead and communicate early.

Course Description

This course introduces various world religions with parallel foci: philosophical features and socio-historic origins. The course accomplishes such an ambitious, cosmopolitan, unitarian introduction by surveying key *writings, insights, principles, commitments, and practices* from across the historical traditions of: the Indic religions (e.g., Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism), D/Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religions, Rastafarianism, indigenous Latin American

cosmologies (e.g., Mayan, Aztec, Pre-Incan, and Incan), Native American philosophy, western polytheism (e.g., Greek, Norse, and Egyptian), western philosophy, and decolonial indigenous religions.

The course is paced into four units, working against the east-west distinction: (i) Western Philosophy; i.e., an incisive, brief survey of metaphysical texts from Emerson, Bergson, Deleuze, Lingis, and Nancy; (ii) Immanent Eastern Religions, e.g., the Vedic and east Asian traditions — despite reductive falsehoods of orientalist east-west dichotomies; (iii) Transcendent Western Religions, e.g., Abrahamic monotheism, Persian Zoroastrianism, and Islamic Neoplatonism; and (iv) Decolonial Indigenous Religions, i.e., philosophies, cosmologies, and practices, e.g., Rastafarianism and writings from Anzaldua and Cordova

Course assignments include four in-person, timed, open-text essays; reading; weekly short response Exit Tickets; and handwritten annotations. Across the semester, each religion will answer three basic questions suggested to us by V.F. Cordova: (1) What is the world? (2) What is the human? (3) What is the human's *proper* way of being with the world? Philosophy answers the same questions with different resources.

Student Resources and Basic Needs

Students are humans first. To learn effectively you must have basic security: a roof over your head, a safe place to sleep, enough food to eat, and other necessary external goods. If you or another student you know are having trouble with any of those things, please talk with me or use the campus resources available.

Course Requirements

- Week 1 Launch
10%; 100 points.
 - 2.5%: Icebreakers [Week 1 Exit Ticket]
 - 7.5%: Unit 0: Syllabus Quiz
- In-Person Bluebook Essay Exams [60min]
72%; 720 points [18% each].
 - Unit 1: Western Philosophy
 - Unit 2: Immanent Eastern Religions
 - Unit 3: Transcendent Western Religions
 - Unit 4: Decolonial Indigenous Religions [Final]
- Handwritten Daily Work
18%; 180 points.
 - Exit Tickets (each week)
[Short Responses to Guiding Questions]
 - **9%; 22.5 points per unit.**
 - 2-5 sentences each week.
 - Two attempts, Pass/Fail [P/F].

- Handwritten Annotations (per unit)
[Print Assigned Readings, Annotate/Underline/Highlight, and Scan]
 - **9%; 22.5 points per unit.**
 - 2/3 of unit annotated.
 - Study Teacher Exemplar Annotations [TEA] for further guidance.
- Extra Credit
+12.5%; 125 points extra.
 - **2.5%:** Respondus LockDown Practice Quiz [January 25; Unit 0]
 - **5%:** Short Response to RPH with Prof. Casey [February 15; Unit 1]
 - **5%:** Critique of Material-Religious Artifact [April 19; Unit 4]

Webcam-recorded timed essay exams (60 minutes, 900 words), with access to your physical annotations, open on Monday, 12:01am, the week they are assigned and will close End of Day Sunday, 11:59pm. Tech issues are expected to be tested and problem-solved beforehand, so plan ahead with notes and practices.

In short, watch weekly lecture videos, study the assigned primary sources, and study for webcam essays.

Reading List

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera*, “*La herencia de Coatlícué / The Coatlícué State.*”
Bergson, Henri. *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, excerpts.
Cordova, V.F. *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V.F. Cordova*, excerpts.
Deleuze, Gilles. “Immanence: A Life.”
_____. “Zones of Immanence.”
Emerson, Ralph Waldo. “Acquaint Thyself First Hand with Deity.”
Lingis, Alphonso. *Violence and Splendor*, excerpts.
Nancy, Jean-Luc. “Of Divine Places.”
OER Materials, Lumen Learning, [World Religions created for Herkimer College](#), CC BY-NC-ND Philip A. Pecorino, *Philosophy of Religion: Online Textbook*, Ch. 2, available online [hosted by CUNY](#).
_____. Various URL articles.
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Course Learning Outcomes

Students will be given the opportunity to:

- 1) (*Knowledge Outcomes*)
 - a) become familiar with fundamental philosophical concepts;
 - b) become familiar with major philosophical traditions;
 - c) develop the ability to critically interpret difficult philosophical texts;
- 2) (*Skill Outcomes*)
 - a) develop the ability to reason and write critically about difficult philosophical texts and issues;
 - b) develop the ability to teach themselves from source texts without background knowledge;
- 3) (*Value Outcomes*)
 - a) reflect critically about ethical, political, aesthetic, and metaphysical [meta-ethical] issues;

- b) reflect critically about the value of knowledge and truth;
- 4) *(Citizenship and Professionalism Outcomes)*
- a) develop professionalism regarding punctuality, communication, and deliverables;
 - b) develop commonly agreed upon citizenship virtues and characteristics; and
 - c) develop the ability to understand contradictory perspectives and harmonize stakeholders.
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Grading Policy

Please refer to the current University Catalog for additional information regarding grades and course withdrawal policies. For this course, (i) weekly exit ticket short responses to the main idea or a choice of guiding questions, are graded on Pass/Fail [P/F] for accuracy, with two attempts; and (ii) webcam-recorded timed essay exams are graded according to the following scale (adapted from Dr. Robin James):

A (100)	Thorough and critical understanding of the issues – subtly summarizes the major issues while also offering insightful interpretation. Outstanding argumentation, organization, and writing (fluid presentation of ideas). No misunderstandings. Clearly above and beyond expectations. <i>Excellent presentation of key ideas.</i>
B (85)	Above average understanding, not as creative or exegetical as an A level product, nor does it capture all the ‘complexities’ of the issues. A thorough recapitulation of the text and/or discussion. Adequate argumentation, organization, and writing, with few presentational complications. <i>No misunderstandings of key ideas.</i>
C (75)	Basic understanding, <i>marked by one or more significant errors or mis-readings.</i> Confused, disorganized writing that may address lots of information, but does not thematize or interpret it. Does not respond directly to all components of prompt.
D (65)	Very basic grasp of the material, presented in a highly confused manner.
F (50)	No comprehension of the material, and/or an utterly incomprehensible paper.
M/INC (0)	Missing/Incomplete/AI-Use. All earnest efforts receive a minimum grade of 50.

Grading Weight Distribution

This class follows a 1000-point structure. However, note that there are 1125 total points available in the class, meaning there is an additional 12.5% worth of extra credit available in this course. Your grade will be categorized into buckets: A = 895+ points; B = 795-894.99 points; C = 695-794.99 points, etc.

The following point breakdown will be used to calculate your numerical grade:

{1125 points possible w/ extra credit}	1125 points	/ 1000 points
Webcam-Recorded Timed Essay Exams:	720 points	/ 1000 points
Unit 1: Western Philosophy	180 points	
Unit 2: Immanent Eastern Religions	180 points	
Unit 3: Transcendent Western Religions	180 points	

Unit 4: Decolonial Indigenous Religions [Final]	180 points
Weekly Work:	180 points / 1000 points
Exit Tickets [Short Responses to Guiding Questions]	90 points
Handwritten Annotations	90 points
Week 1 Launch	100 points / 1000 points
Icebreakers [Week 1 Exit Ticket]	25 points
Unit 0: Syllabus Quiz	75 points
Extra Credit:	125 points / 1000 points
Respondus LockDown Practice Quiz [Week 1]	25 points
Radical Philosophy Hour w/ Casey	50 points
Critique of Material-Religious Artifact	50 points

I reserve the right to curve exams but am more likely to create an extra credit debrief targeting specifics.

Grading Feedback Expectations

I will return grades via Canvas within three weeks after the exam date. For P/F Exit Ticket grading, I will try to grade your first attempt early so you can revise, so submit your first attempt early then let me know.

Late Work and Make-Up Work Policy

If something comes up that will interfere with your engaging class, **especially** for any of our four exam dates, please let me know sooner rather than later. However, if there is a present emergency, please deal with that first and contact me later — you need not, for example, email me from the emergency room.

Missing exams may be taken late, until the end of Week 14, but will be graded down by five letter grades (e.g., -50%). Missing exams taken late *until the end of Week 11* will be graded down by three letter grades (e.g., -30%), to encourage catching up early. Note the third exam can only be made-up at **-50%** and the final cannot be made-up. Exams missed for excused absences can of course be taken without deduction.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI use is not permitted in this course. AI use will result in an “M/INC” grade designation of 0 points, as this course is intended to teach you to think for yourself and to communicate your thinking without aid. Did you know AI causes (often rural) water depletion at its industrial data centers? Your brains can utilize 16 ounces of water (the amount consumed per query/prompt) better than the AI data centers can do so.

Course Schedule

Date	HTA Episode	Essential Readings	Assignments Due
Unit 0: Introduction <i>0.5-1 weeks</i>			
W1 01.19-25	0.1 – 0.3, 0.5	Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 19. No classes. Semester starts on January 20. Meet Your Professor. Syllabus. Essay Exams. Exit Tickets. Respondus. Icebreakers.	
	<i>Unit 0 Exam</i>	Unit 0 Exam, Syllabus Quiz. Opens Tuesday; closes Sunday, EOD.	Unit 0 Syllabus Quiz due End of Week 1. <u>Extra Credit:</u> Icebreakers and Respondus Practice Quiz due EOW1.
Unit 1: Western Philosophy <i>4 weeks</i>			
W2 01.26-02.01	1.1 – 1.5	Emerson, “Acquaint Thyself First Hand with Deity.”	
	1.6 – 1.7	Bergson, <i>Two Sources of Morality and Religion</i> , TBD.	
W3 02.02-08	15.1	Ibid., cont.	
		Ibid., cont.	
W4 02.09-15	TBD	Ibid., cont.	
	<i>Extra Credit</i> RPH: 5.1	Deleuze, “Immanence: A Life,” in <i>Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life</i> , pp. 25-32. Ibid., “Zones of Immanence,” in <i>Two Regimes of Madness</i> , pp. 266-69. Lingis, <i>Violence and Splendor</i> , excerpts.	Short Response to RPH Interview w/ Ed Casey [HTA 5.1], due EOW4.
W5 02.16-22		Nancy, “Of Divine Places,” in <i>The Inoperative Community</i> , pp. 110-50.	
		Unit 1 Exam, Western Philosophy. Opens Monday; closes Sunday, EOD. <i>NB: I will be OOO to present at the Central APA on Feb. 18-21. Thus, the exam will either be on Monday or will be administered online.</i>	Unit 1 Essay Exam, 60min, due EOW5. U1 Annotations.

Date	HTA Episode	Essential Readings	Assignments Due
		Unit 2: Immanent Eastern Religions <i>3 [4] weeks</i>	
W6 02.23- 03.01		Hinduism.	
		Jainism.	
W7 03.02-08		Buddhism.	
		Confucianism.	
		Taoism / Daoism.	
		Shintoism.	
W8 03.09-15		Spring Break, March 9-15. No classes.	
		Ibid., cont. No classes.	
W9 03.16-22		Sikhism.	
		Unit 2 Exam, Immanent Eastern Religions. Opens Monday; closes Sunday, EOD.	Unit 2 Essay Exam, 60min, due EOW9. U2 Annotations.
		Unit 3: Transcendent Western Religions <i>3 weeks</i>	
W10 03.23-29		Myths, Paganisms, Animism, and Polytheisms (e.g., Egyptian, Greek, Celtic, and Norse).	
		Judaism.	
W11 03.30- 04.05		Zoroastrianism.	
		Christianity.	Late Essay Exams Due for -30%.
		Spring Holiday, April 3-5. No classes.	
W12 04.06-12		Islam.	
		Unit 3 Exam, Transcendent Western Religions. Opens Monday; closes Sunday, EOD.	Unit 3 Essay Exam, 60min, due EOW12. U3 Annotations.

Date	HTA Episode	Essential Readings	Assignments Due
		Unit 4: Decolonial Indigenous Religions <i>4 weeks</i>	
W13 04.13-19		African Traditional Religions, Rastafarianism, and Decolonial Indigenous Religions. Indigenous Mesoamerican and Latin American Cosmologies (e.g., Olmec, Maya, Aztec, Zapotec, Pre-Inca [Moche, Nazca], and Inca).	
		Anzaldúa, <i>Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza</i> , Ch. 4, “ <i>La harenzia de Coatlícu / The Coatlícu State.</i> ”	Critique: Material- Religious Artifact, due EOW13.
W14 04.20-26		Cordova, <i>How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V.F. Cordova.</i>	
		Ibid., cont.	Late Essay Exams Due for -50%.
W15 04.27- 05.03		Ibid., cont.	
		Ibid., cont.	

Final Exams
0.5-1 weeks

W16 05.04		No class due to Reading Day. Office Hours by appointment (please utilize!).	
05.05-07		Unit 4 Exam, Decolonial Indigenous Religions (Final). Hybrid: Wednesday, 05.06, 2p, Erath Campus, Rm7. Online Asynchronous: Opens Tuesday, 05.05, at 12:01am; closes Sunday, 05.10, EOD (11:59pm).	Unit 4 Essay Exam, 60min, May 6, 2pm. U4 Annotations.

Important Dates

- **Holidays and No-Class Days**
 - *March 9-15: Spring Break. No classes.*
 - *April 3-5: Spring Holiday. No classes.*
 - *May 4: Reading Day. No class.*
- **Grade-related Dates (Exams)**
 - *January 20-25: Syllabus Quiz [Unit 0]*
 - *January 20-25: Practice Respondus [Unit 0]*

- *February 16-22: Western Philosophy Essay Exam*
 - *March 16-22: Immanent Eastern Religions Essay Exam*
 - *April 6-12: Transcendent Western Religions Essay Exam*
 - *May 5-10: Decolonial Indigenous Religions Essay Exam (Final)*
 - **Grade-related Dates (Make-Ups)**
 - *April 5: All Missing Essay Exams Due for -30%*
 - *April 26: All Missing Essay Exams Due for -50%*
 - **Finals Week and Commencement**
 - *April 29: Last Day of Class*
 - *May 4: Reading Day*
 - *May 5-10: Final Exam*
 - *After Week 16: Commencement Weekend*
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Learning Resources

My Office Hours are listed above; you are always welcome to ask me questions; I encourage discourse. You are welcome to stop by to ask about assigned readings, continue class discussions, get feedback on essays and term papers in advance, get clarity with the assigned reading, or meet my German Shepherd.

[The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy \(SEP\)](#) is better than AI (*use Ctrl+F to find keywords instead of AI*). This is a great secondary source if you are struggling with the primary sources assigned in class. You can also use the SEP to help identify promising secondary sources, topics for term papers, and the broader discourse, context, and interpretation around assigned primary sources, both for reading and for writing.

Disclaimer

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus and modify the information given above at any time during the semester. All changes will be announced via the LMS, which should hopefully forward to your email.
