

RELIGION 100.08A – INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION – SPRING, 2006

INSTRUCTOR: Hoyt Oliver. Office: Humanities 204

TEXTS: Livingston, Anatomy of the Sacred (AS); Hanh, The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching (HBT); Esposito, Islam: The Straight Path (ISP)

REQUIREMENTS: 5 tests, each 15%; one paper/field visit report, 25%. **Attendance is expected.**

Each unexcused absence over 3 deducts 2 points from average. 3 tardies=1 absence.

The Honor Code applies to all work in this course; work must be your own, & proper reference credits given.

DATE

ASSIGNED READINGS

Section 1. How Do We Study Religion?

Wed Jan 18 Introductory session. Film, "Baraka"

Fri Jan 20 AS, chs 1 & 2

Mon Jan 23 AS, ch 3

Wed Jan 25 AS, ch 4

Fri Jan 27 AS, chs 5

Mon Jan 30 AS, ch 6

Wed Feb 1 AS, ch 7

Fri Feb 3 review

Mon Feb 6 **Test # 1**

Wed Feb 8 AS, ch 8

Fri Feb 10 AS, ch 9 **Turn in choice of religious group you will study**

Mon Feb 13 AS, ch 10

Wed Feb 15 AS, ch 11

Fri Feb 17 AS, ch 12

Mon Feb 20 AS, ch 13

Wed Feb 22 AS, ch 14

Fri Feb 24 **Test # 2**

Section 2. Buddhism

Mon Feb 27 film on Buddhism

Wed Mar 1 HBT, chs 1-8

Fri Mar 3 HBT, chs 9-12

Mon Mar 6 HBT, chs 13-16

Wed Mar 8 HBT, chs 17-21

Fri Mar 10 HBT, chs 22-25

Mon Mar 13 – Fri Mar 17 – spring recess, no classes

Mon Mar 20 HBT, chs 26-28 **Turn in draft of research on religious group, with references**

Wed Mar 22 Film on Zen Buddhism

Fri Mar 24 review

Mon Mar 27 **Test # 3**

Section 3. Islam

Wed Mar 29 Film on Islam

Fri Mar 31 ISP, ch 1

Mon Apr 3 ISP, ch 2

Wed Apr 5 ISP, ch 3

Fri Apr 7 ISP, ch 3

Mon Apr 10 ISP, ch 4

Wed Apr 12 ISP, ch 5

Fri Apr 14 ISP, ch 6

Mon Apr 17 review

Wed Apr 19 **Test # 4**

TERM PAPERS DUE (2-point penalty for each day turned in late)

Section 4. Sharing What We Have Learned

Fri Apr 21 class reports

Mon Apr 24 class reports

Wed Apr 26 class reports

Fri Apr 28 class reports

Mon May 1 class reports

(**Note:** information from class reports will be major part of Test # 5)

At scheduled time for Final: Test # 5 (Choice of comprehensive essay + class reports material)

RELIGION 100: REPORT ON STUDY OF A RELIGIOUS GROUP

The research/field visit assignment for Religion 100, Introduction to Religion, has three purposes:

- 1) to enable students to experience a tradition very different from their own
- 2) to familiarize students with library and internet resources for the study of religion
- 3) to enable students to apply insights and methods from class to study of a specific religion

Procedure:

- A) Choose a religious tradition radically different from your own religious background. It may be a different world religion (e.g, a Christian studying Hinduism), or it may be another extreme within your own tradition (e.g., an Orthodox Jew attending a Reform service with a female rabbi).
- B) In the **library and on the internet**, do research on the history, beliefs, and practices of the religion you have chosen. Make use of standard reference works on religion, such as the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Oxford Dictionary of Religions, HarperSanFrancisco Dictionary of Religions, etc. (General encyclopedias are not acceptable). Study also books, articles, pamphlets, etc., pertaining to your specific group. Find internet sources from the religion you have chosen. Pay attention to what is especially important to that specific group. Is it practice, beliefs, history, ritual, experience? **Write six to twelve pages** from your research, and turn it in on date indicated on syllabus. This is a rough draft; comments will be made, and you will be able to revise it before turning it in as part of your final paper. It will be graded then. ***You must furnish a list of references, and use proper reference note and bibliographic form; plagiarism is an Honor offense! Every time you use someone else's ideas you must give credit, even when you are not quoting exact words!***
- C) **Attend at least one worship, prayer, or meditation service** of the group you have chosen. Participate actively, and write up notes on what happened. (Guidance will be given on possibilities for field visits, and it is desirable that, if possible, you attend with fellow students of the faith you have chosen.)
- D) **Have in-depth, extensive conversations with at least two members** of your chosen group. Let them tell you what's important to them in their faith. Write up what you learned in your conversations.
- E) **Combine research, report on worship service, and report on conversations into your final paper.** You may have separate sections, or weave the three together, but be sure to indicate sources for what you put in your paper. **All three parts of this assignment are important – research, worship, and conversations!**
- F) Turn in paper on date indicated on syllabus. (Papers are due at class time, and 2 points will be deducted for each day late, including weekends.)
- G) Alone or with other students who have studied the same religion, **present oral reports to class** on what you have learned. Information from these reports will be a large part of the material covered on Test # 5. **Furnish a printed or learnlink summary of your oral report to all class members.**
- H) Criteria for credit on this assignment include: Did you risk really experiencing a faith practice strange to you? Did you catch the special "flavor" of this faith, of what is important to its adherents? Did you use scholarly resources in your study, and did you learn how to do research on religion through the library? Did you genuinely participate in the worship/prayer/meditation, or were you just a tourist? Did you engage in open, thoughtful conversation with people of this faith? Did you reflect on how this faith compares with or contrasts with your own experience? Did you use proper reference credits?

SUGGESTIONS ON STUDYING FOR RELIGION COURSES

Hoyt Oliver, Oxford College of Emory University

I've been addicted to education all my life, so what I'm passing on to you all comes mostly out of experience; I'm not bothering to back it up with references to all the brilliant scholarly studies on learning. My grandmother was my first grade teacher; she'd gotten me hooked on reading by the time I was four, and I haven't been able to escape learning since. Anyway, it's fun to follow the Golden Rule of Teaching: "Do Unto Others As Was Done Unto You!" Here's some suggestions that have worked pretty well for me:

ON STUDYING TEXTBOOKS:

1. When you first get a book for a course, take a little time for a preview. Look at the table of contents to see where you're going. Then speed-read through the book, putting your mind in neutral, just flipping the pages as fast as suits you and letting key headings, terms, charts, pictures, etc. register without stopping to think. Depending on the book, the subject matter, and your already-existing familiarity with the field, this could take from three minutes to an hour.
2. Read the portion assigned on the course syllabus BEFORE the date it's to be discussed in class, BUT DON'T UNDERLINE ANYTHING ON FIRST READING. You don't yet know what are the key points.
3. After class discussion, or at a later time, go back for a more intentional study of the material. Underline or highlight, make marginal notes, whatever helps you. BUT DON'T LEAVE OUT STEP 4:
4. WRITE OUT FOR YOURSELF A CHART of the chapter or other unit you're studying. Put it in organized "picture" form, with clear sections, very short phrases summing up content, diagrams that capture the structure. There are several reasons to do this: a) you're having to be intentional, making the effort to identify the structure of the material; b) you're an active learner, using your hands as well as your eyes and ears; c) since you've made the effort to chart, chances are that when you come to be tested on the material if you recall a part of it, the whole picture will come back to you.
5. KEEP A SECTION OF YOUR NOTES FOR KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS. In religion courses, you're likely to have to learn a large technical vocabulary of philosophical concepts and terms in foreign languages such as Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit, and Chinese. Identify these terms, from boldface or italicized words in texts, terms presented in class, glossaries in textbooks, indexes, etc. Try writing out short, brilliant explanations of the terms.

ON STUDYING IN GENERAL, AND ON STUDYING FOR EXAMS:

1. Establish for yourself a disciplined, orderly schedule for studying, so that there's no question that at a certain time on a certain day, you'll be in your study-place doing just studying. (I myself don't follow this advice much.)
2. It's much better to come back to the same material two or three times in short sessions than to go past your attention-endurance-limit in long sessions.
3. KEEP UP WITH YOUR COURSES ALL ALONG, DON'T PUT OFF STUDYING AND TRY TO CRAM BEFORE SCHEDULED EXAMS! (I have little sympathy for students who try to stay up studying the night before a test, and then gripe because the electricity or the fire alarm went off.) It's much more relaxing and stress-reducing to do your studying regularly, review well in advance of a test, then the day or evening before an exam, quit studying and do something relaxing to you. (When I was an Oxford student, I used to camp out in the woods during finals with no textbooks, just coming in for tests.)
4. If you find it helpful to study together with fellow class members, STUDY TOGETHER EARLY, NOT ON THE NIGHT BEFORE A TEST. Save your final review to do on your own. One reason for this is that, if you're studying together and somebody asks about some information, when you give them an answer

your mind goes, "Whew! I knew that one!" and LETS GO OF IT! So you need to come back to recharge the brain-cells by yourself after studying together.

Study suggestions for religion courses: page two

5. In Oliver courses, students get their exam papers back. There may be old tests floating around the campus for the course you're taking. I don't mind if you look at old exams, but BEWARE: IN MY RELIGION COURSES, THE QUESTIONS MIGHT BE THE SAME, BUT THE RIGHT ANSWERS COULD CHANGE EVERY SEMESTER!

ON WRITING PAPERS:

1. A major term paper assignment in a course should take weeks, not hours or days, to do. Start thinking and exploring right away, and give it time to emerge. My image of working on a paper or a lecture is a **funnel** – wide at the top, then narrowing down to the spout where it finally pours out. Start big, just exploring, and make lots of notes on scratch paper, and coming back to it often; keep on finding out relevant materials and jotting down ideas that pop into your head, without any clear decision yet on where you'll end up.
2. When you have that large mess of stuff to work with, look at it and see what pattern starts to emerge. Make tentative charts, grouping together related ideas in possible sections. Play with tentative outlines until you see what are the really important points you want to include.
3. There's a difference between **reports** and **term (research) papers**. Reports are like the assignment in Religion 100, where you learn about a religious group, visit a worship service, talk with people, then do a **descriptive report** on what you have learned. In a **research paper**, such as the major assignment for Religion 332 or Religion 200, there needs to be a **central thesis** which is discussed in an **analytical**, not a descriptive, way in the paper. In preparing research papers, you should work hard to focus on the central point you're trying to make. You should be able to state it in a sentence or two, and it should appear clearly in the first paragraph of your paper.
4. **You must give proper reference credit within your papers to every source of information used, in such a form that the reader can see clearly what are your own thoughts and what you have used from other sources.** This means making reference notes for information used indirectly or summarized, not just words quoted verbatim from your sources. You may use any of several standard forms of referencing: parenthetical, footnotes, endnotes, etc, just so your style is consistent. Papers should contain a page of Works Cited with proper bibliographic information. Consult with Library staff about guides to referencing styles.
5. You may receive help from the Writing Center with your written assignments. Use this resource!
6. Sorry, but I will no longer accept papers written in Urdu. I don't know that language very well.
7. Papers are to be turned in on the date specified in syllabus. There will be points-off penalties for every day turned in late (including weekends).

“GOALS” FOR RELIGION COURSES
Hoyt Oliver, Oxford College of Emory University

Our esteemed Dean has pointed out to me that, for purposes of accreditation, documentation, accountability, and other academic measurement procedures, all our course syllabi need to include “goals” for the course. Okay, that’s possible. **But** I must set a context by saying that all the spiritual paths with which I am familiar tell me that when I try to achieve salvation, or moksha, or enlightenment by my own efforts and willpower, I haven’t a hope of success! You all are most welcome to set for yourselves lesser goals, such as gaining information, getting a grade of “B,” learning religious practices, satisfying a uniform requirement, and the like – and if you do the course work, you’ll probably achieve that kind of goal.

Krishna says it better than I can, speaking to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita:

“Foolish men talk of religion
in cheap, sentimental words,
leaning on the scriptures: ‘God
speaks here, and speaks here alone.’

.....
You have a right to your actions,
But never to your actions’ fruits.
Act for the action’s sake.
And do not be attached to inaction.

Self-possessed, act
Without any thought of results,
Open to success or failure.
This equanimity is yoga.

Action is far inferior
To the yoga of insight, Arjuna.
Pitiful are those who, acting,
Are attached to their action’s fruits.

The wise man lets go of all
Results, whether good or bad,
And is focused on the action alone.
Yoga is skill in actions.” (Translation by Stephen Mitchell)

All that said, here are some “results” I hope will happen for you in my religion classes:

- You will be enabled to question the religion of your upbringing, and come back to it with deeper insight.
There is no such thing as second-hand faith.
If I’m uptight about religion it isn’t faith, it’s addiction.
- You will encounter other world-views and religions, and need to ask questions such as,
“Is there any one ‘right’ faith?” “Are all religions talking about the same truth?”
Wer eine religion kennt, kennt keine. (Max Mueller)
If I know only one religion, I know none.
- You will experience the intellectual frustration and delight of having to make connections between religious belief-systems and other word-games such as science, history, art – and arrive at some sense of wholeness/holiness.
Religion is to spirituality as technology is to science
There’s a God-shaped (w)hole in my universe!
- You will learn a huge vocabulary of technical jargon in religions from which you can spout terms to impress your friends and relatives and show them that your tuition may be well-spent:
- *satori—OM—transcendence—immanence—eschatology—prajnaparamita—ontology—incarnation—avatar—theodicy—bhakti—ruach—pneuma—Tao—ad infinitum! **And, have fun!***

