

Las Positas College  
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## Course Outline for RELS 1

### RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

Effective: Fall

#### I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

RELS 1 — RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD — 3.00 units

Introduction to religion by examining several religions; basic principles of each shown by fundamental scriptures and works in the visual and musical arts.

3.00 Units Lecture

#### Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

#### Discipline:

	<u>MIN</u>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	54.00

#### II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

#### III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

#### IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

**Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:**

1. Formulate reasons for the existence of religion;
2. Compare and contrast the use of religious symbols in various traditions;
3. Describe patterns among religions;
4. Apply a multidisciplinary approach to religious studies;
5. Identify the basic beliefs of several world religions;
6. Express the function of religion in the local community;
7. Analyze the use of religious motifs in literature and art.

#### V. CONTENT:

- A. Understanding Religion
  1. Why is there religion?
    - a. Speculations on the sources of religion
    - b. Key characteristics of religion
    - c. Meanings of the sacred
    - d. Religious symbolism
  2. Are there patterns among religions?
    - a. Focus of beliefs and practices
    - b. Religious views of the world and life
    - c. Religious views of male and female
    - d. Multidisciplinary approaches to study of religion
- B. Oral Religions
  1. Discovering oral religions
    - a. Past obstacles to appreciation of oral religions
    - b. Modern recovery of oral religions
    - c. Patterns in oral religions
- C. Hinduism
  1. Origins of Hinduism
  2. The Upanishads and the Axial Age
  3. Living spiritually in the everyday world
  4. Devotional Hinduism
- D. Jainism
  1. Origins of Jainism
  2. Jain ethics and practices
  3. Jain scriptures
  4. Jain art and architecture
- E. Sikhism
  1. Nanak and the origins of Sikhism
  2. Development of Sikhism
  3. Sikh scriptures

- 4. Sikhism and the modern world
- F. Taoism
  - 1. Origins of philosophical Taoism
  - 2. Basic teachings of philosophical Taoism
  - 3. Religious Taoism
  - 4. Taoism and the modern world
- G. Confucianism
  - 1. Living according to Confucian values
  - 2. Confucian literature
  - 3. Development of Confucianism
  - 4. Confucianism and the arts
- H. Shinto
  - 1. Origins and historical development of Shinto
  - 2. Essentials of Shinto belief
  - 3. Shinto religious practice
  - 4. Shinto and the arts
- I. Judaism
  - 1. Jewish and Biblical history
  - 2. Jewish belief and religious practice
  - 3. Development of Rabbinical Judaism
  - 4. Judaism in the modern world
- J. Christianity
  - 1. Life and teachings of Jesus
  - 2. Historical development of Christianity
  - 3. Christian practice
  - 4. Christianity and the arts
- K. Islam
  - 1. Essentials of Islamic law and philosophy
  - 2. Historical development of Islam
  - 3. Islam and the modern world
  - 4. Islam and the arts
- L. Religious Search in the Modern World
  - 1. Modern influences on the future of religion
  - 2. Recurring challenge of change
  - 3. New religious phenomena
  - 4. Eclectic spirituality

#### VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. **Field Trips** -
- C. Multi-media presentations & analysis
- D. Group Discussion
- E. **Student Presentations** -
- F. Course Readings

#### VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Reading
  - 1. Read Chapter 1, "Understanding Religion," and be prepared to discuss why religion is important to human existence.
  - 2. Read Chapter II, "Discovering Oral Religions," and be prepared to explain the place of shamanism, sacrifice, and magic in oral religions.
- B. Brief writing assignments
  - 1. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast 3 significant teachings of Jesus and the Buddha.
  - 2. Visit a local museum and write a short essay about one work of art with a religious theme or subject.
- C. Group discussion
  - 1. In your groups, read the 1885 Statement of Principles of Reform Judaism and compare and contrast that statement with the 1999 statement. In what ways might the changes in the two statements relate to changes in the cultural experiences of the Jewish community during that time? Write down your ideas.
  - 2. As a group, read the five Zen koans in your textbook and discuss the ways in which the ideas presented in those koans relate to the principles of Zen Buddhism discussed in class and your textbook. Write down your ideas.
- D. Student presentations
  - 1. Divide into groups of four. Working with your group, prepare a presentation on one of the world religions that was formed after 1600. Explain the religion using William Young's model of religious functions, and compare and contrast this religion with the historical religions that preceded it.
  - 2. Take one question from the midterm review sheet. With your group develop a poster board presentation that answers that question, offers illustrations of your point, and raises one question that has not yet been addressed in the discussion of your topic.
- E. Multi-media presentations and analysis
  - 1. After viewing America of the Amish discuss what you see as the similarities and differences between the Amish belief system and that of other traditional divisions of Christianity. Take notes on your discussion.
  - 2. Discuss three ways the speakers in Dennis Wholey's documentary Interfaith Dialogue recommend cooperative interaction between people of diverse religious backgrounds. Discuss the challenges and advantages that might arise from such dialogue. Take notes on your discussion.
- F. Term Paper
  - 1. Choose one major world religion to analyze. Discuss the central beliefs of that religion, and then show how those beliefs have been utilized to address central human problems in the contemporary world.
  - 2. Select two major world religions that we have discussed this term. In your final paper compare and contrast their views using

four of the elements found in William Young's model of religious functions.

#### VIII. EVALUATION:

##### A. **Methods**

1. Exams/Tests
2. Papers
3. Oral Presentation
4. Group Projects

##### B. **Frequency**

- One to two midterm exams
- One final exam at the end of the term
- Three to Five brief writing assignments
- Three to Five collaborative learning papers
- Two to Four multimedia presentation and analysis papers
- One to two student presentations

#### IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Champion, Selwyn, and Dorothy Short. *The World's Great Religions: An Anthology of Sacred Texts*. 1st ed., Dover, 2003.
2. Hopfe, Lewis, and Mark Woodward. *Religions of the World*. 11th ed., Prentice Hall, 2008.
3. Molloy, Michael.. *Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change*. 4th ed., McGraw Hill, 2006.
4. Van Voorst, Robert. *Anthology of World Scriptures*. 1st ed., Wadsworth, 2008.

#### X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: