PHIL 2110: Religions of the World  
Semester: Spring 2017  
Location: online  
Meeting Time: asynchronous – no set meeting times

Instructor: D. Clint Johnson  
Office: Social Science Building #4005  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 7-9PM  
Office Phone: 770-578-6294  
Email: djohn151@kennesaw.edu

Course Communication – For questions about the course, I am always available by email at djohn151@kennesaw.edu. I will respond within two days to email. Written assignments will be graded and returned within two weeks after they are due. Please use this email address instead of the D2L client as I can check it more frequently. You may also contact me via Skype. Look me up by my email address (djohn151@kennesaw.edu) chat during office hours or outside of office hours if we make arrangements to do so by email.

Electronic Communications. The University provides all KSU students with an “official” email account with the address “students.kennesaw.edu.” As a result of federal laws protecting educational information and other data, this is the sole email account you should use to communicate with your instructor or other University officials.

Course Description:  
The course is a study of selected world religions with concentration on the origin and major periods of the conceptual, scriptural, and doctrinal development of these religions. Some topics include the nature and identity of religious experience, hermeneutics, mysticism, religious practice, and the place of religion in contemporary society.  
From Catalog at: http://catalog.kennesaw.edu/content.php?catoid=24&navoid=2024

Required Reading:  

The Sharpe volume is our primary “textbook.” It’s a narrative of the history of comparative studies in religion. In addition to these texts, we will have a number of readings available online and in the course packet.

The materials in the course are specifically targeted to help up get to the heart of why the different periods and religions are challenging for scholars to understand. Each module in the course will build from the reading assignments. The lecture is designed to explicate the issues
involved in understanding and contextualizing the reading materials and religious traditions. Often times, we will need to begin by breaking down barriers in the form of our tendencies to think that other traditions are too easily understood using our existing categories and modes of thought.

**Prerequisites:**
Successful completion of all Learning Support English requirements, including ENGL 1101, if required.

**Attendance Policy:**
Students are solely responsible for managing their enrollment status in a class; nonattendance does not constitute a withdrawal. If you do not complete a graded assignment, you will be assigned a grade of NA (Never attended).

Since this is an asynchronous, fully online course, we have no fixed meeting times. However, you are still responsible for weekly discussion board posts. To adequately complete this assignment, you will need to keep up with the weekly lectures and readings.

You will see all of the relevant course readings, lectures and assignments for each week in the learning module(s) labeled for that week. In attempt to simulate the face-to-face learning environment of a classroom, I have recorded video versions of the lectures, corresponding roughly to the number and duration (minus discussion) of class meetings that you would expect from a course that meets in person. Also in effort to recreate the classroom environment, I have created a PDF file for each lecture that corresponds to the kind of outline material and key terms that I normally write on the board during class. The PDF files are designed to supplement the lectures, and they by no means summarize or replace the lectures.

**Electronic Devices Policy:**
Aside from the computer that you use to access the course, no other electronic devices are allowed while you take the exams. The only online material you should have open during an exam is the exam on the course website. This corresponds with the general policy that no electronic devices are allowed during the exams for the traditional version of this course.

**Technological Proficiency:**
Since this is an entirely online course, the minimum for computer proficiency is naturally somewhat higher than it might be for a traditional course. I expect that you will have consistent access to an internet connection with a computer and browser capable of displaying the course website for this class. You will also need software that is capable of playing the video lectures (H.264 codec). This is standard for Apple’s devices and is supported by Windows as well. Some familiarity with discussion boards and threads is also assumed.

**Technological Support:**
If you are having technical difficulties with the course, please let me know. I will help with any issues you have if possible. For technical issues with D2L itself, please refer to the Kennesaw State Help Desk at [http://learnonline.kennesaw.edu/resources/tech.php](http://learnonline.kennesaw.edu/resources/tech.php). When students tell me
that they are having trouble loading the videos, audio files or other course content, my first recommendation is always to try a different web browser and then a different computer.

**Course Assessments/Assignments:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly writing (discussion boards)</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Due by 11:59PM on ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm (topics 1-12)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Each Sunday, January 22 – April 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Open from Monday February 27 – Friday March 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (topics 13-25)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>April 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Open from May 2-8</td>
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**DISCUSSION BOARDS:**
Each week, you will be graded on your participation on the class’ discussion board. For each discussion board, you will be expected to do the following:

1. **Summarize the ideas you found most important and challenging from the readings.**
2. **Explain the ideas:** In your own words, work through the details of what the challenges are and how you are responding to them. Use this space as a vehicle to think through and refine your understanding of the texts and traditions.

A substantive paragraph for each is expected, totaling about 500 words for each post. Note that these are intended to be *informal* and do not need to be treated like academic papers. Don’t be intimidated by the amount of writing. This is informal writing. Most of you probably write emails that are longer than this long on a regular basis.

Though your grade for this assignment will come from your posts, you are also encouraged to respond to other students’ posts. I track discussion board activity (time spent and posts made) carefully because it is a good indication that students are putting in the needed time and effort into the course. If I see that you are responding to others’ posts in a thoughtful way, *I take this into consideration when rounding grades at the end of the course*. I have rounded course grades up several points in the past when I saw that students were truly putting in a lot of effort into the discussion boards. You can think of this like an extra credit assignment for the course.

Since these posts are designed to facilitate your thinking about the material we cover and take the place of class discussion, **they must be done on time**. Late submissions may receive up to half credit. Posts will be graded each month.

**In summary:**

1) Post on the modules we are covering that week in class
2) One post per module – so, one post per discussion board
   25 total for the whole course = 25 modules × 1 post each
3) Your posts for that week are due by Sunday night by 11:59pm
For the first week, since people will still be shuffling their schedules, the posts for those modules are not due until the second Sunday at 11:59pm.

**Discussion Board Rubric:**

- **90-100%:** Thoughtful, insightful, substantive posts that fulfil the parameters of the assignment. The comments that you make and detail that you include clearly evidence your engagement with the material.
- **80-90%:** Posts which either do not fulfill the parameters of the assignment or are weak and lack detailed explanation and analysis sections will be given 80% of the value of the assignment. Such posts indicate that you did not fully read the assignment or spend as much time considering the ideas.
- **70-80%:** Posts that are significantly weak and do not meet the criteria for the assignment. Such posts indicate that you did not read much of the assignments or engage very thoughtfully with the material.
- **Under 70%:** These posts have a significant shortcoming: either making only superficial, brief comments, showing that you did not read the assignment or give thought to the ideas contained therein.

**Discussion Board Etiquette:** Please remember that these discussion boards are part of a university course and that the other people posting are your fellow students. In other words, you should interact with them with the courtesy and consideration that you would if you were sitting next to them in class. This does not mean that you shouldn’t disagree – this is philosophy, after all. If you do disagree with someone, simply remember to do so in a respectful manner.

**Essay on Religious Change over Time:**

Choose a specific change between two particular time periods in the history of a single religion and describe that change in detail. Your detail of what the change is should be in service of the thesis of your paper which addresses **why** the change happened and what may have contributed to it. The assignment should be long enough to discuss the topic in some detail, probably 5-10 pages – when in doubt, more (relevant!) detail about the change is better. This is a targeted research paper that is intended to be an exercise in fleshing out the detail of a particular slice of religious history. This assignment is a miniature version of the same process and product that you will see in religious studies articles and books. You will be expected to consult the secondary literature (academic journals and books) on your topic. I recommend searching for articles and books through the KSU library (many of which are available online). You can also get assistance by visiting the library and talking with the staff directly. For philosophy: [http://libguides.kennesaw.edu/philosophy](http://libguides.kennesaw.edu/philosophy). The librarians can be very helpful in finding material that is relevant to what you are researching.

Final due: **April 21**
Last day for drafts (optional): **April 14**

The structure of the assignment should be as follows:

1) Title
2) Introduction to the topic and brief encapsulation of what it is and what significance it has.
3) Description of the change itself, appealing to any relevant figures in religious and philosophical history
4) Argument for why the change occurred

Rubric for the essay:
- Papers that have quality versions of all of the sections listed above will receive an A (90-100%) for the assignment. To achieve that level, you must have “done your homework” in reading the appropriate secondary literature that is relevant to your topic. It must be clear that you have understood the relevant pieces of history, accurately represented the tradition and engaged the secondary literature on the topic. Your presentation must be clear and succinct. In discussing the material, insightful and well researched, clearly presented writing will achieve the highest marks.
- As one or more sections shows some weakness or incompleteness, the grade falls from an A. An A- (90-92%) to B+ (87-89%) level paper is one that is likely complete, but lacking in minor ways in one or more areas.
- A B- (80-82%) to B (83-86%) level paper is one that is lacking in significant ways, possibly including an incomplete understanding of how the ideas work.
- A C (74-76%) to C+ (77-79%) level paper has significant problems, either with sections missing or substantial inaccuracies in presentation or gaps in research.
- A C- (70-72%) and below (0-69%) level paper is one that is significantly deficient in a number of areas.

Important Note: Personal opinions and personal religious beliefs will not be graded as right or wrong. The written assignments are not such that you must “agree with the professor” to do well. This does not, however, mean that “anything goes.” If you are giving serious thought to the topic, if you have done adequate research, and if you can express your ideas clearly, you will do well.

DO NOT QUOTE WIKIPEDIA – Wikipedia is a great resource to start with if you know nothing about a topic. It is not, however, good as a formal academic resource. For this class, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is much better and more reliable.

DO NOT QUOTE THE DICTIONARY – The dictionary is not an authority on anything other than the common usage of words. No philosophical debate of any substance has ever been resolved by looking in the dictionary.

Use of outside sources: aside from the source material for the structured readings and the source material for your philosophical analysis, you are not required to use any other outside sources, though you may cite additional sources in your commentary if it helps to elucidate a point that you are making.

SUBMITTING WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:
You must submit your essays on the Desire2Learn course website. Writing will be automatically checked for plagiarism by the Turnitin.com service. The assignment will be marked and returned via the website so that both the student and the instructor have dated copies
of the assignment. You must log back into the website to see your graded paper and comments. Assignments submitted by email will not be graded unless this has already been discussed with the instructor. For more detail on the written assignments, see the rubrics at the end of this document.

**DRAFT POLICY:**
Up to one week before a paper is due, the student may elect to submit a draft of the paper to the instructor by email. Comments will be returned with the paper. I am available via email, during office hours and other times by appointment to go over the comments and answer additional questions. If you have concerns about your writing ability, organization, understanding of the topic or are interested in sharpening your paper to get the best grade possible, turning in a draft and revising your paper before it is due is an excellent way to improve your grade. Yes, this policy is very generous – it rewards students who are willing to put the time in. I will go back and forth with you on email as many times as you like to perfect your assignments. This doesn’t result in all of my students getting an A simply because people (for some reason) choose not to do it! In addition to submitting drafts, working with the writing center on campus is a great way to improve your writing and chances of success with the paper: [http://www.kennesaw.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.kennesaw.edu/writingcenter/)

**MIDTERM AND FINAL TESTS:**
The tests are to ensure that you are doing the readings and understanding the material covered. The tests are given entirely online. One of the advantages in taking this class in an online format is that each test has a window rather than a particular time slot. So you are expected to at any one hour period during the window to sign on to D2L and take the test in the quizzes tab. Be very sure that you are starting the test at a time that you will not be interrupted and you can finish it. You may only start the test once. Grades will be released at the end of the test window. Be advised that the test questions were written with full knowledge that some unscrupulous students will have Wikipedia open in another window even though this is forbidden. You are far better off studying by traditional means as described above. If you are trying to look things up during the test (even though this is prohibited), it is likely that you will not have time to finish the test.

**Grading:**

**Grade Calculations**

The total discussion board grade, midterm, essay and final exam are equally weighted. Since there are 25 discussion boards and the discussion board assignment is worth 25% in all, this means that each discussion board is worth 1% of your course grade. The exams and the paper are each worth 25% of the course grade.

**Makeup Exams and Late Assignments:** An assignment is late if it is turned in after the day that it is due. Except for the discussion board posts (which can only receive up to half credit – see above), late assignments will be penalized 10% of the point value of the assignment for each week that the assignment is late, up to 20% for being two weeks late. No assignments that are more than two weeks late will be accepted for credit. If a student has a circumstance that they
feel warrants additional time for an assignment, contact with the instructor must occur well in advance. This does not mean the day before the assignment is due. Exceptions will only be given for appropriately documented medical emergencies. Makeup assignments will take the form of research papers with topics that are assigned on an individual basis. A makeup is *not* automatically given. Arrangements for a makeup must be made *prior* to the exam date.

**Tracking your progress in the course**

Throughout the semester, you have access to your grades to date on the course website. You will notice that grades will not be assigned for the discussion boards until the end of the semester. This is to allow students to make up discussion board posts for partial credit according to the late policy. You should still know exactly where you stand with this assignment, however, since I will contact you if there is a problem with the quality of your discussion board posts. Consequently, you can simply tally your posts that were done on time to date and calculate your discussion board grade from there. The graded papers will be returned with comments within ten days of the due date.

**Grading Scale**

Students are evaluated on the following scale:

- A - (90-100%)
- B - (80-89%)
- C - (70-79%)
- D - (60-69%)
- F - (below 60%)

- I - Indicates an incomplete grade for the course, and will be awarded only when the student has done satisfactory work up to the last two weeks of the semester, but for nonacademic reasons beyond his/her control is unable to meet the full requirements of the course. Incomplete grades are only valid after submission of the Incomplete Grade form (signed by both the instructor and student) to the Department Chair’s office.

**Academic Integrity Statement:** Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, as published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Section 5. C of the Student Code of Conduct addresses the university’s policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to university materials, misrepresentation/falsification of university records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the Department of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (SCAI), which includes either an “informal” resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct’s minimum one semester suspension requirement. See also [https://web.kennesaw.edu/scai/content/ksu-student-code-conduct](https://web.kennesaw.edu/scai/content/ksu-student-code-conduct).
It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is. Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, as published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Section II of the Student Code of Conduct addresses the University’s policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to University materials, misrepresentation/falsification of University records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the University Judiciary Program, which includes either an “informal” resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct’s minimum one semester suspension requirement.

Plagiarism includes copying material from websites, books, or any other source and presenting it as your own work without a citation or quotation. I am aware of the online resources available and have the knowledge and ability to search these sources. If you copy entire sentences or paragraphs from an online source or book without a citation, that is plagiarizing. Anyone caught plagiarizing will immediately receive a grade of F for the course. See the following websites for more information on plagiarism:

http://plagiarism.org/
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml
http://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorials/plagiarism/index.html

ADA Compliance and Accessibility:

Students with qualifying disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act who require “reasonable accommodation(s)” to complete the course may request those from Office of Student Disability Services. Students requiring such accommodations are required to work with the University’s Office of Student Disability Services rather than engaging in this discussion with individual faculty members or academic departments. If, after reviewing the course syllabus, a student anticipates or should have anticipated a need for accommodation, he or she must submit documentation requesting an accommodation and permitting time for a determination prior to submitting assignments or taking course quizzes or exams. Students may not request retroactive accommodation for needs that were or should have been foreseeable. Students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Student Disability Services is located in the Carmichael Student Center in Suite 267. Please visit the Student Disabilities Services website at www.kennesaw.edu/stu_dev/sds for more information, or call the office at 470-578-6443.

Should you require assistance or have further questions about the ADA, please refer to http://learnonline.kennesaw.edu/resources/index.php.

Accessibility of technologies used in the course

As with philosophy generally, learning is primarily facilitated by reading and writing. As text, the course website and online readings are all capable of being translated for use in different
forms (large print, text-to-speech, etc.). Electronic copies of the books or different translations of the same original texts are also available.

For accessibility information on AOL instant messenger, please see https://help.aol.com/articles/about-accessibility

Transcriptions and closed captioning of the course lectures are currently being worked through the Distance Learning Center at Kennesaw State and should be available soon. For accessibility information on D2L Brightspace, please see:

http://www.brightspace.com/about/accessibility/standards/

**Privacy Policies of Technology used in the course**

D2L Brightspace: http://www.brightspace.com/legal/privacy/

AOL instant messenger: http://privacy.aol.com/privacy-policy/

**Student Support Services**

For information on the writing lab, tutoring and other student support services at Kennesaw State, please visit: http://learnonline.kennesaw.edu/resources/tutoring_academic_support.php
## Course Calendar

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 9-14</td>
<td>Introduction to the philosophical study of religion. How can we understand just how different other cultures are? (1)</td>
<td>Frazer - <em>Golden Bough</em> Part I chs.1,5,6,7,8, Part II chs. 11,12,13 (pp.9-22, 77-122, 366-389), Campbell - <em>Myths to Live By</em>, ch.2 (pp.19-42) (suggested: ch.3: 43-60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 22-28</td>
<td>Sacrifice (3)</td>
<td>Eliade - <em>Sacred and the Profane</em> ch.2 (pp.68-113), Frazer - <em>Golden Bough</em> Part II ch.2 (pp.228-253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29 - February 4</td>
<td>Ritual and mythic time (4)</td>
<td>Mythic structure, 'total' understanding and meaning (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 5-11</td>
<td>What is polytheism? Separation of East and West (6)</td>
<td>Eliade - <em>Sacred and the Profane</em> ch.3 (pp.116-161), Campbell - <em>Myths to Live By</em>, ch.4 (pp.61-82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 9-14</td>
<td>Ancient Greek myth and practice (7)</td>
<td>Burkert - <em>Ancient Mystery Cults</em> Introduction (pp.1-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12-18</td>
<td>Upanishadic Hinduism, development of early Buddhism (8)</td>
<td>D.T. Suzuki - <em>An Introduction to Zen Buddhism</em> ch. 1-6 (pp.31-88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 19-25</td>
<td>Mahayana Buddhism, <em>Zen, Tantra</em> (9)</td>
<td>D.T. Suzuki - <em>An Introduction to Zen Buddhism</em> ch. 7-9 (pp.88-132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 26 - March 4</td>
<td>Taoism, Confucianism (10)</td>
<td>Tao <em>te Ching, Analects</em> (selections)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 5-11</td>
<td>Egyptian religion, Judaism (11) March 1 is the last day to withdraw without academic penalty</td>
<td>Huston Smith – <em>The World’s Religions</em> ch.7 (pp.271-316)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12-18</td>
<td>Apocalypticism and early Christianity (12) First Test available in the assessments tab from Monday February 27 – Friday March 3 only. Grades released after the end of the test availability window. Test covers topics 1-12.</td>
<td>Frazer - <em>The Golden Bough</em> Part III ch.5 (pp.666-676), Huston Smith – <em>The World’s Religions</em> ch. 8 (pp.317-364)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 19-25</td>
<td>Patristics: Augustine (13)</td>
<td>Augustine - <em>Confessions</em> Blk. IX, Tertullian <em>Contra Hereticos</em> (selections)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12-18</td>
<td>Patristics: Origen, Evagrius, Dionysius (14)</td>
<td>Bernard McGinn – <em>Foundations of Mysticism</em> (pp.108-130, 144-182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26 – April 1</td>
<td>Medieval Christianity: Nicholas of Cusa, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross (16)</td>
<td>Cusanus - <em>De Docta Ignorantia</em> (selections)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2-7</td>
<td>Intro to Islam, Sufism, Hallaj (17)</td>
<td>Huston Smith – <em>The World’s Religions</em> ch.6 (pp.221-270)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9 – 15</td>
<td>Early theories of myth, history of religions (18)</td>
<td>Eliade - <em>Sacred and the Profane</em> (pp.216-232), Sharpe ch.1 (pp.1-27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9 – 15</td>
<td>19th century study of religions: 'Science of Religions' (19)</td>
<td>19th century study of religions: 'Science of Religions' (19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 9 – 15</td>
<td>19th century study of religions: Phenomenology &amp; Pragmatism (20)</td>
<td>William James – <em>Varieties</em> Lectures I, II (pp.5-52), Sharpe ch.5 (pp.97-119)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading Material</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 16-22</td>
<td>Early 20th century study of religions (21)</td>
<td>Sharpe ch.7 (pp.144-172)</td>
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<td>Structuralism (22)</td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss - <em>Savage Mind</em> ch.1 (pp.1-33)</td>
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<td>Essay due Friday April 21</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jung, Campbell and the perennial philosophy (23)</td>
<td>Jung (archetypes article), Campbell - <em>Myths to Live By</em> ch.10 (pp.207-239), Sharpe Ch.9 (pp.195-220), Jung - Forward to D.T. Suzuki’s <em>An Introduction to Zen Buddhism</em> (pp.9-29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23-29</td>
<td>Personal religious experience (24)</td>
<td>Robert K.C. Forman - <em>Meister Eckhart: Mystic as Theologian</em> ch.1 (pp.3-27)</td>
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<td>End of Discussion Board Assignment April 30</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can there be any new mythology? Art and poetry in religion (25)</td>
<td>Campbell - <em>Myths to Live By</em> (pp.258-275)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2-8</td>
<td>Final Exam available in the assessments tab during this time only. Test covers topics 13-25. Grades will be released at the end of this week</td>
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All of the original texts that are listed in the *Online Reading* column are not included in the required textbooks for the course and will be posted to the class’ website.
Learning Objectives:

Since it is not as easy to simply raise your hand and ask a question in an online course, the learning objectives are here to clearly lay out the expectations for what you will get out of each element of the course, what the purpose is in each assignment and what the overall goals of the course are. This detail can be very useful to you in preparing for the exams and doing the other assignments in the course. I recommend wrapping up your course activities each week by going through the learning objectives to ensure that you’ve accomplished the goals set out for that week.

Relationship between the instructional materials and the learning objectives:
The learning objectives center around the ideas presented about different traditions and a comprehension of the historical circumstances of those traditions, including what preceded them and what followed them (and what they may have influenced). The Sharpe volume will be principally used as an historical narrative that facilitates historical contextualization of the ideas. The course lectures bring the historical material and the ideas together. I also try to provide you with some perspective on how the ideas and traditions are generally understood and discussed among scholars to round out your perspective on the material.

Relationship between learning objectives and course activities:
Conversation is a living and vital part of learning philosophy and religion. We gain a great deal of perspective by being around others who are knowledgeable or feel strongly about religion. By ‘conversation,’ I mean to also include the act of writing (since it may have an audience and thereby become part of a conversation). When we write, we are often able to think through ideas more easily than we would by merely thinking. This is doubly true for conversation with others. The discussion board posts attempt to capture both of these situations. This kind of assignment is useful for philosophy and religion at all levels of study. Similarly, the self-tests and learning objectives allow you to check your understanding at the end of each week. These may serve to ensure that you do not miss essential material or walk away with incorrect or incomplete understandings of the most important points.

Relationship between module learning objectives and course learning objectives:
Each module attempts to go through and discuss in detail the ideas of a particular tradition or time period and the historical context of those ideas and practices. The module-level objectives often concern specific ideas or interpretative challenges. Since we will cover many of the most popular religions of the world, the perspective you take away from understanding the challenges involved in studying them will be useful to you when you encounter them again in your other courses. In each case, the module-level objectives concern specific ideas in their contexts, which relate directly to the first several course-level learning objectives. Further, when putting all of the modules together, the big picture of how religion and the philosophical study of religion have evolved over time will coalesce. This relates to the course learning objective that asks you to be able to discuss the history of religion with an eye toward comparison. Comparison is only possible with a strong understanding of each of the traditions being compared.
Course level learning objectives:
- Recognize and explain ideas and practices that are characteristic of the religious systems that we cover.
- Be able to discuss the main ideas of the theories of religion that we cover.
- Be able to discuss the way that religion changed as it moved from one historical epoch to the next and what challenges exist in attempting to compare different traditions and even the same tradition across time.
- Be able to describe the difficulties in understanding another culture’s religion and be able to apply this to the particular religions that we cover.

Module-level learning objectives:
1) Intro to the philosophical study of religion. How can we understand just how different other cultures are?
   a. Describe the difficulties inherent in the historical study of religion
   b. Discuss the problems associated with defining the term ‘religion’
   c. Discuss the difficulties in understanding another culture and several ways that other cultures can be different in ways that make direct understanding and categorization difficult.
2) Frazer - The Golden Bough, mythological motifs
   a. Describe the significance of Frazer’s work and why he is still read today
   b. Recall and arrange the steps in his argumentation, noting which elements have been challenged by subsequent thinkers and why
   c. Describe several examples from one of his chapters. Describe why his juxtaposition of such examples has been historically useful and shocking to his readers.
3) Sacrifice
   a. Explain the difficulties in isolating what sacrifice is.
   b. Describe at least two different theories of sacrifice.
   c. Describe the social function of sacrifice according to Mauss
   d. Describe the main ideas of Heesterman’s account of sacrifice
4) Ritual and mythic time
   a. Describe the difficulties in defining what ritual is.
   b. Describe the difficulties we have in relating to cyclical conceptions of time
   c. Describe the interpretative challenges in attempting to describe the effect rituals have on individuals.
   d. Describe the social role of rituals
   e. Explain Eliade’s sacred/profane dichotomy
5) Mythic identity, metaphor and notions of the self
   a. Explain what mythic identity is and how this conception has changed over time.
b. Describe several ways in which the conception of the individual self is different for other societies. Explain the implications of these differences.

c. Explain what metaphor is in contrast to simile and analogy in the context of mythic identification.

6) What is polytheism? Separation of East and West
   a. Describe the challenges involved in our trying to understand what polytheism is like as a living option.
   b. Describe the way that polytheism changed in the period leading up to classical antiquity.

7) Ancient Greek myth and practice
   a. Recall and describe the major Greek gods and their place in the pantheon.
   b. Describe the challenges that are specific to understanding Ancient Greek polytheism in relation to the birth of philosophy and monotheism and the changes that took place during the Axial age.

8) Upanishadic Hinduism, development of early Buddhism
   a. Describe the way in which Upanishadic Hinduism was different than what came before it.
   b. Describe the historical environment in which Buddhism arose.

9) Mahayana Buddhism (Zen, Tantra)
   a. Describe how Buddhism is different from other religions and is more like a philosophy in many ways.
   b. Explain what is meant by the idea that everything in Buddhism is a ‘tool’ and how this relates to the parable of the raft.
   c. Recall and discuss the four noble truths.
   d. Explain what a koan is and discuss their use and meaning.
   e. Explain the basic principles of Buddhist meditation.
   f. Discuss how modern psychology has taken notice of meditation and used its techniques.

10) Taoism, Confucianism
    a. Explain why the *Tao te Ching* is difficult to translate into English.
    b. Explain the significance of contradictions in the *Tao te Ching*.
    c. Recall and explain the five major themes we discussed in the *Tao te Ching*.
    d. Describe the place and significance of propriety in Confucian thought.
    e. Explain what the Golden Mean is.
    f. Recall five important themes in Confucian thought.

11) Egyptian religion, Judaism
    a. Recall the major figures and stories of Egyptian mythology.
    b. Describe how the major figures in Egyptian mythology are similar to other mythological systems before and after.
    c. Describe the surfacing of the first hints of monotheism in Egyptian religion.
12) Apocalypticism and early Christianity
   a. Describe the environment of apocalyptic spirituality that was part of the soil in which Christianity grew.
   b. Recall and describe the cultural factors that may have contributed to the development of early Christianity
   c. Describe the timeline of the writing of Jewish and Christian scriptures
13) Patristics: Augustine
   a. Describe the evolution of thought for the early Church Fathers that led to Augustine’s work
   b. Describe the similarities between Augustine’s ideas and those of the Neoplatonists
14) Patristics: Origen, Evagrius, Dionysius
   a. Describe the differences between the Western and Eastern churches.
   b. Discuss the rise of monasticism and its relation to the progression of leaders in the early church
   c. Describe the mystical, neoplatonic thought of Dionysius
   d. Explain why he is sometimes called “Pseudo-Dionysius” and “Saint Denys.”
15) Medieval Christianity: St. Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart
   a. Describe the different schools of so-called love and intellectual mysticism of the late middle ages
   b. Explain how the infusion of Aristotelian texts and Islamic philosophy changed the landscape of Christian thought in the 13th century
16) Medieval Christianity: Nicholas of Cusa, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross
   a. In the context of cultural and intellectual changes, describe how the work at this time differed from the Christianity of the preceding centuries and how this period foreshadowed the development of modern Christianity and the Reformation
   b. Describe how attitudes toward the physical world changed during this period and laid the groundwork for modern mathematics and science
17) Intro to Islam, Sufism, Hallaj
   a. Describe the rise of Islam and the cultural conditions surrounding it
   b. Describe what Sufism is and how it compares to similar currents in Christianity
18) Early theories of myth, history of religions
   a. Describe the beginnings of the academic study of religions
   b. Explain why there was resistance to the earliest comparative studies
19) 19th century study of religions: ‘Science of Religions’
   a. Explain the place of Frazer’s work in the context of the early study of religions
   b. Recall at least two other scholars in the 19th century study of religions and describe their theories
20) 19th century study of religions: Phenomenology & Pragmatism
a. Describe the emergence of pragmatism and how it relates to the history of religions
b. Describe the emergence of phenomenology and the significance of phenomenology for 20th century thought and religious studies in particular.

21) Early 20th century study of religions: Functionalist anthropology
   a. Explain what functionalist anthropology is
   b. Describe the circumstances and thinking that led to the development of functionalist thought in contrast to previous anthropological thought.
   c. Explain the significance of this vein of thought for the study of religions

22) Structuralism
   a. Describe the emergence of structuralist thought in the 20th century
   b. Explain how structuralist analysis works and what its critics have identified as its potential shortcomings

23) Jung, Campbell and the perennial philosophy
   a. Describe the perennialists’ defining perspective about the nature of religion
   b. Explain the perennialists’ arguments
   c. Describe the relation of psychoanalysis to the study of religions

24) Personal religious experience and the study of religion
   a. Describe the arguments surrounding the place of personal experience in the study of religion and what makes religion a challenging subject of academic study
   b. Describe Forman’s theory on religious experience and discuss this in the context of other contemporary theories.

25) Can there be any new mythology? Art and poetry in religion
   a. Describe the way that myths have been “created” over time and at different cultural stages.
   b. Describe the place of art and poetry in religion, including the rise of the novel as a literary form and the possible implications for our understanding of religion.

Guidelines for paper grades: please consider these guidelines for your written assignments.

A = Excellent. Your essay will:
   • Have a strong thesis (main point) that is clearly supported by an organized essay/letter/speech where appropriate.
   • Provide excellent examples to support your thesis.
   • Show thorough comprehension of the ideas presented in class and in the reading.
   • Demonstrate innovative ideas and approaches.
   • Have strong analyses of material and arguments found in lecture, reading, and research.
   • Contextualize ideas and arguments to the overall historical period.
   • Have proper citations as per syllabus.
   • Be written clearly, with few errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or usage.

B = Good. Your essay will:
   • Have a valid thesis that is supported by a mostly well organized essay/letter/speech where appropriate.
• Provide appropriate examples to support your thesis.
• Demonstrate comprehension of the ideas presented in class and in the reading.
• Analyze material and arguments found in lecture, reading, and research.
• Connect ideas and arguments to the overall historical period.
• Have proper citations with few mistakes as per syllabus.
• Be written clearly, with minor errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or usage.

C = Satisfactory/Average. Your essay will:
• Have a thesis, perhaps flawed, or one that is incompletely supported by the essay/letter/speech where appropriate.
• Organized.
• Provide examples to support your thesis.
• Demonstrate basic comprehension of the ideas presented in class and in the reading.
• Reveal some incompleteness in the research.
• Incompletely analyze material and arguments found in lecture, reading, and research.
• Incompletely connect ideas and arguments to the overall historical period.
• Improper use of citations, or incorrect format as per syllabus.
• Be written clearly, with some errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or usage.

D = Below Average/Barely passing. Your essay will have one or more major problems:
• A weak thesis; or one that is incompletely supported by the essay/letter/speech where appropriate.
• Incomplete or weak organization.
• Weak examples or neglect to include textual examples.
• Show minimal comprehension of the ideas presented in class and in the reading.
• Show incomplete research.
• Partially analyze material and arguments found in lecture, reading, and research.
• Missing, or use incorrect citation format as per syllabus.
• Show lack of coherence, or many errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or usage.

F = Failing. Your essay will receive an “F” if it meets ANY of the criteria below:
• Does not meet the minimum requirements for a D.
• Shows evidence of plagiarism.
• Does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.
• Contains unacceptable number of compositional errors.
• Written in stream of consciousness or incoherent argumentation (babbling).
Bibliography

Primary resources for the class:


Supplementary resources: