

HUMI 9 – Comparative Religion

De Anza College – Winter '16 -- 4 units

Instructor: Lori Clinchard, Ph.D.; clinchardlori@deanza.edu

Office Hours: F2 building ; M/T/W/Th – 12:30-1:20

“All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.” --A. Einstein

Come to this class with an open mind, compassion, respect, and a willingness to see the world through others' eyes. Kindness is the rule, and truth is the key.

Course Description:

This course examines the religious dimension of human life and experience, focusing on the religious language, attitudes, images, myths, metaphors, symbols, and rituals relating to the history and practice of religion. We will study how women and men throughout history and across cultures have lived and expressed a religious faith based on their sense of the sacred.

Course Objectives:

The student will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the variety of ways in which the religious dimension of human existence is expressed and lived from pre-modern times through the present;
- Examine, analyze, and compare different types of religious consciousness;
- Examine, analyze, and compare religious faiths from several cultures and time periods;
- Identify and evaluate similar modern and contemporary patterns in different religions;
- Open and expand both mind and heart to the diversity that exists among human beings.

Required Reading:

1. Smith, Huston. (1994). **The Illustrated World's Religions: A guide to our wisdom traditions.** San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. ISBN: 0-06-067440-7
2. Maathai, Wangari. (2010). **Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual values for healing ourselves and the world.** New York: Doubleday. ISBN: 978-0-307-59114-2

*Note: several copies of both texts are on reserve in the De Anza library, available for checkout.

Course Requirements:

1. Weekly Response Paper (due every Monday):

- a. **Listening sessions:** Every other week, you will find someone to *listen* to about their religious and/or spiritual experiences. The idea is to get an *insider's* perspective. Your paper should describe the listening session and your own reflections about the experience. Paper should be at least **2 full pages typed**, double-spaced. *Due on turnitin.com*
- b. **Reading responses:** On the alternate weeks, you will write up a response to the assigned readings. Most weeks you will have some choice of chapters to read. Include your answers to these questions: 1) what are the most important or meaningful ideas from **each** chapter? 2) How can you relate to these ideas? Include chapter headings in your response papers, but do not waste space. Paper should be at least **2 full pages typed**, double-spaced. *Due on turnitin.com*

2. Participation

- a. Substantive participation in weekly online discussion board on *turnitin.com*
- b. Attentive presence in class (rarely absent or late; no electronics; respectful)
- c. Personalized Index card given to instructor (including name, photo, interests)

3. Final Paper: In this 6 page paper, address the following questions:

- a. What are your earliest memories/beliefs in relation to religion or spirituality?
- b. What people, experiences, or ideas have been most influential to you?
- c. Which of the ideas from this course did you most relate to, and why?
- d. What did you learn about specific religions that was meaningful to you?
- e. How will you integrate this knowledge into your life?
- f. **6 full pages:** *double-spaced, typed, 12 font, Times New Roman, 1" margins*

Grading: Total points possible = 300 pts.

Listening sessions = 5 papers x 20 pts. each = 100 points

Reading responses = 5 papers x 20 pts. each = 100 points

Participation = 50 points

Final paper = 50 points

Grading Scale

A-=90%; A=93%; A+=97% / B-=80%; B=83%; B+=87% / C=73%; C+=77%

D-=60%; D=63%; D+=67% / F=<60%

Late work: Weekly papers may be turned in **one week late**, for a loss of 2.5 points (equal to one letter grade). No papers will be accepted beyond one week late without particular exception made by arrangement with instructor during office hours (usually for reasons such as documented medical condition, etc.).

Absences: You may miss 2-3 classes in the quarter with no effect on your participation. Any absences beyond 3 need to be discussed with instructor during office hours. You may be dropped after 4 absences.

Plagiarism: Any instances of copying and pasting from Internet sources, books, articles, or other students' papers will be immediately reported to De Anza Administration.

Course Outline

Week 1 – Spirituality & Religion

Week 2 – Indigenous Religions

M 1/11 – Reading Response paper due:

Smith Ch. IX

Maathai Ch. 2

Week 3 – Hinduism & Sikhism

M 1/18 – Personal Experiment paper due

Week 4 – Buddhism

M 1/25 – Reading Response paper due:

Smith Ch. II & III (Hinduism; Buddhism)

Maathai Ch. 3 & 4

Week 5 – Confucianism & Taoism

M 2/1 – Personal Experiment paper due

Week 6 – Judaism

M 2/8 – Reading Response paper due:

Smith Ch. IV & V & VII

Read Maathai Ch. 5 & 6

Week 7 – Christianity

M 2/15 – Personal Experiment paper due

Week 8 – Islam

M 2/22 – Reading Response paper due:

Smith Ch. VIII & VI

Maathai Ch. 7 & 8

Week 9 – New Religious Movements

M 2/29 – Personal Experiment paper due

Week 10 – Atheism & Materialism

M 3/7 – Reading Response paper due:

Maathai Ch. 9 & 10

Week 11 – Consciousness + the new sciences

M 3/14 – Personal Experiment paper due

Read Maathai Ch. 11

Week 12 – Finals week

Final Paper Due

Bring to Final Exam period

Extra credit options -10 pts.; choose one only - Due by Monday of week 10 (no exceptions)

- 1) Visit a place of worship (temple, gurdwara, mosque, church, synagogue, Zen garden, etc.). Write a 2 page response paper (double-spaced, 12 font, typed); attach some physical evidence of your visit; **OR**
- 2) Watch the online documentary “What the Bleep do we know”, and respond to the film in relation to the organized religions (2 page response paper; double-spaced, 12 font, typed)

****Additional bonus points: 2 pts for bringing homemade food to share on last day**

Honors Option:

An Honors cohort is being offered in this section. Eligibility requirements can be found at www.deanza.edu/honors. If you are interested, please contact Mehrdad Khosravi, Honors Program Coordinator at dahonors@fhda.edu or at 408-864-8833 for approval. The cohort entails additional work, **most notably, an informal research paper on an agreed-upon topic**. You must commit to participating in the Honors cohort by the end of the first week of the quarter by dropping the current section of this course and adding the Honors section with a separate add code. You must also sign a written contract with me. Once you commit to the Honors portion, you will be expected to complete the extra work. Failure to complete the Honors work will result in a lowering of your class grade by 2/3 of a grade (ex: A- to B; B+ to B-; B to C+; etc.).