

HUMI 9 – Comparative Religion

De Anza College – Winter '17 -- 4 units

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

Office Hours: F2 building ; M/T/W/Th – 12:40-1:30

“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

“God has no religion.” – Mahatma Gandhi

“This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.” -Dalai Lama

“There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it.” – George Bernard Shaw

“All religions are true, but none are literal.” – Joseph Campbell

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. Peter Russell. (2002). **"From Science to God: A Physicist's Journey into the Mystery of Consciousness"**. Novato: New World Library ISBN: 1-57731-494-8

***Note: important class announcements are often made in the first 5 minutes of class. If you are late, you are still responsible for this information, so please make sure you are on time.**

Course Requirements:

1. **3 Listening sessions:** Three times during the quarter, you will find someone to *listen* to as they talk 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* only.
2. **2 Midterms:** Midterm exams will cover the most important or meaningful ideas from the readings and the in-class material. Exam will be entirely short essay questions, asking you to describe the major themes from each chapter and weekly topic, along with examples from each.
3. **Final Exam:** Exam will be entirely short essay questions, asking you to describe the major themes from each chapter and weekly topic, along with examples from each. Final exam will cover the most important or meaningful ideas from the readings and in-class material since the 2nd midterm, and will also have a comprehensive section addressing the overall themes of the course.

Participation: Students are expected to come to class every day and to participate in class group discussions. Daily in-class writing responses and participation in class discussion will be used to help determine borderline grades.

Grading:

Listening sessions = 3 x 50 pts. = 150 points

Midterms – 2 x 75 pts. = 150 points

Final exam = 100 points

400 total points possible

Grading Scale

Thorough class participation will be used to determine borderline grades.

A-=90%; A=93%; A+=98% / B-=80%; B=83%; B+=88% / C=70%; C+=78%

D-=60%; D=63%; D+=68% / F=<60%

Late work: Late work is NOT accepted, except with advance permission of instructor.

Absences: You may miss 3 classes in the quarter. Any absences beyond 3 need to be discussed with instructor during office hours. You *may* be dropped after 4 absences. You are responsible for material covered in class while you are absent.

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 – Read each week for reading assignments & due dates

Course Outline

Week 1 – Spirituality & Religion

Smith Ch. I – Intro

Week 2 – Atheism, Materialism & Consciousness

Smith Ch IX Primal Religions

Week 3 –Indigenous Religions

Smith Ch IX Primal Religions

Week 4 – Hinduism & Sikhism

Smith Ch. II - Hinduism

Midterm #1 – Thurs., Feb. 2nd (covers weeks 1-4)

Week 5 – Buddhism

M: Personal Experiment #1 due – Feb. 6th

Smith Ch. III Buddhism

Week 6 – Confucianism & Taoism

Smith Ch. IV & V - Confucianism; Taoism

Week 7 – Judaism

Smith Ch. VI - Judaism

Week 8 – Christianity

Smith Ch. VII - Christianity

Midterm #2 – Thurs., Mar 2nd (covers weeks 5-8)

Week 9 – Islam

M: Listening Session #2 – Mon. Mar 6th

Smith Ch.VIII – Islam

Week 10 – New Religious Movements

“From Science to God” p. 1-56

Week 11 –Religion & the Future

“From Science to God” p. 57-129

Th: Listening Session #3 – Thurs. Mar

Week 12 – Finals week

Two extra credit options: Due anytime; last date is March 16th (no exceptions)

- 1) Visit a place of worship (temple, gurdwara, mosque, church, synagogue, Zen garden, etc.). Write a 1 page response paper (single-spaced, 12 font, typed); attach some physical evidence of your visit – **10 points**

- 2) Watch the online documentary “What the Bleep do we know”, and analyze the film *in relation to* the religions we have studied (1 page response paper; single-spaced, 12 font, typed) – **5 points**

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.).