

Bergen Community College
Division of Arts and Humanities
Department of Philosophy and Religion

Course Syllabus

PHR-121 Religions of the World

Basic Information about Course and Instructor

Semester and year:
Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary: [optional]
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

PHR-121 Religions of the World is a comparative study of the history, basic beliefs, and characteristic practices of such major religious systems as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Some attention will also be given to the religions of the ancient Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean peoples, to ancient and modern tribal religions, and to contemporary sectarian and cultic movements.

3 lectures, 3 credits

General Education Course – Humanities Elective

Student Learning Objectives: As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to

1. identify and analyze the basic perspectives and characteristic practices of the major religions of the world;
2. define, summarize, and analyze the major similarities and differences between various religious world-views;
3. use critical thinking methods appropriate to the interpretation and appraisal of religious ideas to analyze and evaluate the ways in which various religions approach life and its problems;
4. analyze the relationships between religion and other aspects of human culture such as science, philosophy, art, and politics; and
5. state and support their own views on religious issues, both orally and in writing, and with logical and critical precision, clarity, and rigor.

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, the course is based on the reading and discussion of both primary and secondary sources in the field of comparative religion; the essential principles of critical thinking are introduced; techniques of scholarly research and writing are reviewed; students are given the opportunity

and are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's Core Competencies and General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Religion Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through a variety of assessment types (tools) and on the basis of a variety of assessment criteria. These alignments and correlations are depicted in the [attached document](#). [[Back to course listing](#)]

See an [individual classroom syllabus](#) for this course based on the policies stated in this departmental syllabus. [[Back to course listing](#)]

Course Content

Unlike the course, "Introduction to Religion" (PHR-120), "Religions of the World" (PHR-121) attempts a systematic survey of some of the major religious traditions of the world, at least including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. If time permits, the course gives some attention also to Taoism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, and various primal (tribal) religions.

The coverage of each religion, though obviously it cannot be complete, should at least present a representative sampling from each faith. Some attention should be paid to ritual, personal spirituality, major beliefs, and historical evolution in each religion. The balance struck will vary with each instructor and will likely vary with each religion treated. The treatment should be phenomenological, i.e., presenting, so far as possible, a sympathetic account of the religions which would be considered fair by members of that religion (some of whom may be members of the class).

Class use of primary source passages, especially from the scriptures of each faith, is strongly suggested. The selective use of videos (in-class or library assignments) is quite valuable as conveying the full-blooded reality of the religions, showing that they are living systems experienced by real people, not mere collections of abstract and strange-seeming doctrines.

Special Features of the Course (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy and/or information literacy learning in the course; etc.

Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

Recommended Texts: The current editions of any of the following texts are appropriate for use in PHR-121.

B. H. Earhart (ed.), *Religious Traditions of the World*.

Mircea Eliade & I. P. Couliano, *The Eliade Guide to World Religions*.

L. M. Hopfe, *Religions of the World*.

Warren Matthews, *World Religions*.

David S. Noss, *A History of the World's Religions*.

Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience*.

_____, *The World's Religions*.

Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (paperback ed.). Current departmentally-approved text.

These texts should be used in conjunction with primary and significant secondary source materials. A useful anthology is Gary E. Kessler, *Ways of Being Religious* (Mayfield). Kessler's book can, in fact, be used as the

sole text for PHR-121. The current departmentally-approved anthology is *Anthology of World Scriptures*, ed. Van Voorst (4th ed.) (Wadsworth/Thomson, 2003) ISBN 0-534-60201-0.

Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)

Because PHR-121 is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

Grading Policy

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the final grade.

Attendance Policy

BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

Attendance Policy in this Course:

[To be designated by the instructor]

Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements [optional but recommended]

<p><u>Examples:</u></p> <p>Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty.</p> <p>ADA statement.</p> <p>Sexual Harassment statement.</p> <p>Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology.</p> <p>Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.</p>

Student and Faculty Support Services [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

Student and Faculty Support Services

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 psimms@bergen.edu
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp
The Tutoring Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908
The Writing Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908
The Online Writing Lab (OWL)	On Line at:	www.bergen.edu/owl
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-131	201-612-5270 www.bergen.edu/oss
The Sidney Silverman Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

Include the following statement on Logos – The BCC Philosophy Club

Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club

Logos usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, in Room L-342. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of religion, you should find the meetings and other activities of the philosophy & religion club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy & Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor, Dr. Vanda Bozicevic (L-331, 201-493-7528, vbozicevic@bergen.edu). (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)

Include a Course Outline and Calendar [can be combined in a single syllabus section]

The Course Outline and Calendar must include all of the following elements:

- A daily or (at least) weekly schedule of topics to be covered.
- Dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. (This does not mean that all evaluation of students must be in groups and at the same time. Exams and other means of assessment can be listed as "to be scheduled individually.")

- Due dates for major assignments – e.g., when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due.
- Any required special events must be included in the outline/calendar, e.g., a lecture by a visiting speaker, a dramatic or musical performance, a field trip.
- Designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic (see sample below).
- A note to students stating that the course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Sample Format for Course Outline and Calendar

Note to Students: The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Events
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity/Assignments	Student Learning Objectives
		Mid-Term Examination – up and running on course website, Oct 25 through Oct 31	
9-10	Nov 1, 3, 8, 10	PART VI: JUDAISM Required Reading: Smith, Chapter 7 Online Anthology: Read at least one of the following: Selections from the Hebrew Bible (<i>Tanach</i>) <i>Tract Aboth</i> from the <i>Talmud</i> Solomon Schechter, "The Dogmas of Judaism"	1-5
11-12	Nov 15, 17, 22, 24 Nov 25-28	PART VII: CHRISTIANITY Required Reading: Smith, Chapter 8 Online Anthology: Read at least one of the following: <i>The Gospel According to Mark</i> G. Cronk, "The Theology of St. Paul" Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God Thomas à Kempis, <i>The Imitation of Christ</i> Recommended Reading: Jaspers, "Jesus" Thanksgiving Weekend	1-5
13-14	Nov 29, Dec 1, 6, 8 Nov 29 Dec 8	PART VIII: ISLAM Required Reading: Smith, Chapter 6 Online Anthology: Read at least one of the following: Selections from the <i>Koran (Qur'an)</i> Selections from <i>A Manual of Hadith</i> Al-Ghazali's <i>Confessions</i> Second Site Visit Report due Final deadline for late and extra credit work – no late or extra credit work accepted after this date	
15	Dec 13 Dec 15	Final Review End-Term Examination – in class	1-5