



East China Normal University International Summer Session

REL 28/ PHI16: Introduction to World Religion and Philosophy

Term: July 5th -August 8th, 2018

Time: 10:45-12:35

Instructor: Thomas Michael

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Course Overview

Over the course of the last many hundreds of thousands of years of cultural existence and continuing as much as ever in the modern world, humans have consistently demonstrated their adherence to mystical, religious, and philosophical beliefs. Human beings have not only richly developed religious beliefs about God, or gods, or goddesses, but also beliefs in mystical or philosophical forces such as dharma, dao, and karma. Because there are vast differences in language, culture, and geography among human societies, the world's civilizations from their beginnings long, long ago have developed their own systems of belief that continue to deeply influence how even modern people understand the world in their culturally separate ways.

The purpose of this course is to give a broad overview of many of the major religious traditions in the world and their distinctive features. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, but to give basic historical familiarity with the foundational belief systems of some of the most important religions of the world. It divides them between the West for the first half of the course, and the East for the second half. We begin by examining some of the earliest belief systems from the wellsprings of the Western civilization, the ancient Middle East, and continue on to the historical development of ideas about God from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the second half of the course, we examine the somewhat more mystical and philosophical traditions of Eastern belief systems by studying some of the fundamental assumptions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism.



Course Goals:

A student who satisfactorily completes this course should:

1. Summarize the religions of the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age
2. Summarize the Jewish/ Christian understanding of God and the creation of the world
3. Summarize the Christian understanding of Jesus and his death and resurrection
4. Summarize the Hindu beliefs about reincarnation, liberation, and yoga
5. Summarize the Buddhist beliefs about nirvana and meditation
6. Summarize the Daoist and Confucian beliefs about the Dao
7. Demonstrate ability to explain class readings and lectures at 75%

Required readings, listed under “Course Schedule” below, will be handed out at the beginning of the class, and are taken from the following sources:

1. *The Goddesses' Mirror: Visions of the Divine from East and West*, by David Kinsley. SUNY Press, 1989.
2. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed.'s Bruce Manning Metzger, Roland Edmund Murphy, 1994.
3. *Bhagavad Gita, A New Translation*, George Thompson. North Point Press, 2008
4. *Dhammapada: A New Translation of the Buddhist Classic*, by Gils Frontal. Shambala Press, 2011.
5. *The Daodejing*, by Thomas Michael. SUNY Press, 2015.
6. *The Analects of Confucius*, by Simon Leys. Norton Paperbacks, 1997.

Course Hours

The course has 25 class sessions in total. Each class session is 110 minutes in length, for a total of 2750 minutes of in-class time. The course meets from Monday to Friday from July 3 to August 4. ECNU awards 4 credits for this course. Different universities may count course credits differently. Consult officials at your own home institution.

Attendance

Summer school is very intense and to be successful, students need to attend every class. Occasionally, due to illness or other unavoidable circumstance, a student may need to miss a class. ECNU policy requires a medical certificate to be excused. Any absence may impact on the student's grade. **ECNU policy is that a student who has more than 3 absences will fail the course. Arriving late or leaving early will count as a partial absence.**



Grading Policy

ECNU awards grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, D, and F. Most colleges and universities do not award transfer credit for grades of D or F.

In this course, grading will be based on the following:

- 40% Midterm exam
- 50% Final exam
- 10% Classroom engagement (attendance, attention, participation in discussions)

General expectations:

Students are expected to:

- Attend all classes and be responsible for all material covered in class and otherwise assigned. Any unexcused absence may impact a student's grade. Moreover, ECNU policy is that a student who has more than 3 absences will fail the course. Arriving late or leaving early will count as a partial absence.
- Complete the day's required reading and assignments before class
- Review the previous day's notes before class; make notes about questions you have about the previous class or the day's reading
- Participate in class discussions and complete required written work on time.
- Refrain from texting, phoning or engaging in computer activities unrelated to class during class. Students who do not do this will be asked to leave the class
- While class participation is welcome, even required, you are expected to refrain from private conversations during the class period.
- ***Academic Honesty***
- Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty. Specifically, unless otherwise directed by the professor, students may not consult other students, books, notes, electronic devices or any other source, on examinations. Failure to abide by this may result in a zero on the examination, or even failure in the course.
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- Students are also expected to adhere to appropriate scholarly conventions in essays and research papers. This class includes paper assignment(s) in which students must give credit to all outside sources used by means of citations and a bibliography. Failure to do so may result in a zero on the paper assignment, or even failure in the course.
- Also note that everything you will need to do great on the mid-term and final comes



exclusively from our class readings and lectures, therefore avoid the Internet at all costs—I can easily see, and the consequences will be harsh.

Course Schedule

The planned schedule sketched out below may be modified to suit the interests or abilities of the enrolled students or to take advantage of special opportunities or events that may arise during the term.

WEEK ONE:

Thurs: Introductions:	
Fri: Stone and Bronze Age Religion	The Goddesses' Mirror: Innana
Mon: Iron Age Religion	Enuma Elish, Babylonian Creation
Tues: Iron Age Religion	Enuma Elish, Babylonian Creation
Wed: Judaism, Christianity, and the Bible	The Book of Genesis

WEEK TWO:

Thurs: Judaism, Christianity, and the Bible	The Book of Genesis and Exodus
Fri: Judaism, Christianity, and the Bible	The Book of Exodus
Mon: Christianity and the Bible	The Gospel of Matthew
Tues: Christianity and the Bible	The Gospel of Matthew and John
Wed: Christianity and the Bible	The Gospel of John

WEEK THREE:

Thurs: Mid-term Review	
Fri: Mid-term Assigned	Due Monday, July 23
Mon: Hinduism	The Bhagavad Gita
Tues: Hinduism	The Bhagavad Gita
Wed: Hinduism	The Bhagavad Gita

WEEK FOUR:

Thurs: Buddhism	The Dhammapada
Fri: Buddhism	The Dhammapada
Mon: Buddhism	The Dhammapada
Tues: Daoism	The Daodejing
Wed: Daoism	The Daodejing

WEEK FIVE:

Thurs: Confucianism	The Analects
Fri: Confucianism	The Analects



Mon: Confucianism
Tues: Final Review
Wed: Final Assigned

The Analects

Due Friday, August 10