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RS 10013

UNDERSTANDING RELIGION:

THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

Office

M-F:

or by

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This course attempts to understand the nature of religion by looking at some foundational ideas, texts, and figures in a variety of religious traditions. We will look at differing approaches to the study of religion, and explore what human beings have seen as the ultimate meanings and purposes of existence. Our goal is to comprehend better the varieties of religious experience and expression in the world. We shall assume that religion has many dimensions and that answers to religious questions are manifold.

The course has two main aims: first, for you to become more informed about the ultimate concerns of others, past and present; second, for this information to make available new understandings of yourself and others. At times you should ask yourself: what is true, and why? Why are people religious? Do people really believe this or that? What do I believe, and why? Remember, learning about others should teach you about yourself.

Regular attendance is expected (come on time, but come even if late), and roll is taken. If you miss five or more classes, your grade can be lowered automatically unless you have a legitimate and documented excuse. If you have a problem affecting your course participation, or must miss class, let me know. There will be lots of discussion, and questions are welcome. All topics are open, but civil and respectful discourse is required. You are also expected to read (and think about) the assignments before class. The readings are the "raw material" with which we shall build our understandings. Bring books to class for reference.

The primary determinant of your grade will be three exams, equal in value, which include both identification and essay questions. They will cover material from lectures and readings, and are intended to bring out both academic information and personal reactions to what you are learning. Unless you contact me beforehand, only officially excused absences are permitted. The third exam is during finals. You must bring bluebooks to me before each test date, and I will keep all exams in my office until the semester ends. Occasionally one page responses to readings will also be required; they are mandatory, but ungraded. For extra credit, you may keep a journal of personal reflections on religion, and go to hear speakers or have other experiences outside of class. Extra credit does not have a specific point value, but can boost your grade to the next level if your exams are close (example of possibilities: 88+ average to A, 79+ to B).

Our primary texts are Ninian Smart's Worldviews and Christian Jochim's Chinese Religions. Also required is a booklet of short readings; all are available at the bookstore.

If you have a disability which may affect your class performance, please inform me during the first week of class. Finally, feel free to see me after class or in my office.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

- Aug. 28 Introduction to course
- Aug. 30 Definitions/aims Smart: 1-7
- Sept. 4 The Nacirema Reading 1
- Sept. 6 The academic study of religion Smart: 11-15
- Sept. 9 Psychological approaches Smart: 65-70 Reading 2
- Sept. 11 Sociological approaches Smart: 132-35
- Sept. 13 Modern approaches Smart: 8-10, 15-32 Readings 3 and 4
- Sept. 16 Worldviews: nationalism Smart: 33-46 Readings 5 and 6
- Sept. 18 Worldviews: scientific humanism
Smart: 46-54 Readings 7-10
- Sept. 20 Experiential Dimension Smart: 55-64 Readings 11 and 12
- Sept. 23 Experience (devotion) Readings 13 and 14
- Sept. 25 " " (mysticism) Reading 15
- Sept. 27 " " " Reading 16 **BRING BLUEBOOK**
- Sept. 30 Mythic Dimension Smart: 71-86 Readings 17-19
- Oct. 2 **EXAMINATION**
- Oct. 4 Doctrinal Dimension Smart: 87-95, 98-103 Reading 20
- Oct. 7 " " " Smart: 95-97 Reading 21
- Oct. 9 Ethical Dimension Smart: 104-11 Readings 22-24
- Oct. 11 **MID-SEMESTER BREAK**
- Oct. 14 " " " Smart: 111-17 Readings 25 and 26
- Oct. 16 Ritual Dimension Smart: 118-30 Readings 27 and 28
- Oct. 18 Social Dimension Smart: 135-44 Readings 29 and 30
- Oct. 21 Social Responsibility Readings 31 and 32
- Oct. 23 " " " Readings 33-35
- Oct. 25 Humanistic Psychology Readings 36 and 37
- Oct. 28 " " " Readings 38-40

Oct. 30 Science and Technology Reading 41
Nov. 1 " " " Reading 42-43 **BRING BLUEBOOK**

Nov. 4 The Future of Religion Smart: 145-58

Nov. 6 **EXAMINATION**

Nov. 8 The Chinese Worldview Jochim: 1-10

Nov. 11 Chinese Religious History Jochim: 12-24, 27-33

Nov. 13 " " " Jochim: 34-55

Nov. 15 Modern China Jochim: 55-60

Nov. 18 Han Confucianism Jochim: 60-68, 77-81, 145-47, 158-60

READING 44

Nov. 20 "Religious" Taoism Jochim: 9, 68-71, 73-76

READING 45

Nov. 22 Chinese Buddhism and Religion and Art in China
Jochim: 10-12, 82-103 (to 109 optional)

Nov. 25 Taoism video

Nov. 27 Confucius Jochim: 110-14, 117-27 **READING 46**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec. 2 Lao-Tzu Jochim: 127-34 **READING 47**

Dec. 4 Practical Dimension Jochim: 135-43, 149-56

Dec. 6 Social Dimension (family) Jochim: 160-73 **READINGS 48 and 49**

Dec. 9 " " (monastery) Jochim: 173-81

Dec. 11 Conclusions Jochim: 182-89

FINAL EXAM Monday, 8: 30, Dec. 16 (10 MWF)

Friday, 11:30, Dec. 20 (1 MWF)

BOOK AND ARTICLE SELECTIONS FOR RELI 10013

1. "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" by Horace Miner.
Found in *Exploring Society: Selected Readings in Sociology*. A. Sadnovik, C. Persell, E. Baumann, and R. Mitchell, eds. New York: Harper and Row, 1987.
Also on web: www.msu.edu/~jdowell/miner.html
2. From *The Future of an Illusion* by Sigmund Freud. New York: Norton, 1971, pp. 15-20.
3. "Peering Past Faith to Glimpse the Jesus of History," *The New York Times*, 23 December, 1991.
4. "Scholar Sees 4 Perspectives on Jesus in Gospels," *The New York Times*, 27 March, 1994.
5. Japanese Imperial Rescript on Education. Found in *Sacred Texts of the World*. Edited by Ninian Smart and Richard Hecht. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1982
6. The Pledge of Allegiance
7. Preamble to the United Nations Charter. Found in *Sacred Texts of the World*. N. Smart and R. Hecht, eds.
8. "I'm O. K., You're Selfish," *The New York Times Magazine*, 17 October, 1999.
9. "The Group and the Self," *The New York Times*, 12 December, 1990.
10. "What Faith Is." From *The Dynamics of Faith* by Paul Tillich. New York: Harper & Row, 1957. Pp. 1-4.
11. From *The Way of the White Clouds* by Lama Anagarika Govinda. London: Random House (UK), 1988. Pp. 185-87
12. "The Inner Ecstasy" by Marcus Bach. The World Publishing Co., 1969. Pp. 11-17.
13. "Radha and Krishna." From *In Praise of Krishna*. Edward Dimock and D. Levertov, trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. pp. 18, 21, 56-57, 69 from Univ. Of Chicago Press
14. From *The Mystical Theology* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. *The Classics of Western Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press, 1987. Pp. 140-41
15. From *The Republic* by Plato. Edited by G. R. F. Ferrari. Translated by Tom Griffith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 220-24.

16. From *How to Meditate* by Kathleen McDonald. Boston: Wisdom, 1984. Pp. 13-6, 34-6, 44-6, 77-9
17. *Genesis* 1-3. Found in *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and About Women*. Edited by Serinity Young. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1993. Pp. 2-4.
18. *Rig Veda* X. 90 and 129. Found in *The Hindu Tradition*. Ainslee Embree, ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1972. Pp. 25-7.
19. "Origins of the Universe," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 25 December 1995.
20. From "Theodicy: Encountering Evil." Found in *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion* by James C. Livingston. 3rd Edition. Saddle River, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1998. Pp. 275-76, 289-300
21. "The Object of Perfect Wisdom." From *Selected Sayings from the Perfection of Wisdom*. E. Conze, ed. and trans. London: The Buddhist Society, 1955. Pp. 74-5. (Also versions on web.
22. "Women." From *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. 1. Arthur Arberry, trans. London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1955. Pp. 100-1, 105-6.
23. New Society Outlook (free) and reading from *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas. Found in *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and About Women*. Edited by Serinity Young. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1993. Pp. 68-69.
24. "The Status of Women." From the *Laws of Manu*. Found in *The Range of Religion*. Denise and John Carmody, eds. New York: Macmillan, 1992. Pp. 269-71.
25. Matthew 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount). *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. NT, pp. 6-10
26. From *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* by Jeremy Bentham. 1789.
27. The Passover (Exodus 12). Found in *Sacred Texts of the World*. Edited by Ninian Smart and Richard Hecht. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1982. Pp. 69-70
28. From *The Book of Common Prayer* (Episcopal Church). New York: Seabury Press, 1977. Church Hymnal Corp. Pp. 326-7, 333-8.
29. "A Boom in Spirit," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 October 1992.
30. From *The Precarious Vision* by Peter Berger. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1961. Pp. 105-07, 109-17

31. "How to Be a Good Communist" by Liu Shao-chi. From *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. W. T. deBary, ed. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960. Pp. 911-18.
32. "The Role of Religion in Communist Chinese Society" by Lucy Jen Huang. *Asian Survey* XI. 7 (July, 1971). Found in *The Chinese Way in Religion*. L. Thompson, ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1973. Pp. 239-41.
33. "Confronting the Challenge of Hunger," from *The Hunger Project*. New York: The Hunger Project, 1998. Pp. 2-4. Also on web.
34. "Fighting Hunger. . ." from Oxfam America (Boston), 1998.
35. The PPE and Upward Spirals, from UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 1994*.
36. "Living Your Vision" by David Gershon and Gail Straub. *Lotus* (Spring, 1993): 58-63.
37. From *Toward a Psychology of Being* by Abraham Maslow. 2nd ed. New York: Wiley and Sons, 1968. Pp. 3-8.
38. "Putting Life's Trials in a Sacred Context," *The New York Times*, 9 February, 1997.
39. From *The Americanization of the Unconscious* by John Seeley. New York: Science House, 1967. Pp. 53-60
40. From *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. New York: Macmillan, 1952. Pp. 161, 167-70, 174-75.
41. "Man Against Darkness" by W. T. Stace. *Atlantic Monthly* (Sept., 1948). Pp. 54, 57-58.
42. "A Genetic Future Both Tantalizing and Disturbing," *The New York Times*, 1 January, 2000.
43. "Four Indicators of Humanhood--the Enquiry Matures" by Joseph Fletcher. Found in *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*. S. Lammers and A. Verhey, eds. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987. Pp. 275-77. Originally from *The Hastings Report* 4 (December, 1975), 4-7.
44. From *The Book of Rites*. Found in *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources*. Edited by Deborah Sommer. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. 38-9.
45. From *The Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity*. Found in *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources*. Pp. 149-51.

46. From *The Analects* of Confucius. Found in *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources*. Edited by Deborah Sommer. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. 44.
47. From *The Tao-te-Ching* of Lao-Tzu. Found in *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources*. Pp. 73-75.
48. From *Lessons for Women* by Pan Chao. Found in *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources*. Pp. 108-11.
49. From *The Hsiao Ching*. Mary Makra and Paul Sih, trans., Asian Institute Translations, (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961) Found in *Religious Worlds* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall-Hunt Publishing Co.), pp. 179-80.