

Marshall University
RST 205 Fall 2000
Introduction to Religion in the Modern World [World Religions]



Not knowing how near the Truth is,
People seek it far away: what a pity.- Hakuin

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Class Electronic Discussion Lists: Section 201: rst205a-0101-list@marshall.edu
Section 202: rst205b-0101-list@marshall.edu

Class Electronic Discussion Lists Archives: [Section 101](#) and [Section 102](#)

RST 205, Section 201: MWF 9-9:50, Harris Hall 445 / **RST 205, Section 202:** MWF 11-11:50, Harris Hall 445
Office hours: MW 10-11, 12-2; T/Thr 11-12:30; F 10-11
Office Email: Student email will be responded to within 24 hours of reception

Text/Resources: *The Illustrated World's Religions*, Smith
The Religions of the World, CD-ROM
Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind, O'Halloran
Spirituality and World Religions, Saint-Laurent
World-Wide Web Sites

[Religious Studies](#) is an academic discipline in which the [phenomenon of religion](#) in human experience is studied in a nonsectarian, unbiased manner using various kinds of historical-critical, analytical, comparative, phenomenological, interdisciplinary methodologies. Discussion should be conducted with honesty, enthusiasm, kindness, critical thought and respect for the worldviews and beliefs of others. This course is not only for learning, but is itself to be a model for how to learn, why to learn, and to learn to love to learn.

The following course explanation, in its totality, is a syllabus that is dynamic and flexible according to the needs of the learners and of the learning process. It is not presented as complete at the beginning of the study, but as an initial trajectory for the study. More specific guidance and resources will be available as needed along the way. You, the learner, have a key voice in the directions our study of world religions take so that our work will be significant for you and for the class as a whole within a learner/student-centered context.

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Course Description

This course is a correlation of religion with the different areas of life: natural science, humanities, social sciences, philosophy, ethics, education. We will explore the influences of the following upon religion today: science & technology, the privatization of religion, secularization, skepticism, religious disbelief (agnosticism and atheism), religious pluralism. This study is a sustained reflection on the nature, role and meaning of religion in the personal, cultural and universal aspects of human life and existence. Many [web resource sites](#) are available for this study and each student is responsible for using the sites.

Most of the course is an introduction to the major religions of the world: **Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam**. The content of **primal religions**, such as American Indian traditions, will also be viewed. The problems, issues and dynamics of interreligious dialogue form an ongoing contemplation in the course. Such topics as God/Ultimate Reality, cosmology, evil, suffering and death, ethics, myth, ritual, doctrine, freedom, love, mysticism, community, Afterlife, the sacred, etc. will be integrated into the discussion.

A feature of this course this semester will be an experience / experiment in incultural dialogue and collaboration as learners in this RST 205 course communicate and collaborate with Japanese students in a "Comparative Cultures" class at Kansai University in Osaka, Japan. This project will involve intercultural and interreligious discussions and writings with a [Kansai students web site](#) and a [Marshall students web site](#).

A major focus in the study will be upon **interreligious dialogue** and learners are encouraged to reflect upon the theories and practices of such dialogue. The following web sites are recommended to you:

[Interfaith Calendar](#)

[Relations Among Religions](#)

[United Communities of Spirit](#)

[Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance](#)

[World Scriptures: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts](#)

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Course Objectives

By the end of this study it is hoped and expected that each student will be able to formulate a foundational understanding of the meaning and role of religion today. Each student should gain an introductory, but insightful, comprehension of the major world religions, as well as the problems and possibilities of interreligious dialogue and the relationship between religion and contemporary science and culture. This can all serve to encourage students in their quest for meaning, understanding, compassion and wisdom.

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Computing in this Course

Each student needs to have the basic ability to use email that is web-sensitive such as Netscape Messenger or Microsoft Outlook and to be able to find and utilize world-wide-web resources that are available for the study of religion and religions through use of a web browser such as Navigator (4.0 or higher) or Internet Explorer (4 or higher). The course will include sending and receiving email, web site readings and research, an electronic discussion list (with web archive) and electronic publication of student writings, both individual and collaborative.

The educational use of telecomputing will facilitate ongoing asynchronous discussion, submission and revision of student writings, peer review of student writings, collaborative group writings and projects, individual communication with the professor, or among students, and publication of an electronic course journal with student contributions.

[Telecomputing tutorials](#) are available as is guidance on how to [engage in respectful communication](#) on the Internet ([netiquette](#)). In using web sources, please refer to [documenting sources from the World Wide Web](#).

The purposes of the using of computer technology in this study are as follows:

- Participation in the archived, asynchronous class discussion list (maillserv)
- Communication with international, intercultural guests on the class list
- Individual email contact with students from other parts of the world
- Anytime communication of questions, comments, problems, etc. with the professor/mentor via individual email
- Engage in a semester-long discussion with other learners in the course via the class discussion list
- Submit individual & collaborative writings electronically to the class list or professor
- Investigate relevant World-Wide Web sites
- Collaborate with other students in the course on projects/writings via email
- Expand opportunities for reflective participation in the study, beyond classroom time & place
- Encourage learners/students to become more central to the learning process and more responsible for their own, and others', learning
- Develop computer skills
- Allow learning to become more enjoyable, valuable, enduring, self-directed, active and expansive beyond just a transfer information from professor to student

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Writing Across the Curriculum

This study is a [Writing Across the Curriculum \(WAC\)](#), writing-intensive, course where writing is fully integrated into all aspects of the learning and reflection process. In this process one's writing skills are further developed in the context of both learning to write and writing to learn. There are no exams in this course, but there are in- and out-of-class writings, a formal, revised essay, group writings, oral presentations or debates with written components. On-line [writing resources](#) are available. All writings are to be completely the work of the individual or the group doing the writing, thus avoiding all [plagiarism](#).

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Attendance Policy

Attendance at every class is expected and necessary to best benefit the act and art of learning through the discussion and writing orientation of this course on a very complex subject. Anyone not willing to be responsible for attending all classes is advised not to take this course.

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Drop Policy

The official withdrawal policy is observed where the withdrawal ("W") period for an individual course begins January 18th and ends March 17th.

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Course Evaluation

Class List Participation, Selected Writings & Kansai U (Japan) - Marshall U Project	- 25%
Individual Essay / Project #1	- 25%
Self-Directed Group Writing & Class Presentation Project	- 25%
Individual Integration Essay #2 (revision process)	- 25%

* Collaborative Initiatives for Course Journal Issues *

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All writings, presentations, discussion list postings need to be given on time to receive full evaluation.

[Semester Schedule](#)

"Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it." - Pascal

