

**Comparative Religion (Rel 120)**  
Benedict College  
Columbia, South Carolina  
Spring 2010

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**Course Description**

This course is a study of the world's major religions and how they are interrelated. To be sure, the practice of religion has meant for most of us in the Western Hemisphere the Christian faith instilling in us its mixed blessings of the call to human salvation on the one hand but clear biases regarding non-Christian religions and those who adhere to them on the other. This course seeks to minimize those biases by providing the student with a more informed knowledge of the major religions of the world in three contexts:

1) Primitive or Basic Context; 2) Indian Context; and 3) Middle East Context. Further, this course examines the presuppositions of each context showing their similarities and differences. In this sense, the course is most aptly titled Comparative Religion. The student will be encouraged to develop a genuine appreciation for the basic tenets of each of the religions such that he/she does not feel that the distinctives of his/her faith are being compromised.

**Course Objectives**

This course will enable the student to:

- 1) identify major theories regarding the origin of religion;
- 2) have a working knowledge of the common characteristics of each of the contexts out of which the religions emerged;
- 3) identify the founders, leaders, major developments and basic tenets of the religions covered.

**Course Requirements**

Five Examinations (25% each - lowest exam score dropped)

Exams

The exams will be objective, i.e., they will consist of multiple choice questions along with two extra credit questions to be determined by the instructor. The exam material will be taken primarily from class lectures and discussions with the remaining material taken from the textbook. Students are required to take all exams on the days designated by the instructor. **Make-up exams will be given only in cases of emergency (to be determined by the instructor). If a student wishes to take a make-up exam, he/she must consult with the instructor before the scheduled exam.** Only in rare instances will the instructor permit a make-up exam if consulted after the scheduled exam. Students have up to the next class meeting after the scheduled exam to take the make-up. No make-ups will be given after that! Students not taking either the scheduled or make-up

exam will be given a numeric grade of zero for that exam. Students are also required to be on time and ready to take the exams before they are administered. Students entering the lecture hall after the exam has been administered will **NOT** be allowed to sit for the exam and will be given a numeric grade of zero for that exam!

#### Grade Scale

- A 100-85
- B 84-70
- C 69-60
- D 59-50
- F 49-below

#### Cheating

Cheating on exams or other assignments will not be tolerated. It will result in your immediate dismissal from this class and a failing grade for the course. These measures will be taken in addition to whatever action(s) Benedict College deems appropriate.

#### Attendance

Given that the majority of the exam material will come from class lectures and discussions, regular attendance is imperative for student success. **Therefore, students will be allowed three unexcused absences. After the third unexcused absence, a point will be deducted from the student's final average for each subsequent absence!**

When in class, students are expected to take lecture notes and participate in class discussions. Students doing neither of these and constantly disrupting the general decorum of the classroom may be dismissed from the classroom by the instructor.

#### Electronic Devices

Other than a laptop or recording device for lectures, electronic devices are strictly prohibited in the classroom. **In particular, cell phones and listening devices are prohibited from use during class!** They are to be turned off before entering the classroom and not used for the duration of the class. Students in violation will be disciplined or dismissed from the class.

#### **Required Course Text**

Hopfe, Lewis M., Mark Woodward, Religions of the World (Eleventh Edition).  
Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Publishing, 2007.  
(First published in 1983).

#### **Course Outline**

**Week One** (1/11-1/15): Course Introduction and Syllabus

- A. 1/11 Course Introduction
- B. 1/13 Course Syllabus

**Week Two** (1/18-1/22): Theories of the Origin of Religion

- A. 1/18 King Holiday (No Classes)
- B. 1/20 Polytheistic Theories of the Origin of Religion

**Week Three (1/25-1/29): Theories of the Origin of Religion con't.**  
A. 1/25 Monotheistic Theories of the Origin of Religion  
B. 1/27 Atheistic Theories of the Origin of Religion  
Readings: Hopfe, Introduction

**Week Four (2/1-2/5): Examination One**  
A. 2/1 Faculty Development Day (No Classes)  
B. 2/3 Examination One

**Week Five (2/8-2/12): Basic Religions**  
A. 2/8 Return Examination One  
B. 2/10 Characteristics of Basic Religions

**Week Six (2/15-2/19): African Religions**  
A. 2/15 African Religions  
B. 2/17 Black History Teleconference (No Class)  
Readings: Hopfe, Chapter 1

**Week Seven (2/22-2/26): Midterm Exam**  
A. 2/22 Controversial African Customs  
B. 2/24 Midterm Examination  
Readings: Hopfe, Chapter 3

**Week Eight (3/1-3/5): Midterm Examination**  
A. 3/1 Return Midterm Examination  
B. 3/3 Midterm Grade Preparation  
Founder's Day Convocation, Tuesday, March 2

**Week Nine (3/8-3/12) Spring Break (No Classes)**

**Week Ten (3/15-3/19): Indian Religions**  
A. 3/15 Characteristics of Indian Religions  
B. 3/17 Classical Hinduism  
Readings: Hopfe, Chapter 4

**Week Eleven (3/22-3/26): Hinduism con't**  
A. 3/22 Postclassical Hinduism  
B. 3/24 Examination Three

**Week Twelve (3/29-4/2): Middle East Religions**  
A. 3/29 Return Examination Three  
B. 3/31 Characteristics of Middle East Religions  
Friday, April 2, Easter Holiday (No Classes)

**Week Thirteen (4/5-4/9): The Formation of the Biblical Canon**

A. 4/5 Easter Holiday (No Classes)

B. 4/7 The Formation of the Biblical Canon

Readings: Hopfe, Chapter 12

**Week Fourteen (4/12-4/16): Examination Four**

A. 4/12 The Formation of the Biblical Canon con't

B. 4/14 Examination Four

**Week Fifteen (4/19-4/23): Divisions In The Church**

A. 4/19 Return Examination Four

B. 4/21 The Great Schism

**Week Sixteen (4/26-4/30): Divisions In The Church**

A. 4/26 The Protestant Reformation

B. 4/28 Examination Five

**\*\*\*Sophomore Proficiency Examination\*\*\***

Thursday, April 8, 1pm-4pm and Monday, April 12, 6pm-9pm  
LRC PO A and PO B

**\*\*\*Senior Examinations\*\*\*** Monday, April 26-Wednesday, April 28

**\*\*\*Common Final Examinations\*\*\*** Friday, April 30, Saturday, May 1, 8am-6pm

**\*\*\*Final Examinations\*\*\*** Monday, May 3 - Friday, May 7

**\*\*\*Commencement\*\*\*** Saturday, May 8

Although this is the stated outline, it is subject to change as dictated by either time availability or unforeseen circumstances.