GB 5563: World Religions
Summer 2015
Weekend Format

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Course Dates: This course meets May 29–30 and July 10–11. It meets on Fridays 5–9 p.m. and on Saturdays 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Course Description: Increasing globalization has created an environment of religious plurality. This course is designed to provide students with an understanding and appreciation for the phenomenon of religion in general and of the various world religions in particular. The course will begin with an examination of the origin and practice of religion. The bulk of the course will focus on a survey of the major religious systems: Tribal religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, and Islam. Comparisons will be made to the Christian faith. The course is intended to introduce the student to the history, myths, beliefs, rituals, and moral codes of the world’s major faiths. We will explore how religion is related to the larger culture and how changes in culture impact belief systems. The course will also examine a few new religious movements with particular emphasis given to the growing influence of Eastern religious thought on the Western World and the language of Spirituality in contemporary culture.

Course Objectives
Students completing this course will be able to:
1. Recognize the interrelationship of culture and religion.
2. Describe the basic beliefs and practices of the major world religions.
3. Find points of contact with Christianity to enable dialogue with people of another religion.
4. Recognize elements of traditional religions in the eclectic environment of religious pluralism.

Assessment
The fulfillment of these objectives will be assessed through:
1. Class discussion
2. Reflective reports on visit to worship center of another religion
3. Comparison chart
4. Two exams
5. Book review

Required Text


**Course Requirements**

1. **Attendance & Participation** - An integral part of the learning process is participation in class discussion. Allowing your ideas to be challenged by the intellectual community moves us all to a better understanding of the truth.

2. **Reading Assignments** - Students will be assigned both primary and secondary texts to read in preparation for each class session. Certain readings may require the student to write a reflective essay.

3. **Exams** - There will be one take home exam after each weekend session.

4. **Comparison Chart of World Religions** - The student will develop a comparison chart of the major religions we cover which will include: 1) the historical and cultural contexts in which the religion developed, 2) what is sacred [deserving of veneration]- key gods, spirit beings, nature, etc. 3) sacred writings/authority, 4) beliefs about the nature of humans, 5) ultimate goal [salvation or something else] 6) ritual practices, 7) explanations of evil, and 8) ethics and morality.

5. **Observation and Theological Response** - Each student should choose two religions for special study (one Eastern religion and one Western religion). You are required to **read at least one book** for each of these two religions and then **visit** a worship center that practices that system of belief. Take note of key symbols, images, and practices. For each religion write a **10 page paper** (double space, 1 inch margins, 12 pt font) outlining your observations and providing a Christian response. How would you describe the essence of this religion? What is attractive about this religion? What elements are most difficult for an outsider to understand? How is this religion practiced differently in the United States than it might be in its place of origin? After presenting a coherent description of the religion and your experience, outline a Christian response to this religion. What are some points of contact or similarity that would provide a means of dialogue? What are some areas of conflict that are incompatible with Christian faith? How would you share your faith with someone raised in this particular religion? The first half of the paper should address what you learned from the book. The second half should address your personal observations. Include a bibliography.

6. **Book Summary** - Read Cowan and Bromley’s *Cults and New Religions: A Brief History*. Provide a synopsis of each chapter and close each section with your thoughts/response. Submit double space, 12 pt font, 1 inch margins. “B” paper min. 1.5 page per chapter. “A” paper min. 2.5 pages per chapter.

7. **Academic Integrity** - In keeping with our identity as a Christian University and our goal to help shape lifelong disciples of Christ, academic integrity will be taken very seriously in this class. As your instructor, I will deal with each student fairly and honestly. As students, you are expected to do your own work on all tests and assignments unless I indicate otherwise. Penalties for integrity violations will range from failure on the assignment involved to failure in the
course. Instances of cheating may also be reported to appropriate members of the administration. For clarification, refer to the University’s Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy.

8. Dropping the Course- A decision to stop attending class does not constitute dropping the course. A drop/add form (available in the Registrar’s Office) must be signed by the teacher and processed in the Registrar’s Office before the drop is official.

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<tr>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 100–90</td>
<td>Book Summary 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B 89–80</td>
<td>Comparison Chart 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C 79–70</td>
<td>Exams 40%</td>
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<td>F Below 70</td>
<td>Religion Paper 1 20%</td>
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<td>Religion Paper 2 20%</td>
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Due Dates
- Book Summary- June 12th
- Paper 1- June 26th
- Paper 2- July 24th
- Comparison Chart- July 29th

Reading Assignment for May 29th–30th
*Experiencing the World’s Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change* by Molloy: Chapters 1–4
*Anthology of World Scriptures* by Van Voorst - Chapters 1–3

Reading Assignment for July 10th–11th
*Experiencing the World’s Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change* by Molloy: Chapters 6–8, 10
*Anthology of World Scriptures* by Van Voorst - Chapters 6, 7, & 12
World Religions Bibliography


Picken, Stuart B. D. *Shinto, Japan=s Spiritual Roots*. Kodansha America, 1980.


