

Introduction to World Religions

Ms. Stephanie Wong

"No one who has not examined patiently and honestly the other religions of the world can know what Christianity really is, or can join with such truth and sincerity in the words of St. Paul. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

Friedrich Max Müller

"If you only know one religion, you don't know any."

Martin Marty

"The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. It regards with respect those ways of acting and living and those precepts and teachings which, though often at variance with what it holds and expounds, frequently reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens everyone."

Nostra Aetate, 2

Course Description: This course is a survey of the major world religions. It will analyze each of the religions from a perspective of neutrality, looking at its beginnings, its major teachings, and its modern practice. In addition, it will also look at each religion from a Catholic lens.

Course Benchmarks: Students completing the 12th grade World Religions course will:

- Understand the stance of the Roman Catholic church toward other religions as explicated in *Nostra Aetate* and additional documents.
- Demonstrate a working vocabulary for and a mature understanding of major world religions.
- Appreciate the beauty and complexity of the beliefs of major religions and the expression of those beliefs.
- Understand some of the factors that shape religions, including cultural, geographical and political factors.
- Identify and appreciate the common elements as well as the basic differences between the major world religions.
- Understand that there is diversity within each religion as to how its adherents interpret its basic truths and interact with the wider world.
- Develop an awareness of the impact of religions on the world today.

Text: Nancy Clemmons, *Exploring the Religions of Our World* (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN; ISBN 1-59471-125-9)

COURSE OUTLINE

Weeks 1-2	Introduction to the course <i>Nostra Aetate</i> Chapter 1: Beginning the Journey
Weeks 3-4	Chapter 2 Judaism
Weeks 5-6	Chapter 3 Christianity
Weeks 7-8	Chapter 4 Islam
Weeks 9-10	Chapter 5 Hinduism
Week 11-12	Chapter 6 Buddhism
Week 13-14	Chapter 7 Chinese Religions (group presentations)
Week 15-16	Chapter 8 Japanese Religions (group presentations)
Week 17-18	Comparative religions and Review

Grading and Expectations

Plagiarism - Students are expected to comply with IHHS's policy on academic integrity.

Study materials – You are expected to bring your textbook and a journal to class every day.

Class Participation – Students are expected to participate actively and respectfully in class and in online discussion with thoughtful questions, reflections, or other input. Disrespectful behavior such as interrupting others or making scornful remarks will reflect negatively on your grade.

Attendance – If you are absent, it is *your* responsibility to find out about any assignments missed and to catch up on class notes. Please check the class website for assignments. If you miss a test due to an excused absence, you must meet with me to make it up. Field trips and guest speakers are important components of the course. Consequently attendance on these days are mandatory. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence, you must let me know beforehand. An alternate assignment will be given. In the case of field trips, this will usually involve a visit to a comparable site.

Students are expected to read the chapter before we begin the new chapter.

Grades will be based on total points, except for the Final Exam (25%) and Participation (10%).

Please check my website regularly for assignments, including:

- a weekly blog based on a news article. Please comment thoughtfully and respectfully – keeping in mind both your classmates and the religious traditions of the world. Entries should be 6-10 sentences long, using correct grammar and spelling. You should try to present an honest and original viewpoint. It can also consist of personal anecdotes, good questions, or responses on your classmates' comments (Please read them). For security reasons, please do not use your full names when posting comments and do not give any information that might identify you or the school to anyone outside of this class.
- a test at the end of each chapter.
- Group presentations for chapters 7 and 8.
- Reflection papers, due two days after every field trip or class speaker, which should be typed MLA style and consist of an introduction, conclusion and at least three original observations and commentary (1CD:2CM format).
- Journal entries will be assigned in class. Please bring a journal (new or unused) to class everyday. Journal entries will be judged not on the rightness of your ideas but on the amount of thoughtfulness in your response to the prompt. Journals are confidential, but any information that can be construed as cry for help will be brought to the counselors' attention.. I will collect the journals once every quarter.

Extra credit – Extra credit assignment will be allowed in the form of a 11-15 minute presentation about a religion that was not covered in this course. You must get the date approved by me at least two weeks before your presentation. The presentation should be done within the first 15 weeks of the semester. If you do NOT present on the pre-assigned day, your class grade will be dropped 1%.Your presentation should include some form of visual aid, e.g. powerpoint, video, poster. Each student may only do one extra credit assignment. The maximum score for each assignment is 2% of the class grade.