

Human Religious Experience -- Religion 100-007

Fall 2016, Blueridge Hall 129, Mon. & Wed., 1:30-2:45 pm

Instructor: David Dakake

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Course Description and Objectives:

This course will deal with seven of the world's major religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism/Taoism, the North American Indian tradition, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Each religious tradition will be examined from the perspective of its fundamental doctrines and practices, and with consideration to the fact that within each tradition two universal elements may be discerned: (1) a "truth" – an essential doctrine or dogma, and (2) a "way" – a means of realizing that truth within the life of the individual. In addition to this general framework of study, we will also spend time dealing with some of the issues confronting followers of these faiths today, that is to say, we will explore within each tradition some of the particular conflicts and challenges posed by religious life lived in modernity.

The objectives of the course are, to familiarize students with the basic concepts and practices of each faith, as well as to make students aware of the fundamental religious history that informs each of these traditions. By the end of the class students should be aware, not only of the various formal and historical elements that distinguish these traditions from one another, but they should also be able to articulate something of the internal unity of these various doctrines that can be said to lie beyond the formal plane. Students will also be expected to understand some of the basic challenges posed to each of these religious traditions by modernity.

Course Requirements:

Attendance at lectures and class discussions is left to the discretion of each student, although students are responsible for all materials presented at these times, as well as any announcements made in class concerning the course. Each student is expected to complete three exams (1st, 2nd and Final) during the semester. If a student misses any of these exams (**for a reason acceptable to the instructor**), the student will have to write a 15 page research paper (300 words per page, with proper academic citations) on a topic of the student's choosing, so long as it is related to the subject/s of the exam that was missed, and so long as the topic is approved by the instructor. Research papers related to missing either the 1st or 2nd exam will be due by the end of class on Nov. 28, 2016. Any research papers not handed in at that time will result in the student receiving a grade of "zero" (not "F") for the particular exam or exams that they missed. If a student misses the Final exam (**for a reason acceptable to the instructor**) that student will receive an "incomplete" grade for the semester and will also have to write a 15 page research paper (with the same requirements as described above). That paper must be submitted in time to satisfy university regulations for finishing incompletes.

Grading:

Final grades are determined on the basis of the three exams. Each exam is worth 1/3 of the semester grade. The instructor reserves the right, in borderline cases, to take into consideration a student's participation in class in assigning the final grade.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments:

Aug. 29 and 31 **Introduction to the Study of Religion and Hinduism**,
read: *The World's Religions*, pp. 12-81.

Sept. 7 and 12 **Hinduism**, read: *Ethical Issues*, pp. 1-51.

Sept. 14 and 19 **Buddhism**, read: *The World's Religions*, pp. 82-153.

Sept. 21 and 26 **Buddhism**, read: *Ethical Issues*, pp. 55-93.

Sept. 28 **1st EXAM**

Oct. 3 and 5 **Confucianism/Taoism**, read: *The World's Religions*, pp. 154-220.

Oct. 11 and 12 **Plains Indian**, read: *Black Elk Speaks*, pp. xiii-xxx
and pp.1- 99 (through "The Rubbing Out of Long Hair").

Oct. 17 and 19 **Plains Indian**, read pp. 100 ("Walking the Black Road") –
210 (through "Author's Postscript").

Oct. 24 **2nd EXAM**

Oct. 26 and 31 **Judaism**, read: *The World's Religions*, pp. 271-316.

Nov. 2 and 7 **Judaism**, read: *Ethical Issues*, pp. 135-170.

Nov. 9 and 14 **Christianity**, read: *The World's Religions*, pp. 317-364.

Nov. 16 and 21 **Christianity**, read: *Ethical Issues*, pp.175-214.

Nov. 28 and 30 **Islam**, read: *The World's Religions*, pp. 221-270.

Dec. 5 and 7 **Islam**, read: *Ethical Issues*, pp. 220-258.

Dec. 14 **FINAL EXAM** 1:30-4:15pm

Textbooks:

-*Black Elk Speaks*, John G. Neihardt, SUNY Press, 2008.

-*Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions*, eds. Peggy Morgan and Clive Lawton,
Edinburgh University Press, 2007. **This is a GMU eBook**

Direction to view eBook:

Go to library web page at <http://library.gmu.edu>

Select the "**Books & more**" tab.

Type the book title, "**Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions**," into search box.

Click on the title for the 2007 edition, not the 1996 edition

Click on "**Links: Online resource available to Mason and WRLC student, faculty, staff and onsite patrons.**"

Click on "**eBook Full Text**" on the left side of the page.

Use "Table of Contents" to select a particular chapter/section.

Use the left and right arrows to get to specific pages.

-*The World's Religions*, Huston Smith, HarperOne, 2009.

-Blackboard materials

