

COURSE OUTLINE **Comparative Religions**

Course Description: RG 210. Comparative Religions. 3 hours credit. This course will enable the student to develop his or her historical understanding of seven of the world's major, living religions through his/her analysis of their origins and their historical development. These seven religions are Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Shinto. The student will analyze the principal and distinguishing features of these religions in terms of their primary customs, beliefs and practices, identifying the most outstanding characteristics of each of these religions, and the student will present his or her own views on these issues in discussion and/or written documents.

Course Relevance: The formal, academic study of world religions provides students the opportunity to explore the diverse range of answers given to the most fundamental, ultimate questions of human existence. A course in "Comparative Religions" helps students to develop their skills in the areas of critical thinking, historical interpretation and written communication, all of which help to enhance students' skills in understanding complex issues. "Comparative Religions" provides students with the foundations for intellectual maturity and lifelong self-inquiry. It provides them with the foundations for the improvement of cultural awareness, with a deeper understanding of current world events, and with new insight into the highly human quality of such religions as Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Shinto.

Required Materials:

RG 210

Textbook: Hutchison, J. (1991). *Paths of Faith* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

RG 210 Telecourse Materials

Textbook: Coogan, M., Ed. (2001). *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*.

New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Telecourse study guide: Simmons, J. (1999). *Beliefs and Believers: Teleclass Study Guide* (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Telecourse tape series: *Beliefs and Believers*, Lessons 1—24. (Note: Instructors are to choose and assign a minimum of 15 of the 24 one-hour videos; assignment of more videos is optional and is left to the instructor's discretion.)

Telecourse faculty manual: Simmons, J. (1999). *Beliefs and Believers: Faculty Manual*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

RG 210 Online Course Materials

The materials for the RG 210 Online Course are the same as those for the RG 210 Telecourse.

Online course study guide: Simmons, J. (1999). *Beliefs and Believers: Teleclass Study Guide* (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Online course tape series: *Beliefs and Believers*, Lessons 1—24.

Online course faculty manual: Simmons, J. (1999). *Beliefs and Believers: Faculty Manual*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Learning Outcomes:

The intention is for the student to be able to:

1. Analyze the origins and the historical development of seven of the world's major, living religions and develop his or her own historical understanding of these religions
2. Identify and analyze the principal and distinguishing features of these religions in terms of their primary customs, beliefs and practices
3. Present his or her own views on these issues in discussion and/or written documents in a clear and precise manner

Primary Learning PACT Skills that will be DEVELOPED and/or documented in this course:

Through the student involvement in this course, he/she will develop his/her ability in the following primary PACT skill areas:

1. Critical Thinking
 - The student will analyze three world religions, comparing and contrasting them in regard to their principal and distinguishing beliefs and practices, and the student will explain in detail how the believers discover or create meaning in their lives by means of those beliefs and practices.
2. Historical Interpretation
 - The student will place the three religions within their historical and socio-cultural contexts—their time and place of origin—and discuss their implications for the present and their possibilities for the future.
3. Writing
 - Through a variety of types of written work, the student will practice his/her writing skills, including his/her use of standard English wording and phrasing and his/her knowledge of standard English spelling and punctuation and grammar.
4. Computer/Internet Use
 - Through the production of a research paper that requires that the text document be word processed and that the student make use of the internet to find information useful to his or her purposes, the student will use a computer to do research on his/her topic, to create a complete document, to make revisions in the document until it is in its final form and to produce a hard copy of the document to be turned in to the instructor.

Secondary skills (developed but not documented):

Self-Concept (Participation in activities which promote and stimulate personal growth and development)

Teamwork (Willingness to actively and productively participate)
 Valuing Diversity (Recognition of the diversity of perspectives; recognition of the similarities and differences between the self and others; perception of value added through the experience)
 Ethical Conduct (academic honesty and respect for others' rights)

Major Summative Assessment Task:

These learning outcomes and the primary Learning PACT skills will be demonstrated by:

1. Preparation of a five to seven page essay on the following topic: "Discuss and analyze three world religions in regard to their principal and distinguishing beliefs and practices. Explain in detail how the believers discover or create meaning in their lives by means of those beliefs and practices."

SCORING RUBRICS FOR THE RELIGION DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT OF THE SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT TASK:

THE SCORING KEY: (The same key is applicable to all the ACT skills)

- 6 = Exceptional achievement evident; mature, unusually superior mastery for college sophomore level work
- 5 = Outstanding achievement evident; superior mastery for college sophomore level work
- 4 = Very strong achievement evident; more than adequate competence for college sophomore level work
- 3 = Moderate achievement evident; adequate competence for college sophomore level work
- 2 = Minimal achievement evident; less than adequate for college sophomore level work
- 1 = No achievement evident; utterly not adequate for college sophomore level work

**The "A" Skills
 Analytical Thinking**

CRITICAL THINKING

The student's work evidences:	Score:
1. an accurate identification of the topic to be analyzed	6 5 4 3 2 1 _____
2. consideration of pertinent information before decision-making	6 5 4 3 2 1 _____

3. use of an analytical process (“analytical process” refers to such approaches as comparison/contrast; classification; cause and effect, etc.)	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
4. drawing of logical conclusions	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
5. supporting of conclusions with evidence and reason	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
6. application of previously learned principles/concepts to current topic	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
7. insight into the topic	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____

**The “A” Skills
Analytical Thinking**

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

The student’s work evidences:		Score:
1. awareness of the historical distinction of the phenomenon	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
2. identification of the interrelationship of major components of the phenomenon	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
3. identification of concepts evident in the phenomenon	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
4. application of those concepts to present and/or future phenomenon	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____

**The “C” Skills
Communication Skills**

WRITING

The student’s work evidences:		Score:
1. knowledge of standard English wording and phrasing	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
2. knowledge of standard English spelling and punctuation	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
3. knowledge of standard English grammar	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____

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|---|-------------|-------|
| 4. use of topical, chronological and/or spatial organizational strategies | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 5. effective fulfillment of a specific purpose or purposes | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 6. effective addressing of a specific audience | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |

**The “T” Skills
Technology Skills**

COMPUTER LITERACY

- | | | |
|---|-------------|---------------|
| The student’s work evidences: | | Score: |
| 1. the creation of a complete document using an appropriate program | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 2. the saving of the document with appropriate identification | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 3. the creation of a final modified document | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 4. the production of a hard copy of the document | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |

**The “T” Skills
Technology Skills**

INTERNET USE

- | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------|
| The student’s work evidences: | | Score: |
| 1. knowledge of internet terminology | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 2. use of current and reliable sources of information | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 3. use of a directory search engine and/or a keyword search engine and the use of source(s) derived from a web search engine and/or an online database | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |

Course Content:

- I. Themes—Key recurring concepts that run throughout this course:
 - A. Personal identity: Who am I?
 - B. Individual purpose: Why am I here?
 - C. Personal destiny: Where am I going?
- II. Issues—Key issues that will be addressed in this course: areas of conflict that must be understood in order to achieve the intended outcome:
 - A. Varied conceptions of the ultimate origin and identity of human beings
 - B. Varied perspectives on the question of the meaning and purpose of the existence of human beings
 - C. Varied conceptions of the ultimate destiny of human beings
- III. Concepts—Key concepts that must be understood to address the issues:
 - A. Buddhism
 - B. Christianity
 - C. Confucianism
 - D. Hinduism
 - E. Islam
 - F. Judaism
 - G. Shinto
- IV. Skills—Actions that are essential to achieve the course outcomes:
 - A. Analyze the origins and historical development of seven world religions
 - B. Analyze their principal and distinguishing features
 - C. Identify their most outstanding characteristics
 - D. Provide evidence of the ability to perform the above skills in a research paper that is clearly and precisely written

Learning Units:

- I. Introduction: What is “Religion?”
 - A. Various definitions of the term “religion”
 - B. Various approaches to the study of religion
 - C. Characteristics of a proper academic study of religion
- II. Buddhism
 - A. Origins and historical development
 - B. Principal and distinguishing features in terms of its primary beliefs and practices
- III. Christianity
 - A. Origins and historical development
 - B. Principal and distinguishing features in terms of its primary beliefs and practices
- IV. Confucianism
 - A. Origins and historical development
 - B. Principal and distinguishing features in terms of its primary beliefs and practices

- V. Hinduism
 - A. Origins and historical development
 - B. Principal and distinguishing features in terms of its primary beliefs and practices
- VI. Islam
 - A. Origins and historical development
 - B. Principal and distinguishing features in terms of its primary beliefs and practices
- VII. Judaism
 - A. Origins and historical development
 - B. Principal and distinguishing features in terms of its primary beliefs and practices
- VIII. Shinto
 - A. Origins and historical development
 - B. Principal and distinguishing features in terms of its primary beliefs and practices

Learning Activities:

Independent and collaborative learning activities will be assigned within and outside the college classroom to assist students in achieving the intended learning outcomes. Learning activities will be geared toward practices that would be useful not only in the comprehension and critical analysis of assigned class readings but also in the analysis of other types of written communications. The learning activities will also emphasize the importance of good writing skills which is a benefit to students both inside the classroom and outside the college classroom in a variety of situations. Examples of activities which contribute to the learning process include: instructor lectures, class discussions, panel discussions, audio-visual aids, films followed by group discussion, guest speakers, daily exercises, reading assignments, handouts, study guides, field trips and individual conferences with the instructor. These methods and other methods deemed suitable may be used individually or in combination by all instructors.

Telecourse instruction is based on the use of video tapes, a textbook and a study guide and may include other avenues to student learning as deemed suitable by the instructor.

Online course instruction is based on the use of the computer as a distance learning/ communication tool. This course also makes use of video tapes, a textbook and a study guide and may include other avenues to student learning as deemed suitable by the instructor.

Grade Determination:

The student will be graded on the satisfactory completion of learning activities (including the required assessment task as stated earlier in this document). Grade determinants

may include the following: Daily work; tests, both essay and objective (including quizzes, chapter or unit tests and comprehensive examinations); writing assignments (both inside and outside of class); research papers; student projects; student presentations; attendance; class participation and other methods of evaluation employed at the discretion of the individual instructor. These methods may be used individually or in combination by all instructors. A Center for Independent Study is available for those students having difficulty in a particular area to seek additional assistance in course work.

