**RS150: WORLD RELIGIONS**

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**Santa Susana 235, 818-677-2357, Office Hours (online): M 11-12**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This online course studies selected major world religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – and investigates rituals, ethics, institutional structures and the cultural ethos of religions, as well as their myths, doctrines and sacred texts. Through a combination of lectures, class discussions, writing exercises, films, readings of sacred texts, and site visitations, we will develop a better understanding of and appreciation for the diverse religious traditions of the world. As we study these traditions, we will also have an opportunity to reflect critically upon some thematic connections that tie various traditions together at the same time that they illustrate their differences.

Student Learning Objectives for World Religions 150:

1. Think empathetically and critically about conflicting religious claims.

2. Acquire knowledge of the history and culture of more than one major religious tradition.

3. Become familiar with the broad outlines of several world religions that continue to shape major civilizations and which have important influences on the culture of Southern California.

4. Grasp the phenomenological approach (as exemplified in the textbook) to the study of religion and culture through the study of clear descriptions and sympathetic insights into the religion of others.

5. Become a more proficient and critical reader through careful study and discussion of a masterfully written survey of selected world religions.

General Education Student Learning Outcomes: Comparative Cultural Studies/ Gender, Race, Class, Ethnicity Studies and Foreign Languages.

Goal: Students will understand the diversity and multiplicity of cultural forces that shape the world through the study of cultures, gender, sexuality, race, religion, class, ethnicities and languages with special focus on the contributions, differences, and global perspectives of diverse cultures and societies.

GE Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe and compare different cultures;

2. Explain how various cultures contribute to the development of our multicultural world;

3. Describe and explain how race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, sexuality and other markers of social identity impact life experiences and social relations;

4. Analyze and explain the deleterious impact and the privileges sustained by racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, classism, homophobia, religious intolerance or stereotyping on all sectors of society.

RS150 is a GE Paths (Global Studies/Comparative Cultural Studies)

Students enrolled in the GE Paths program explore a special theme or major question from a multidisciplinary perspective in the context of their general education requirements. If you are interested in this program you can find additional information and sign up through the website: www.csun.edu/gepaths or you can contact them directly at gepaths@csun.edu.

Student Learning Outcomes from Global Studies Path Courses:

Two or more of the learning outcomes listed below are addressed in each Global Studies Path course:

1. Students will be able to define globalization and key concepts related to globalizing trends.

2. Students will be able to recognize a variety of globalized political, economic, socio-cultural, and aesthetic forms.

3. Students will be able to discuss the political, economic, socio-cultural and/or historical underpinnings of globalization

4. Students will be able to analyze the diverse consequences of globalization including its impacts on various social formations (e.g. identity, culture, art, communities, media, markets, nation-states, among other examples) and/or the environment.

5. Students will be able to demonstrate how globalization affects and is affected by one’s own life.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is a core value at CSUN. As such, students are expected to perform their own work. When practiced, academic honesty ensures that all students are fairly graded. Cheating, plagiarism, and other dishonest practices undermine the educational process and will not be tolerated. Cheaters and all who assist them will be subject to disciplinary action with could result in suspension, expulsion, or other disciplinary actions.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Participation/Posting (30%, 30 pts.): Your participation in Discussion Forums (accessed via www.moodle.csun.edu; login using your CSUN ID and password) is very important and will count towards 30% of your grade. Each student must post at least three (3) thoughtful responses per week in any two (2) or more of the Discussion Forums for that week. Each post should be about a paragraph long (~150 words) and is rated/worth up to 2 pts. -> “2(1)” means that you received a 2/2 for 1 post in the Forum. You may, of course, post more than three posts per week, and I will count your three highest-rated/graded posts; late posts within three (3) days of the due date will only be worth one (1) point, and after three (3) days, they will not be counted at all so be sure to keep good pace each week.

Your posts should offer insight, critique or further discussion based on my initial thread or other students’ posts. Good posts (“2” rating) will demonstrate critical thinking skills and reflect assigned readings. Weak posts (“0” or “1” rating) will be those short one or two-sentence responses, which do not offer much insight or contribute to further discussion. Also, I will ask you to post a weekly summary of what you learned after each week - this will also count towards your participation/posting requirement; responses to other students in any forum also count – interaction with others is encouraged.

So, for each week of participation in Discussion Forums, you can receive up to six (6) points total (3 posts X 2 pts. = 6 pts. per week) and you will be only required to post for ten (10) weeks (so, 6 pts. per week X 10 weeks = 60 pts. total). Be sure to track your points earned per week for ten weeks. The total points earned will be multiplied by 0.5 at the conclusion of the course to calculate your participation points; so, 30 pts. total possible. During the last week of class, you will be asked to calculate and give me your participation points so that I can confirm it with my calculations at the end of the course (warning: if your calculation is incorrect, I will deduct 1 point so make sure to double-check).

2. Site Visitation Assignment (20%, 20 pts.): Students will attend a worship service of a religious group other than their own tradition and write a report (4,5 pages, 12-pt font, double-spaced; 1000 words minimum) that describes and analyzes the site/ritual observed; specific guidelines is posted on Moodle.

3. Exams (50%, 50 pts.): an objective midterm exam (on Eastern Religions) consisting of 60 multiple-choice questions (30 pts., timed, one submission, no back-tracking); and, an objective second exam (on Western Religions; 20 pts., timed one submission, no back-tracking). The portal for both the midterm and second exam will be open during the weekend of the exam, from Friday, 8am, to Sunday, 11:59pm, so that students could take the exam at their own convenient times (note: student is responsible to find a location with good internet connection). A five day “grace period” with a five (5) points deduction for an unexcused absence will be allowed for the midterm exam only (emergency situations will be taken into consideration). *There is no final exam*.

4. Extra Credit (Optional; up to 4 pts.): Visit a local museum (LACMA, Getty Center, Norton Simon, etc.) and write an essay (2 full pages, 12 pt font, double-spaced) analyzing the religious motifs found in two (2) religious art pieces (paintings, sculptures, etc.) - must relate to course content in the essay. Note: you must attach the entrance ticket (or a photo of the ticket) to your paper as proof of attendance to receive full credit. Due on or before the last day of class, not accepted after.

Important\*\*\* You will be required to submit all assignments via moodle. Be sure to submit your files using Microsoft Word .doc or .docx attachments (Note: I cannot open .wps or other obscure versions; you may also simply type in your text). I will give you one warning if you submit your file incorrectly; if it happens again, you will be assessed a penalty point for not following directions. It is important for you to monitor your grades; your assignments will be graded usually within a week. *Warning*: I do not accept any assignments via email - if you cannot submit the assignment on Moodle, that means that you missed the cut off date and the assignment is no longer accepted.

Grading % (out of 100 total points): 94-100 A, 90-93 A-, 87-89 B+, 84-86 B, 80-83 B-, 77-79 C+, 74-76 C, 70-73 C-, 60-69 D, <60 F.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (Harper). ISBN-13: 978-0061660184

Philip Novak, *The World’s Wisdom: Sacred Texts of the World’s Religions* (Harper) ISBN: 978-0-06-066342-1.

SCHEDULE:

Week 1. Introduction – go over syllabus, class introductions. Read Smith, Introduction. The Study of Religion.

**EASTERN RELIGIONS**

HINDUISM

Week 2 Indus Valley Civilization and Vedic Religion. Read Smith, Chapter on Hinduism. The Upanishads. “Varanasi” (VIDEO)

Week 3 Deities of Classical Hinduism. *Bhagavad-gita* and the Paths of Liberation. Krishna: The 9th Avatar of Vishnu.

BUDDHISM

Week 4 Life of Buddha. Read Smith, Chapter on Buddhism. Dharma: The Four Noble Truths.

Week 5 Sangha: The Buddhist Community. Novak, Chapter 2. “Little Buddha” (VIDEO).

Week 6 Zen Buddhism. Bushido. “Last Samurai” (VIDEO).

Week 7 The Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism. “Kundun” (VIDEO).

CONFUCIANISM

Week 8 Life of Confucius and His Teachings. Read Smith, Chapter on Confucianism. Mencius and Xunzi on Human Nature. Novak, Chapter 3.

TAOISM/SHINTO

Week 9 Lao-tzu’s Tao-te ching. Read Smith, Chapter on Taoism. Read Genzo Yamamoto’s web-article on “Shinto,“ from Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL), which can be accessed via CSUN Library website under “Find Resources” then “Database A-Z.” Shinto: Way of the Gods” (VIDEO); Novak, Chapter 4.

Week 10 MIDTERM EXAM

**WESTERN RELIGIONS**

JUDAISM

Week 11 Origins of Judaism. Read Smith, Chapter on Judaism. Development of Judaism to Modern Times. Novak, Chapter 5.

CHRISTIANITY

Week 12 Life of Jesus Christ and the Gospels. Read Smith, Chapter on Christianity. Apostle Paul and His Missionary Activities. Novak, Chapter 6.

ISLAM

Week 13 Life of Muhammad and the Muslim Community. Read Smith, Chapter on Islam. “The Five Pillars” (VIDEO). Novak, Chapter 7.

Week 14 Site Visitation Assignment due

Week 15 SECOND EXAM (Western Religions only); Extra Credit due