The world is increasingly interdependent, so that lasting peace—national, regional and global—can only be achieved if we think in terms of broader interest than parochial need...As the world grows smaller, we need each other more than in the past... The Dalai Lama

The mission of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions is to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its other guiding institutions in order to achieve a peaceful, just, and sustainable world... Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions

The Course: This course attempts to understand the world religions and how they have come to shape contemporary culture and values. This course also fulfills the General Education requirement for Comparative Cultures and global perspectives of diverse cultures and societies. (S5) A study of selected major world religions with emphasis on tribal religions as well as the historic international faiths of Asia and the Near East. Investigates rituals, ethics, institutional structures and the cultural ethos of religions as well as their myths, doctrines and sacred texts.

General Education 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 culture, gender, sexuality, race, religion, class, ethnicities and languages with special focus on the contributions, differences, and global perspectives of diverse cultures and societies.

General Education Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:
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;
5. Demonstrate linguistic and cultural proficiency in a language other than English.

Religious Studies Student Learning Objectives:
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.

Requirements:
Weekly internet writing assignments (25% of your grade) and participation. Pay attention to your weekly assignments. These are important to keep up and turn in a timely manner. For assignments over two weeks late or later, you will be marked by 1 out of 5 points for the weekly assignment unless a legitimate reason approved by the professor. After five weeks, you are automatically marked down by 2 out of 5 points.

(Word of caution. Do not take for granted these weekly assignments and try to keep up. They can have a significant impact upon your final grade.)

I look for answers to be at least 1 page per question and reflective of your text and virtual assignments.

Discussion groups online: I will post a question each for discussion. My expectation is that you will answer my question with a posting and respond to a fellow student with another posting. (10% of your grade)

There will be an open book midterm with a choice of two questions given to several weeks before the due date. (25%)

Final Paper: 8-10 Pages. Look at one Western Religion (Judaism, Christianity, or Islam) and one Asian Religion (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Chinese Religions). How are they responding to the Ecological Crisis? What resources are they using within their own traditions? What specifically are they doing to alleviate the ravages of climate change? You must use 5-10 outside sources Due December 15. (40% of your grade)
**Required Texts:**

**Recommended Sources:**
World Religions and Ecology Book Series, Harvard University Press.
http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/main.html

**Recommended Websites:**
www.religioustolerance.org (A good site on contemporary issues).
http://www.pluralism.org/about/index.php (Good resource on World Religions in the United States)
The Forum on Ecology and Religion
http://www.environment.harvard.edu/religion/main.html
Interfaith Outreach http://www.earthday.net/programs/religious/default.aspx

**WEEKLY Class ASSIGNMENTS:**

1) **Week of August 26 Introduction What is Religion?**
Young, pp. 3-22

**Internet Assignment:**
Read: Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,”
Explore http://www.pluralism.org/weblinks/index.php
Explore the Religion and Ecology Forum: http://www.religionandecology.org/

**Answer the Following Questions. Due September 2**

1) What is religion(s)? Why are people religious?

2) What is the method that Young uses in the text book to study religions? Explain.

3 Describe what you discovered on your online tours. Be specific as possible.

4) Assess Lynn White’s argument for the historical roots of our ecological crisis? What do think the strengths and weaknesses of his arguments?

Email robert.goss@csun.edu
Week of September 2  Indigenous Religions  
Young, pp. 27-54  

Internet Assignment:  
Watch on youtube: Inconvenient Truth by Al Gore  
Watch

Answer the Following Questions. Due September 9  
1) Describe the world view of the Yoruba or Oglala Sioux? Explain the sacred way of the religion you chose.  
2) Assess the strength of the argument of Al Gore on human impact on the climate.  
3) What do understand by “global warming”? How does it currently impact us? Its future impact?

3) Week of September 9  Zoroastrianism  
Young, 179-185  

Internet Assignment:  
Watch the youtube: People of the Flames Zoroastrianism  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPLXnteRDO4  
World of Traditional Zoroastrianism  
http://www.zoroastrianism.com/  
Parsis turn to Solar Power  
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1443789.stm

Answer the Following Questions. Due September 16  
1) What are the distinctive teachings of Zoroastrianism? What is its traditional worldview?  
2) Beliefs about the afterlife?  
3) What are Zoroastrian views of the earth and ecology? How do their burial practices reflect a respect for ecology and the earth?

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4) Week of September 16 Judaism Part 1  
Young, 186-205  
Internet Assignment:  
Watch the youtube video: History of Judaism Part 1  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B38t_Ua3_0Y  
Explore:  
The Israel Jerusalem Museum  
http://www.imj.org.il/  
The Israel Bible Museum  
http://www.israeltbaimuseum.com/
Answer the Following Questions. Due September 23.

1) Define the following? Torah, Moses, Tanak, Mishnah, Talmud, Sabbath, Covenant, Kosher Foods (Give at least a paragraph description of each and how they function in Judaism.)
2) What are the three most important periods for the development of Judaism from the vico Judaism.
3) What are the various forms of contemporary Judaism? Describe their particular features. Which ordain women? Which marry same-sex couples?
4) What practices and beliefs distinguish the Jewish religious traditions from other world religions?

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5) Week of September 23 Judaism Part II
Read the appropriate sections of Young on Judaism and modern issues in chapters 15-18

Internet Assignment:
Jewish Virtual Library http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaism.html
United States Holocaust Museum http://www.ushmm.org/
Nahum Rakkover, Living In God’s World.
http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=81
Jewish Articles: Nature and the Environment

Answer the Following Questions. Due September 30

1) Describe the major festivals of Judaism.
2) Some Jews have claimed that the holocaust has been one of the most important events in Jewish history. What did you learn from your virtual tour of the Holocaust Museum?
3) Some Jews claim that there is a Torah of the Earth. What are Jewish positions on the environment?
4) Explain what Katz calls the two ethical Jewish principles for environmental activism?

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6) Week of September 30 Christianity Part I
Young, 207-233

Internet Assignment
Watch the PBS youtube Part 1. “From Jesus to Christ.”
http://video.pbs.org/video/1365214164/

Explore the online tour of the Vatican Museums:
http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/MV_Home.html
Explore Monastics Orders (pay attention to the Taize Community):
http://www.snowcrest.net/dougbnt/ch-ord.html
http://www.christianecology.org/hristianity

Answer the Following Questions. October 7

1) What was the central message of Jesus?
2) Describe what you learned from the video From Jesus to Christ. Christian worldview.
3) Explain the distinct features of the major Christian movements: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and 2 Protestant Traditions (Lutheranism, Calvinism, or Church of England)?
4) How do Christians understand the following:
   a) kingdom of God in heaven and on earth,
   b) grace, faith, and sacraments
   c) Trinity

Extra-credit: Watch Part 1 PBS From Jesus to Christ. Write a 1 page summary of what you learned:
http://video.pbs.org/video/1365214164/

Email robert.goss@csun.edu

7) Week of October 7 Christianity Part II
Read the appropriate sections of Young on Christianity and modern issues in chapters 15-18

Internet Assignment
Christian Ecology http://www.christianecology.org/
California Interfaith Power and Light, http://interfaithpower.org/
Sally Bingham: A Religious Response to Global Warming, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhPbVbFji5A&playnext=1&list=PLDE4AC3DDDCE2EE953&feature=results_main
Watch two Segments: Rev. Bob Shore-Goss, Homosexuality and the Bible on youtube.

Answer the Following Questions. Due October 14

1) Both Carol and Ruether require changes of Christian behaviors toward the environment. Which has the strongest arguments? Why?

2) Explore two of the links from Christian ecology.org. What did you
3) What did you learn from watching Dr. Shore-Goss on homosexuality and the Bible?

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8) Week of October 14 Islam Part I
Young, pp. 235-261
Read the appropriate sections of Young on Islam and modern issues in chapters 15-18

Internet Assignment
Watch youtube: Decoding the Secrets of the Koran
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duEsJof50K0

Non-violence and Peace-building in Islam,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T27bX9FYJmE

Answer the Following Questions. Due October 21
1) Explain what are the five Pillars of Islam?
2) Describe the Islamic worldview.
3) Explain the differences between Sunni and Shi’ite Islam? What is the Sufi movement?
4) Describe two modern movements in contemporary Islam.
5) Summarize what you discovered on the youtube video, Decoding the Secrets of the Koran.

9) Week of October 21 Islam Part II

Internet:
Virtual hajj: http://www.princeton.edu/~humcomp/vhajj.html
Youtube: Islam and Global warming
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmziqZ2QV1M
Queer Jihad: http://www.well.com/user/queerjhd/
Also google: Queer and Islam

Answer the following questions: Due October 28
1) What did you learn from your experience of the virtual hajj?
2) What is Islam’s view on the status of women? Views on Homosexuality?
3) How is the Islamic concept of tawhid use for environmentalism?
4) How does Islam deal environmental issues and global warming in the youtube assignment?

Midterm Essay: Due October 25th
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10) Week of October 28 Hindu Religious Traditions
Young, 57-86
Read the appropriate sections of Young on Hinduism and modern issues in chapters 15-18

Internet Assignment
Watch all five segments on youtube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKE7enkhZyo
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lEJNh8Pn9t20
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZavKqW7m08
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1302EhyCf4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crmGQDPSb7c

Some sites:
Explore: The Maha Shivaratri Festival slide Show:
http://www.pluralism.org/resources/slideshow/slideshow.php?show=sisisky&shownumber=3&slide=1
Hindu Temples:  http://www.mandirnet.org/

Answer the Following Questions. Due November 4.

1) What as the general message of the Upanisads and the Bhagavad-Gita? What new insight did the Gita offer beyond the Upanisads? What is the distinction between shruti and smruti made in regard Hindu religious writings.

2) Explain the following notions: Karma, Atman, Dharma, and Liberation of the Soul.

3) What are the gender roles and status of women in Hinduism?

4) Describe the world views of two forms of Hindu traditions in the youtube video series (1-5).

5) According to Chapple, how are ecology and nature affirmed through Hindu religious traditions?

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11) Week of November 4. Hindu, Jain and Sikh Traditions
Young, 105-115, 263-273
Internet Assignment
Hindu pilgrimage:  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T27bX9FYJmE
Read about Jainism and ahimsa: http://www.jainworld.com/phil/ahimsa/ahimindex.htm
Gandhi Institute:  http://www.gandhiinstitute.org/
Explore the slide show of Darbar Sahib Amristar: http://www.sikh-history.com/sikhhist/events/gtemple.html
The Spirit of Vegetarianism:  http://www.jainpushp.org/veggie.htm

Answer the Following Questions. Due November 11

1) Describe your response to the Hindu pilgrimage video.
2) What are the distinctive religious worldview of Jainism?
3) How does the Jain notion of ahimsa apply to the ecological crisis?
4) Describe the Sikh worldview.
5) Define Khalsa, Guru Adi Adi Granth, Gurdwara, Guru Nanak.

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12) Week of November 11 Buddhism Part I
Young, 88-104, 146-152
Internet Assignment: Watch the PBS video—“The Buddha”
 http://video.pbs.org/video/1461557530/

Answer these questions. Due November 18. Email  robert.goss@csun.edu

1) Explain the significant events that led the Buddha to search for the truth of existence. What were the contributions that he made after his enlightenment under the Bo tree.
2) Explain the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths. (Listing is not a sufficient answer)
   3) Explain some of the differences between Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhisms?
   4) How does impermanence fit into Buddhism doctrine and practice?
   5) What is the Buddhism notion of no–soul (no-self) doctrine? How does it fit with impermanence?

13) Week of November 18 Buddhism II
Young, 146-163
Optional Reading: David Barnhill, “Relational Holism: Huayan Buddhism and Deep Ecology,” Deep Ecology and World Religions, pp. 77-106. (This is a particularly difficult article)

Internet Assignment:
Find Out information on Buddhist Noble Peace Winners: The Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi.
Earth Sangha http://www.earthsangha.org/
Answer the Following Questions: Due November 25

1) Describe the reasons for the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi won the Noble Peace prizes. What is remarkable about each person as a Buddhist?

2) What did you learn from Thich Nhat Hanh?

3) What did you learn about Tibetan Buddhism?

14) Week of November 25 Chinese Religions
Young, pp. 116-131, 133-143.

Internet Assignment
Watch the youtube video: Watch Buddhism Taoism , and Confucianism in China
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gZY4i4Kg3s

Confucianism and Ecology:

Answer the Following Questions: December 2

1) What is the relationship of Buddhism to Confucianism and Taoism in China?

2) Define: ying and yang, Dao, The Analects, and the Confucian classics.

3) How do Daoist and Confucian worldviews compare and contrast?

4) Is Confucianism a religion?

5) How do Confucian cosmology and its emphasis on intergenerational continuity contribute to environmental well-being?

15) Week of December 2 Shinto and Contemporary Religious Movements
Young, 165-177, 275-305

Answer these questions; Due December 9.

1) Explain how Japan is the land of the kami and describe the central features of Shinto.

2) Describe 3 new religious movements as covered by Young. (1 page each)

3) Describe the Baha'i Faith and the Mormon Church. (1 page each)
Email: Robert.goss@csun.edu

Finals Week
Papers due: December 15th These should be emailed to me: robert.goss@csun.edu
Paper: 8-10 Pages. Look at one Western Religion (Judaism, Christianity, or Islam) and one Asian Religion (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Chinese Religions). How are they responding to the Ecological Crisis? You must use sources (books, articles, and internet sites) in addition to those given on the syllabus. Have at least 10 sources for the paper.