

Fall 2020

PHIL 337-455: World Religions

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New Jersey Institute of Technology
Phil 337
Fully Online

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Phil 337 World Religions

Course Description

This course explores the religion as part of human culture. It will cover what we know about religion from the earliest periods of human existence; the functions of religion in human life, the varieties of religious beliefs, practices, and experiences; how religion relates to other parts of culture; and the relevance of religion to modern societies. The course takes an anthropological perspective which considers all cultural phenomena as valid in their own contexts and requires the student to explore beyond the bounds of any personal beliefs without judgment or criticism. The class also looks at the religions of the world as they exist at the present time, exploring their cosmology, dogma, ritual, and myth.

Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to define religion from an anthropological perspective.
2. Students will be able to explain the relationship between religion and culture.
3. Students will be able to define and give examples of shamanism, witchcraft, and sorcery.
4. Students will be able to discuss the universality of religion.
5. Students will be able to explain the common functions of all religions.
6. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the world's major religions.
7. Students will be able to use the comparative method to analyze religious similarities and differences

Requirements and Grading

1. All readings, videos, and other required materials will be available through the Moodle course page. No textbook is required. The optional text is listed below.
2. The course is divided into ten modules with a quiz or assignment required to complete each module. Each module should be completed before moving on to the next one. Module 9 requires you to write a three-page research paper on a religion not covered in class and not your own.
3. There will also be a final exam. There is no mid-term exam.
4. All work submitted must be your own. There is no collaboration allowed on assignments.
5. Recordings of module lectures provide important information not included in the readings.
6. The module 9 essay should be at least three double-spaced pages and include standard citations and documentation.
7. Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Grading Calculations:

You cannot receive an A without completing all quizzes and the final exam (A=90-100, B+=86-89, B=80-85, C+=76-79, C=70-75, D=60-69, F=<60). The final grade will be computed as follows:
1/3 (Average score on module assignments 1-8, and 9) + 1/3 (Score on essay) + 1/3 (Score on Final)

Optional Texts. All readings provided in Canvas are Fair Use excerpts from the following texts:

Malefijt, Annemarie de Wall. Religion and Culture: an Introduction to the Anthropology of Religion. Waveland Press, 1968. ISBN 0-88133-483-9
Lessa, W.J and E.Z. Vogt. Reader in Comparative Religion. Harper. 9960439912
Eller, J.D., Introducing the Anthropology of Religion. Routledge. 1138024910
Bulliet, Richard, et al. The Earth and Its People: A Global History. Houghton Mifflin. 1337401471
Anglin, J.P. and W.J. Hamblin. World History to 1648. Harper Collins, ASIN 8014177RIS

*ALL READINGS AND OTHER COURSE RESOURCES (VIDEOS, LINKS, ETC.) ARE PROVIDED ON THE COURSE CANVAS SITE.

Module 1: Introduction and Basic Concepts

Culture and Religion: Definitions

The Scientific Study of Religion

Animism, Magic, Witchcraft, Ghosts

Module 2

Shamanism and Sorcery: Benevolent and Malevolent Magic

Module 3

Indicators of Prehistoric Religion : Burials, Venuses, Cave Paintings, Megaliths

Module 4

How Religions Begin and Change

Revitalization Movements

Crisis Cults

New Religious Movement

Module 5

Hinduism and Buddhism

Module 6

Judaism

Module 7

Christianity

Module 8

Islam

Module 9

Other Significant Religions

Your essay is part of this module; there is no module quiz. Read the essay instructions carefully.

Module 10

Religion and Violence

Religion and the State, The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Religious Nationalism

Final Exam

The final exam will be posted the last week of class.
