

Syllabus

Course Code: PHIL 225

Title: Comparative Religion

Institute: Business and Social Science

Department: Philosophy

Course Description: Students will explore the ideas, assumptions, and values of the regions of the world, viewing them comparatively in search for common truths and principals. Among the religions to be studied are the Eastern religions of Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, and the Western religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Prerequisites: READ 092, READ 095 or passing score on Accuplacer Test

Corequisites:

Credits: 3

Lecture Hours: 3

Lab/Studio Hours: 0

Required Textbook/Materials: *Religions of the World*, Lewis M. Hopfe and Mark R. Woodward (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009), **13th ed.**

Additional Time Requirements:

For information on Brookdale's policy on credit hour requirements and outside class student work refer to [Academic Credit Hour Policy](#).

See course/instructor section addendum.

Additional Support/Labs:

See <https://www.brookdalecc.edu/academic-tutoring/>

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, as demonstrated through the writing of essay test questions and critical analysis papers, the student will be able to:

- identify the basic views and practices of the major religions of the world
- summarize and analyze the similarities and differences in the views and practices of the major religions of the world
- develop and defend their own opinions in the development of their own belief system

Comparative Religion, is, as its name suggests, a course in which we will explore and compare the major religions of the world. This presupposes both an understanding of the concept of religion itself, as well as a willingness to look beyond one's own religious beliefs and

assumptions. In order to understand and appreciate the beliefs of others, it is often helpful to recognize one's own beliefs and then set them aside temporarily so that one can fully examine someone else's. Before making comparisons, therefore, we must begin by understanding each of the religions for what it is in itself. This is an essential part of the study of religion and cannot be over-emphasized.

Although most of our time will be spent examining the major religions of today, we will also explore the origins of religions and the beginnings of the various belief systems. To understand what is happening today, we will need to remember that each religion fits into a historical framework and that the past is the key to unlocking the meaning of present conditions.

Fifteen weeks is certainly not enough time to examine completely all the major religions of our world. During that time, all we can do is begin a search; perhaps we may also gain a fuller appreciation for those ways of thinking and patterns of belief that differ from our own.

In this course students will explore the ideas, assumptions and values of the religions of the world, viewing them comparatively in search for the common truths and principles. Among the religions to be studied are the Eastern religions of Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, and the Western religions of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Bahai.

Course Content:

Unit I: Chapters 1-3:

Introduction:

Overview The

student will be able to

1. List the six major characteristics found in most religions.
2. Give several definitions of religion.
3. List and describe the five theories regarding the origin of religions.
4. List and describe the four basic types of religions.

Chapter 1: Characteristics of Basic Religions

The student will be able to

1. Explain the two primary sources for information about basic religions.
2. Describe the religions of the Neanderthal, Cro-Magnon, and Neolithic periods.
3. Define animism, magic, divination, taboo, shaman, myth, mana, prayer, fetish, totem, sacrifice, rite of passage, purification rites, ancestor veneration, polytheism, monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, agnosticism, atheism.

Chapter 2: American Indian Religions

The student will be able to

1. Describe the forms of animism found among the Native Americans and their relation to nature.
2. Apply the terminology of sacrifice, rituals, taboos, and visions to control the spirit world by Native Americans.
3. Describe the religious leadership, ceremonies and rituals of these religions.
4. Discuss their notion of medicine, death and afterlife.

Chapter 3: African Religions

The student will be able to

1. List and describe the influence of non-native religions in Africa.
2. Discuss their idea of the high God, the lesser spirits, and the role of ancestors.
3. Describe sacrifice, rites of passage, theory of healing, and religious leadership among African religions.
4. Comment upon the status of African religions today.

Unit 2: Chapters 4-7:

Chapter 4: Hinduism

The student will be able to

1. Discuss the Aryan and Vedic origins of Hinduism, including the major early gods.
2. Briefly describe the contents of the major religious literature of Hinduism: the four Vedic books, the Upanishads, the Code of Manu, the Bhagavad-Gita.
3. List and describe the three major gods of post-classical Hinduism.
4. List and define the four Hindu ways to salvation: jnana, bhakti, karma, and rajah, i.e., knowledge, devotion, works and discipline.
5. List and define the four castes in Hindu society: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras,

and the outcastes.

6. List and describe the four stages of the Brahmin's life.
7. Comment upon the status of modern Hinduism.
8. Define the following terms: Dravidian, mantra, yoga, samsara, karma, dharma, Brahmanas, avatar, moksha, maya, Vedanta.
9. Identify the following gods or persons: Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, Kali, Arjuna, Shankara, Ramanuja, Sri Ramakrishna, Mohandas K. Gandhi.
10. Describe briefly the major Hindu holy days of Holi, Divali, and Dasehra.

Chapter 5: Jainism

The student will be able to

1. Discuss the life and teachings of Mahavira.
2. List and explain the five vows of Jainism.
3. Distinguish the three major sects of Jainism.
4. Describe briefly the Jain festivals of Pajusana and Divali.
5. Comment upon the status of Jainism today.
6. Define the following terms: jiva, ajiva, ahimsa, Agamas.

Chapter 6: Buddhism

The student will be able to

1. Describe the life of Sidhartha Gautama (the Buddha).
2. Describe the circumstances and content of his Enlightenment.
3. Discuss the teachings of the Buddha on the nature of the self, suffering and desire.
4. List the Four Noble Truths and describe the Eight-Fold Path to Enlightenment.
5. Discuss the beginnings of Buddhism as a religion.
6. Contrast Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.
7. Describe the spread of Mahayana Buddhism.
8. List and describe the major sects of Mahayana Buddhism.
9. Discuss the unique features of Tibetan Buddhism.
10. Describe briefly the major festivals of Buddhism: New Year, Buddha's Birthday, Festival of Souls, and the Robe Offering.
11. Comment upon the status of Buddhism today.
12. Define the following terms: Deer Park, Pali, tanha, sangha, maya, nirvana, arhat, bodhisattva, satori, wat, bot, tantra, lama, Dalai Lama, Book of the Dead.

Chapter 7: Sikhism

The student will be able to

1. Describe the life of Nanak.
2. Discuss the teachings of Nanak and determine which were adopted from Hinduism or Islam.
3. Describe the historical development of Sikhism from a pacifist to a militaristic religion.
4. Distinguish the three divisions of Sikhism.
5. Discuss the basic religious life of the modern Sikh.
6. Comment upon the status of Sikhism today.
7. Define the following terms: Kabir, Japji, Granth, Arjan Dev, Gobind Singh, Amritsar, gurdwara.

Unit III: Chapters 8-9

Chapter 8: Chinese Religions

The student will be able to

1. Explain the following basic concepts: multiple gods and spirits, Yin and Yang, filial piety and ancestor worship, divination, tao, Shang Ti, and the feudal system.
2. Describe the life of Lao-tzu.

3. Discuss the background and the content of the Tao Te Ching.
4. List and discuss the four basic themes of early Taoism, as taught by Chuang-tzu.
5. Discuss the later developments of Taoism.
6. Discuss the teachings of the legalists and Mohists.
7. Describe the life of Confucius (Kung Fu-tzu).
8. Discuss the teachings of Confucius.
9. Define the following terms: li, Jen, Shu, I Ching, Analects.
10. List the five basic relationships in Confucianism.
11. Discuss the later development of Confucianism.
12. Contrast the teachings of Mencius and Hsun Tzu and describe the contributions of each to Confucianism.
13. Describe briefly the traditional Chinese holidays.
14. Comment upon the status of Taoism and Confucianism today.

Chapter 9: Shinto

The student will be able to

1. Discuss the origins of Shinto in Japanese mythology.
2. Define the following terms: Kojiki, Kami-no-Michi, kami, Amaterasu, Susa-No-O, Izanami, Izanagi.
3. Discuss the influence of China upon Japanese religion.
4. Describe the revival of Shinto during the time of the samurai and the Bushido code.
5. Distinguish the three major forms of Shinto.
6. Describe briefly the major Japanese festivals.
7. Comment upon the status of Shinto today.
8. Describe the basic ideas of Zen Buddhism.
9. Comment upon the status of Zen Buddhism today.

Unit IV: Chapters 10-14

Chapter 10:

Zoroastrianism The

student will be able to

1. Discuss the pre-Zoroastrian religions of Persia
2. Describe the life of Zoroaster.

3. Explain the teachings of Zoroaster regarding the nature of God, the nature of destiny of humankind, ethics, worship, and eschatology.
4. Discuss the historical development of Zoroastrianism.
5. Define the following terms: Zarathustra, Ahura Mazda, Angra Mainyu, Spenta Mainyu, Mithra, Chinvat bridge, Dakhma, kustī, sadre, Parsee, Gathas.
6. Describe briefly the major holy days of Zoroastrianism.
7. Comment upon the status of Zoroastrianism today.

Chapter 11: Judaism

The student will be able to

1. Describe the major periods of Jewish history: the Patriarchal period, the Exodus, the period of the monarchy, the prophetic movement, the exile and return, the period of diaspora.
2. Define the following terms: temple, synagogue, minyan, Torah, Mishnah, Talmud, Cabala, Sephardic, Ashkenasi.
3. Discuss the major leaders and movements of modern Judaism: Shabbatai Zevi, Moses Mendelssohn, Baal Shem Tov, Theodore Herzl, Hasidic movement, Zionism, Solomon Schechter.
4. Describe the three major divisions of modern American Judaism.
5. Discuss the recent history of Judaism from the Nazi Holocaust and the founding of the state of Israel.
6. Describe the major Jewish holidays: Sabbath, Passover, Feast of Weeks, New Year, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles, Feast of Dedication, Feast of Lots, Bar Mitzvah.
7. Comment upon the status of Judaism today.

Chapter 12: Christianity

The student will be able to

1. Describe the state of the world at the time Christianity began.
2. Describe the life and teachings of Jesus.
3. Discuss the Gospels, Epistles, and Acts of the Apostles as sources of our knowledge of Jesus and the early Christian Church.
4. Describe the life and influence of Paul.
5. Discuss the early history of Christianity, including the early heresies of Gnosticism, Montanism, Marcionism, and Arianism.
6. Discuss the contribution to Christianity of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, the monastic movement, the Jesuits.

7. Discuss the causes and effects of the schism that split Eastern and Western Christianity.
8. Discuss the reformation period of Christianity and the roles of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and King Henry VIII in the establishment of Protestantism.
9. Discuss the counter-reformation period and the establishment of sacraments and dogmas in Roman Catholicism.
10. Discuss briefly the major holy days in Christianity.
11. Comment upon the ecumenical attempts in Christianity today.

Chapter 13: Islam

The student will be able to

1. Describe the state of Arabic religious thought at the time of Muhammad.
2. Recount the life of Muhammad.
3. Discuss the background and content of the Holy Quran, including the nature of God, predestination and eschatology.
4. List and describe the five pillars of Islam.
5. Describe what Muslims believe.
6. Discuss the following concepts in Islam: status of women, taboos, holy war.
7. Discuss the early history of Islam following Muhammad's death.
8. Distinguish between the Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Sufis.
9. Define the following terms: mosque, Caliphate, imam, Mahdi, dervish, Kaaba, surah.
10. Identify the following persons: Fatima, Abu-Bakr, Ali, Khadija, Abu-Talib.
11. Describe briefly the major holy days in Islam.
12. Comment upon the status of Islam in the world today.

Chapter 14: Baha'i

The student will be able to

1. Discuss the origin and development of Baha'i.
2. Discuss the teachings of Baha'i.
3. Discuss the practices and organization of the Baha'i.
4. Describe briefly the holy days of Baha'i.
5. Comment upon the status of Baha'i today

Department Policies: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Grading Standard:

- 2) Students will take several in-class tests, the exact number and style at the discretion of the instructor.
- 3) Students will write a critical paper, the number and types of papers at the discretion of the instructor.

The grading standard for this course will be as follows:

100% to 93% = A

92% to 90 = A-

89% to 87% = B+

86% to 83% = B-

82% to 80 = B

79% to 77% = C+

76% to 70% = C

69% to 60% = D

below 60% = F

College Policies:

As an academic institution, Brookdale facilitates the free exchange of ideas, upholds the virtues of civil discourse, and honors diverse perspectives informed by credible sources. Our College values all students and strives for inclusion and safety regardless of a student's disability, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, religious affiliation, political orientation, socioeconomic standing, and veteran status. For additional information, support services, and engagement opportunities, please visit www.brookdalecc.edu/support.

For information regarding:

- Academic Integrity Code
- Student Conduct Code
- Student Grade Appeal Process

Please refer to the [student handbook](#) and [catalog](#).

Notification for Students with Disabilities:

Brookdale Community College offers reasonable accommodations and/or services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who wish to self-identify must contact the Accessibility Services Office at 732-224-2730 (voice) or 732-842-4211 (TTY) to provide appropriate documentation of the disability and request specific accommodations or services. If a student qualifies, reasonable accommodations and/or services, which are appropriate for the college level and are recommended in the documentation, can be approved.

Mental Health:

24/7/365 Resources:

- Monmouth Medical Center Psychiatric Emergency Services at **(732) 923-6999**
- 2nd Floor Youth Helpline – Available to talk with you about any problem, distress, or hardship you are experiencing. Call or text at **888-222-2228** or visit the website at <https://www.2ndfloor.org/>

Faculty Counselors:

- Students who need to make an appointment with a faculty counselor can do so by calling 732-224-1822 (non-emergency line) during business hours. Faculty counselors are licensed mental health professionals who can assist students and refer them to other mental health resources.

Diversity Statement:

Brookdale Community College fosters an environment of inclusion and belonging. We promote a safe and open culture, encourage dialogue respecting diverse perspectives informed by credible sources, and uphold the virtues of civil discourse. We celebrate all identities with the understanding that ultimately, diversity, equity, and inclusion cultivate belonging and make us a stronger Brookdale community.

**The syllabus is intended to give student guidance in what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the faculty member reserves the right to modify, supplement, and make changes as the need arise.*