

Comparative Non-Western RELIGIONS: Integrated Writing Comparative Studies 2320

CoLA, Wright State University

COURSE DESCRIPTION and LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The “Comparative Non-Western Religions” Part:

This course explores various religious perspectives and experiences from Asia and Africa. Our analysis will focus on the textual and practical (e.g. ritualistic) dimensions of these religious traditions and will consider core doctrines and their historic evolution. To a certain extent, we will also compare and contrast these various religious perspectives in an attempt to identify common types of religious expression. An underlying theme of the course will be the question of “what is religion and how does it function in different social contexts?”

The broader learning outcomes for this course, which meets the the Global Traditions requirement of the Core Curriculum, are as follows:

- a. Critically describe some of the political, social or economic systems; historical, cultural or spiritual traditions; and/or technological innovations around the world – the course focuses on world religions, specifically Asia and (depending on the instructor) Africa. It examines belief, doctrine, and practice in a variety of such traditions.
- b. Demonstrate an awareness of the diversity of people or traditions in our world in ways that promote effective engagement, both locally and globally – the course promotes comparative analysis with western traditions through class discussions.
- c. Use political, social, economic, historical, cultural, spiritual or technological knowledge to evaluate contemporary issues -- course covers religious perspectives on contemporary social issues and thereby broadens students’ conceptions of how such issues may be dealt with.

The “Integrated Writing” Part:

Since this is an integrated writing course, many of the assignments and in-class activities focus on developing the skills necessary for good writing. Many of these skills—such as the ability to read and think critically and to express yourself well—will be fundamental to all your courses at Wright State and to your future careers.

This course encourages you to think of your writing as a *process* rather than an end-product by giving you an opportunity to rethink and revise a specific writing assignment. By submitting a draft of your paper by a certain date, you will benefit from extensive feedback on your written work and will learn to use your writing as a powerful communicative tool.

Here are the proposed learning outcomes for the Integrated Writing component of the course:

Students will be expected to produce writing that

- *Demonstrates their understanding of course content,*
- *Is appropriate for the audience and purpose of a particular writing task,*

- *Demonstrates the degree of mastery of disciplinary writing conventions appropriate to the course (including documentation conventions), and*
- *Shows competency in standard edited American English.*
- Criteria for evaluating writing are clearly articulated and provided to students on handouts and in class.
- Students will receive response to their writing and have opportunities to use that response to improve their writing.
- Writing counts toward the course grade. Students should not be able to pass the course without completing the writing assignments.
- A significant amount of writing is required. Over the course of the semester, students should be expected to write informal texts, drafts, and graded drafts totaling approximately 2,000 words in IW Wright State Core courses. Disciplines for which word count seems an inadequate measure of student engagement in writing should propose an alternative that will meet the IW learning outcomes.
- Whenever resources permit, IW class enrollment should be limited to 25, the maximum size for literature discussion classes recommended by both the National Council of Teachers of English and the Association of Departments of English. Larger classes designated as IW should provide some means of giving timely, meaningful individual responses to student writing (e.g., through the use of trained graduate teaching assistants, guided peer review, faculty release time from other course teaching assignments, class size reductions in other faculty teaching assignments). Approval of proposed IW courses will not hinge on class size alone.

REQUIREMENTS:

A. Readings:

The required texts for the course are the following:

1. Oxtoby, Willard G., ed.. *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*. New York: Oxford, 2002. [OXTOBY on syllabus]
2. Assignments to be posted on ELECTRONIC RESERVE (**password = religion**)
3. Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*.

Doing the readings is ESSENTIAL for success in this course. These readings will help you prepare for the exams and will also be invaluable in composing your longer writing assignment. ALWAYS BRING THE READINGS WITH YOU TO CLASS FOR DISCUSSION. If a reading is posted on Electronic Reserve, it is your responsibility to PRINT IT OUT and bring the hard copy to class.

Recommended Readings: *A Writer's Reference* by Diana Hacker.

B. Exams: (25%+25%= 50%)

You will have **TWO** exams that will require you to write essays in response to questions about the religions we are studying. I will provide you with a study sheet one week prior to the exam. The exams will be based on readings and class notes.

C. Paper: (40%)

The major writing assignment for this course will be a 7 page paper that analyses a portion of a religious text. The main analytical skill that this assignment emphasizes is **critical reading** but you will also be evaluated based on the qualities essential to all good academic writing. These qualities include:

1. **Content** (are the ideas interesting, supported with evidence, well developed, and clearly expressed?)
2. **Structure** (is there a thesis statement and is that thesis developed in the body of the essay? Does each paragraph make a clear contribution to the paper? Do the paragraphs flow? How effective are the introduction and conclusion at presenting the paper's main points?)
3. **Mechanics** such as grammar, spelling, style (e.g., does the author use professional language? Is his/her tone authoritative?), and syntax (e.g., are the sentences clear and easy to follow?)

You will be given the opportunity to REVISE this paper, after receiving feedback from me. The REVISION PROCESS is the key to good writing and is a **core component** of your success in this class.

D. Participation and Attendance: (10% BUT SEE COMMENTS BELOW!)

I will take attendance regularly in class and expect people to participate actively in discussions and workshops. Students are expected to be present at all classes except in case of emergency. Students with more than one unexcused absence will have their final grade lowered by a full letter. Students with more than two unexcused absences will fail the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Any form of cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course and will result in disciplinary action and a failing grade. Do not copy or borrow others' work or lend your work to others on exams. For papers, it is necessary to use quotation

marks around any statement that you have taken verbatim from another source. Furthermore, even when you are summarizing/paraphrasing another's ideas, it is necessary to give them credit. I will provide information on the correct format for citation later on but it is **your** responsibility to make certain you are not in violation of the University's policy on academic integrity. Please see the WSU website for information on what constitutes cheating and plagiarism. I will also be using Turnitin.com to verify that students are complying with the policy.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

UNIT ONE: INTRODUCTIONS AND RELIGION IN SOUTH ASIA

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS RELIGION?

WEEK 2-4: HINDUISM

UNIT TWO: JAINISM

WEEK 5

UNIT THREE: INDIAN BUDDHISM

WEEK 6-7

UNIT FOUR: CHINESE RELIGIONS

WEEK 8: CHINESE BUDDHISM

WEEK 9: CONFUCIANISM

WEEK 10: TAOISM

UNIT FIVE: JAPANESE RELIGIONS

WEEK 11: SHINTO

UNIT FIVE: AFRICAN RELIGIONS

**WEEK 12-13: Traditional religions of Nigeria and South Africa;
European Colonialism's influence on traditional African religion**

WEEK 14: PEER REVIEW OF PAPERS and CONFERENCES