



## **Philosophy 122: Eastern Religions**

Northwestern Michigan College  
Fall Semester 2019 Online

**Instructor:** Sarah Montgomery-Richards  
**Office Hours:** By Appointment on Tuesdays/Thursdays  
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### **Course Description:**

A study of historical development, main religious teachings, leading personalities, ethical values and worship practices of the major religious traditions of the Eastern world: Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Chinese Religions. We will also consider new religious movements and religion in the public sphere.

This is a course in Comparative Religion, meaning this is an *academic* study of religion. What is Comparative Religion you might ask? According to Professor Courtney Bickel Lamberth, Director of Undergraduate Studies at Harvard University:

“The Comparative Study of Religion engages enduring questions about religion, human society, and the meaning individuals and communities make in life. The concentration trains students to think critically about religions in interaction with other cultural, historical, intellectual, and social phenomena. The concentration also provides students with a basic understanding...of the major religious traditions of the world through...sacred books, rituals, and symbols; philosophy and theology; and the lived experiences and history of participants in the tradition.”<sup>1</sup>

To succeed in this class the student needs to be *objective*. In this vein, the student must be open to alternative viewpoints and be willing to participate in active listening and thoughtful discussion. Throughout this course the student should remain open to new ideas, new ways of looking at, thinking about, and being in the world, all while suspending judgment. If we are to engage in civil discourse, thoughtful and considerate dialogue, responsible inquiry and research surrounding the subject of world religions, we must endeavor to do so in the name of scholarship regardless of personal beliefs.

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<sup>1</sup> Bickel Lamberth, Courtney. "Comparative Study of Religion." Harvard College Handbook for Students 2012-2013. 1 Aug. 2012. Web. 15 Aug. 2015.

## **Objectives:**

- To gain a basic knowledge of “Eastern Religion”, as well as a variety of indigenous religious traditions and new religious movements.
- Recognize the bearing and relevance of indigenous religious systems and new religious movements on and in relationship with “Eastern Religions”.
- To gain a general understanding of Comparative Religion.
- To think critically about religion and apply tools and techniques used within the field of Comparative Religion.
- To communicate in a scholarly fashion (effective communications using the English language and knowledge of Comparative Religion and various religious traditions).
- To recognize the importance of the study of Comparative Religion relative to the modern world and current events.

## **Required Texts/Resources/Materials:**

Fisher, Mary Pat. Living Religions. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 2008. Print. ISBN-13: 978-0136141051.

There will be additional readings posted for the students to read throughout the given weeks, as well as Moodle lectures and other relevant videos for students to watch.

Students will need to have access to a computer that has a microphone for some of the assignments/activities in this course, as well as webcam or smartphone.

Students will be assigned a VoiceThread login for the course for use on various assignments.

Students will be required to complete the Online Learning Orientation in Moodle before accessing the course.

## **Suggested Materials:**

It is recommended that students become familiar with the sources available on our class libguide via our campus library: <http://nmc.libguides.com/religionphilosophy>. This link can also be found on our class Moodle page.

## **Course Requirements:**

*Assignments for this course total to 900 points.*

- (2) Tests – worth 100 points each for a total of **200 points**. **These will be a Midterm due by Saturday, 10/5/19 at 11:59pm and a Final due by Saturday, 12/14/19 at 11:59pm.** These exams will be: Multiple Choice, Matching, T/F, Fill in the Blank Short Answer &/or Essay. Tests will be taken online.

- (4) Unit Quizzes - worth **20 points each, for a total of 80 points.**
- (1) Individual Comparative Reflection Paper – worth **100 points.** Please see description below.
- (15) Comparative Religion Discussion Forums, Current Event Discussion Forums, and Student Introduction – worth 20 points each for a total of **300 points.** Please see description below.
- (1) Group Project – worth **200 points.** (100 points for the paper, 100 points for the presentation) Please see description below.
- (1) Poll (in Unit 4, Week 1) - worth **10 points.** This poll is to select our New Religious Movements for the semester.
- (1) Quiz (Week 1) - worth **10 points.** This one question “quiz” will serve as verification that you have not only read the syllabus, but that you understand all of the expectations and responsibilities associated with the course.
- *Extra Credit Options may be made available throughout the semester at the discretion of the instructor.*
- **Make-Up Work Policy:** The instructor expects that all “Participate” section assignments, quizzes, polls, tests etc. are completed by the dates required. As such, once the date/time has expired, the “Participate” section assignments, quizzes, polls, tests etc. will be locked, and there is no way to go back and attempt to complete the work. **There is NO way to make up a group presentation.**
- **Late-Work Policy:** All writing assignments and group projects are due on the date indicated.
- This is a writing intensive course, thus proficiency in writing, reading, and speaking in English is required. In addition, because this course relies heavily on discussion and participation it is essential for the student to have a strong command of the English language in order for the student to articulate her/his ideas both verbally and in writing, as well as the ability to comprehend the reading material. Recommended prerequisite: Completion of ENG 11/111 or placement into ENG 111.
- **Citation Policy and Writing Center Requirements: Citations and references must be included in both the Individual Comparative Reflection Paper and the Group Project Paper. You must cite each portion of information that is not your own words. Paraphrasing someone else’s words must be cited. Failure to do so is plagiarism and will result in a score of zero (0%) for the assignment and academic sanctions.**

**Students must use The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition Notes-Bibliography System (NB).**

Sample papers are posted on the Moodle page for this course and I would encourage the student to view and read some of them to gain a knowledge of format. *The instructor recognizes that the preferred font and spacing for this style is Times New Roman, double spaced, however you are being asked to use Calibri and 1.5 spacing for all papers in this course.*

**Students are encouraged to use the NMC Writing Center for their papers.** A link to the Purdue OWL Writing lab has been provided for you in the introductory section of the course on Moodle. You can also utilize the tools available at the top of your Moodle screen such as Online Tutoring, as well as the NMC librarians.

- This course will be graded using the 4.0 system.
- **Disruptive Behavior** is viewed as a direct threat to the learning environment and will not be tolerated in this course. Please see your Students Rights and Responsibilities Handbook - non-disruptive, respectful engagement is just as important in an online class as it is in a face to face class.
- The instructor will **NOT** email course notes to students. It is the **Student's Responsibility** to collect material covered in the course.
- Please feel free to email the instructor questions, but allow **24 hours** for an email response (does not include weekends or holidays). **NOTE:** the instructor can only respond to a student's official NMC email address. **Only your NMC email address can be used for campus business per college policy.**
- The instructor does **NOT** and will **NOT** drop any student from the course. It is the student's responsibility to follow the appropriate procedures to withdraw from a course.

### **Individual Comparative Reflection Paper:**

Each student, on their own time, will be required to **visit/attend TWO** different religious communities' spiritual/religious events. The student will then write a 8-10 page paper (12 point Calibri font, 1.5 spaced, pages numbered, and bibliography and cover page in addition to the 8-10 pages) which includes the following:

- A description of each of the communities visited (along with their location and contact information in our community) including a brief summary of their belief systems.
- The context of each of the services/events attended as well as the dates for each (example: I attended a Catholic church to attend my sister's wedding. (or) I attended a Jewish synagogue because it was Yom Kippur).
- Compare and contrast the two communities.
- Answer the questions: ***What do these communities say about religion in Northern Michigan? What do they say (if anything) about religion in the wider world?*** (\*Helpful Tip\* Most students answer these questions in their conclusions)
- Outside sources may be used, all sources must be cited using an approved format – *it is strongly suggested that you include an interview component to each of your visits and get permission to quote your interviewees in your paper.*
- Papers can be submitted throughout the semester **BUT NO LATER THAN Saturday, 10/26/19 at 11:59 pm, and is worth 100 points. Students have the opportunity to earn 5 extra credit points per week early that they hand in this paper.**

## **Comparative Religion Discussion Forums, Current Event Discussion Forums, and Student Introduction, Quizzes:**

Each week, (with the exception of Unit 7, Week 3), students will be required to complete either the Comparative Religion Discussion Forum or the Current Event Discussion Forum. There are samples on the Moodle to assist you with what is expected from an answer. In each case you will be asked to make your initial post by Wednesday of the week by 11:59pm, with 2 response to classmates' posts by Saturdays at 11:59pm. There is also a Student Introduction assignment in Unit 1, Week 1. Please likewise follow the instructions on Moodle for this. **Each of these is worth 20 points total.**

### **Poll for New Religious Movements:**

In Unit 5, Week 1 you will be asked to participate in a poll to select the new religious movements that I will cover in my Moodle lectures during our New Religious Movements unit. We will use the Mary Pat Fisher chapter for the unit as well, but YOU have the opportunity to vote for the new religious movements you'd like to spend some more time on. **This is worth 10 points**

### **Pre-Reading Choice:**

At the start of each unit, there will be a "pre-reading choice" - this is just for fun, and I hope everyone will participate. It is anonymous, and I will mention the general results in my introductions in subsequent weeks. It helps us all to get to know where we are at as a class.

### **Acknowledgment of Syllabus "Quiz":**

In Week 1 you will be asked to complete a "quiz". This one question "quiz" will serve as verification that you have not only read the syllabus, but that you understand all of the expectations and responsibilities associated with the course.

### **Unit Quizzes:**

At the end of each unit you will have a brief quiz to complete. The exception to this are the weeks that you have a midterm or final exam, in which case the material from the end of that unit, along with the preceding material will be on the test. **Each quiz is worth 20 points.**

### **Group Project:**

**Post Group Project to Class by Wednesday, 12/11/19 at 11:59 pm. At least 2 substantive comments on other group's projects by Saturday, 12/14/19 at 11:59pm. The Group Project (Presentation and Paper) is worth a total of 200 points.**

Students participate in a choice activity in the Moodle to select a religion, thus forming their group. There will be no more than three students in a group for any given religion. As a group, the students will develop a slide presentation with voice-over (using VoiceThread), which they will post for the entire class to review and comment on **This is worth 100 points.** Each group will also produce a group paper of 10-15 pages (12 point Calibri font, 1.5 spaced, pages numbered, and bibliography and cover page in

addition to the 10-15 pages) covering the information contained in their slide presentations **This is worth 100 points. Only one group member needs to submit this paper via the Moodle assignment.** Students will work collaboratively within their groups to do the following:

- Your presentation and paper on the Eastern religion you select should include the following:
  - The role of a selected Eastern religion in the U.S. This includes history of its practice in the U.S.
  - Status of the religion in the U.S. today (numbers, demographics, regions in which it's practiced, etc) and how this has changed over time.
  - How (if at all) does the practice of this tradition differ in the U.S. as compared to other places in the world.
  - What issues is this tradition facing in the U.S. and abroad?
- **Please reference the citation policy for use in this assignment.**

## **General Education and Learning Outcomes:**

The General Education and Learning Outcomes as specified by the college for this course are as follows:

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Integration</b>
<p>Students will demonstrate historical and conceptual knowledge of Western Religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.</p> <p><i>This will be assessed through participation in discussion boards, as well as exams</i></p>	<p>Students will practice Philosophical Analysis and Religious Studies research to the area of Western Religions.</p> <p>Students will demonstrate effective communication skills.</p> <p>CT, COM</p> <p><i>This will be assessed through participation in discussion boards, as well as exams and reflective papers</i></p>	<p>Students will recognize the worldviews and values of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other Western Religions, and the ways in which those worldviews converge and differ in cultural and global contexts.</p> <p>Students will compare and contrast worldviews and values of Western Religions with differing cultural and global contexts.</p> <p><i>This will be assessed through participation in discussion boards, as well as exams and reflective papers</i></p>
<b>Human Dimension</b>	<b>Caring – Civic Learning</b>	<b>Learning How to Learn</b>
<p>Students will reflect on Western religious values and cultural diversity.</p> <p><i>This will be assessed through participation in discussion boards, as well as exams and reflective papers</i></p>	<p>Students will demonstrate open-mindedness by considering alternative religious values and points of view.</p> <p><i>This will be assessed through participation in discussion boards, and reflective papers</i></p>	<p>Students will communicate their research findings as a religious scholar.</p> <p><i>This will be assessed through participation in discussion boards, as well as exams and reflective papers</i></p>



**Disclaimer:** Please be advised that this is an adult college-level course. Topics to be discussed

include: current political and world events, problems of religion and morality, questions of cultural diversity, etc. Thus, there will be open and frank discussions of controversial topics and material. Students will not be excused from the course work, including the discussion prompts, due to personal uneasiness regarding an assignment's content.

## **Grading System:**

*Assignments for this course total to 900 points.*

- (2) Tests – worth 100 points each for a total of **200 points**. **These will be a Midterm due by Saturday, 10/5/19 at 11:59pm and a Final due by Saturday, 12/14/19 at 11:59pm.** These exams

will be: Multiple Choice, Matching, T/F, Fill in the Blank Short Answer &/or Essay. Tests will be taken online.

- (4) Unit Quizzes - worth **20 points each, for a total of 80 points**. Quizzes will be taken online.
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- (1) Group Project – worth **200 points**. (100 points for the paper, 100 points for the presentation) Please see description below.
- (1) Poll (in Unit 5, Week 2) - worth **10 points**. This poll is to select our New Religious Movements for the semester.
- (1) Quiz (Week 1) - worth **10 points**. This one question “quiz” will serve as verification that you have not only read the syllabus, but that you understand all of the expectations and responsibilities associated with the course.

<b>Final Grade Point</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Grade Percentage</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>94-100%</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>A-/B+</b>	<b>88-93%</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>82-87%</b>
<b>2.5</b>	<b>B-/C+</b>	<b>76-81%</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>70-75%</b>
<b>1.5</b>	<b>C-/D+</b>	<b>64-69%</b>
<b>1.0</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>60-63%</b>
<b>0.0</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>59%-below</b>

### **Moodle Grade Book:**

A grade book has been created in Moodle for the student to utilize in order to keep track of her/his performance in the course. The student will be responsible for monitoring her/his grade in the course by frequently accessing the Moodle grade book in order to identify the number of points that the student has earned in the course. The student needs to keep track of how many points s/he has lost in the course in order to know what the student’s grade is. The Moodle grade book was created to help the student keep track of this. Keep in mind that there is no extra credit in this course, so once a point is lost, it is lost for good. If you have trouble accessing the Moodle gradebook, please contact the NMC Technology Helpdesk at 231-995-3020.



### **Class Schedule/Weekly To-Do List:**

The instructor will provide you with a weekly to-do list at the start of each week - this is for your benefit and is provided as a tool to help you budget your time.

### **More Resources/College Policies and Procedures:**

Please Review the [College Syllabus](https://elearn.nmc.edu/course/view.php?id=50104) (https://elearn.nmc.edu/course/view.php?id=50104).

It is also available in the main menu of Moodle to view college policies and Learning Services information.

### **Syllabus Changes:**

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus and will inform the class of any changes. *If a student has any personal questions and/or concerns about anything stated in the course syllabus, it is the responsibility of the student to schedule an appointment with the instructor to discuss those concerns.*

**Philosophy 122: Western Religion Syllabus Confirmation: Please complete the Acknowledgment of Syllabus “Quiz” in Moodle.** This one question “quiz” will serve as verification that you have not only read the syllabus, but that you understand all of the expectations and responsibilities associated with the course.