Course Description

Philosophies of World Religions provides an introduction to the histories, basic philosophies and characteristic practices of the world's major religions. Students will learn the importance of viewing religion from various scholarly perspectives. This course is taught from the philosophical perspective which requires that faith correspond to one's ability to use the human gift of reason.

Course Textbook


Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze and identify the common histories, traditions, practices, and beliefs shared by the world’s major religions.
2. Analyze the potential for possible historical causes of misunderstandings and conflict within and between the world’s different religious peoples.
3. Evaluate the extent to which the beliefs, values, and actions of the followers of various religions are connected by similar goals or functions.
4. Examine the manner in which religious beliefs are expressed through ceremony, food, clothing, art, and architecture.
5. Identify differing interpretations of religious tenets within a religion.
6. Utilize research strategies for creating a coherent argument.

Academic Integrity

Honesty and integrity are taken very seriously at Waldorf University. All students should be familiar with the Waldorf University Academic Integrity Policy (found in the current Student Handbook) and the consequences that will result from breaches of this policy.

Credits

Upon completion of this course, the students will earn three (3) hours of college credit.

Course Structure

1. **Unit Learning Outcomes:** Each unit contains Learning Outcomes that specify the measurable skills and knowledge students should gain upon completion of the unit.
2. **Unit Lesson:** Each unit contains a Unit Lesson, which discusses unit material.
3. **Reading Assignments:** Each unit contains Reading Assignments from one or more chapters from the textbook. Suggested Readings are listed in the Unit I, III, and VI study guides to aid students in their course of study. The readings themselves may or may not be provided in the course, but students are encouraged to read the resources listed if the opportunity arises as they have valuable information that expands upon the lesson material. Students will not be tested on their knowledge of the Suggested Further Readings.
4. **Learning Activities (Non-Graded):** These non-graded Learning Activities are provided in Units I and II to aid students in their course of study.
5. **Discussion Boards:** Discussion Boards are a part of all Waldorf courses. Information and specifications regarding these assignments are provided in the Course Policies listed in the Course Menu bar.
6. **Unit Assessments**: This course contains eight Unit Assessments, one to be completed at the end of each unit. Assessments are composed of written response questions.

7. **Unit Assignments**: Students are required to submit for grading Unit Assignments in Units II, III, IV, VI and VIII. Specific information and instructions regarding these assignments are provided below. Grading rubrics are included with each Unit Assignment. Specific information about accessing these rubrics is provided below.

8. **Ask the Professor**: This communication forum provides you with an opportunity to ask your professor general or course content-related questions.

9. **Student Break Room**: This communication forum allows for casual conversation with your classmates.

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**Unit Assignments**

**Unit II Reflection Paper**

*Religious Ceremony Observance*

Your task in this assignment is to observe a religious ceremony (any ritual, festival, or worship) and write a reflective paper about that experience.

You may observe a ceremony of a different denomination or sect of your religion as long as the ceremony is different in some way from what you are used to. For instance, if you are Roman Catholic, you can observe a Pentecostal worship service, as the liturgy is vastly different.

This assignment is about observation, not participation. You may observe a ceremony in video form, if necessary, but it is better to witness the ceremony first hand so that you may use all of your senses to describe the event.

**Reflective Writing**

Reflective writing is very similar to journal writing, but there is less focus on you as the writer, and more focus on the event and an academic reflection of that event. You are more likely to use readings from the course or other outside sources to support your analysis of the event.

Reflective writing consists of two main parts: a description and a reflection. The writer must first describe the event or situation that is the topic of the writing. The description should be objective—facts and detailed observations. Then the writer reflects on the experience with personal feelings and opinions, followed by an analysis of those feelings.

What is the point of reflective writing in an academic setting? Reflective writing helps you examine why you think the way you do and thereby provides a learning experience. By careful analysis of the facts of an event or situation, and then the same careful analysis of your own preconceived ideas and whether they are strengthened or changed by the experience, you will be able to gather and observe practical and personal evidence to support or challenge what might be an abstract idea in your profession or in the area of academics being studied.

This is one of the few times in academic writing when it is appropriate to write in the first person.

**Checklist for reflective writing:**

- **Introduction**
- **Detailed description of event or situation**
  - Use as many of the senses as appropriate in your description.
  - Is there any background information known that would be relevant to share?
- **Analysis of the situation and of your feelings**
  - What were your initial thoughts?
  - Are there any connections to be made between this experience and previous experiences?
  - Has this experience changed your assumptions/values/attitudes/beliefs on the subject matter?
  - What do your changed feelings/understandings about the topic imply for you personally or professionally?
- **Identification of future learning opportunities**
  - Reflect on how the insights you gained from creating this Reflection Paper might affect the way you view your actions and thoughts in the future.
- **Conclusion**
It is important to understand that reflective writing is not a simple descriptive essay. It is an exercise in critical thinking and a method for creating meaning out of a seemingly abstract concept.

Your response should be at least 400 words in length and use APA format (to include a title and reference page). No abstract is necessary. All sources used, including the textbook, must be referenced; paraphrased and quoted material must have accompanying citations.

**Unit III Article Review**

Locate one article in the Waldorf Online Library that addresses the topic of sacred Buddhist texts in connection with Buddhist involvement in social and political issues. Write a review of the article that includes the following elements:

- **Summary of Article**
- Analysis of connection between article’s main points and description of interpretation and exegesis in unit lesson
- **Evaluation of the article’s conclusion and supporting reasons**

Your paper should be at least two (2) pages, not including the title or references pages. APA formatting must be used throughout.

The following are a few journals that you might find useful in your research of the topic. (This is not a complete list, and you certainly may use an article from another academic journal.) These are all located in Academic Search Complete database.

- Buddhist-Christian Studies
- International Journal For Philosophy of Religion
- Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion
- Sociology of Religion
- Method & Theory In The Study of Religion
- Journal of Contemporary Religion
- Reviews in Religion & Theology

Please contact your librarian if you need additional help locating an article. The librarians’ contact information can be found on the right side of the online library page.

Information about accessing the Blackboard Grading Rubric for this assignment is provided below.

**Unit IV Scholarly Activity**

**Art Creation and Analysis**

Your task is to create a piece of art that reflects a text that has some meaning to you. The art can be in any form you can imagine. You can paint, draw, sing, perform a dance, take a photo, make pottery, make a collage with magazine pictures, create a meal, or whatever you can think of. You can use any text that is important to you. It can be a religious text, but it does not have to be. You could use a poem, a song, a newspaper story, a letter from an old friend, or anything else that has some value to you.

You do not have to be an artist to do this assignment and you do not have to be an expert in symbolism. The point of this assignment is to see the connection between art and religion by creating your own art and your own symbolism. By participation in the analysis of a text based on your beliefs of what it means and creating a work of art based on those beliefs, you might better be able to analyze works of art and their connection to religion.

Consider what you read in the Unit III lecture concerning exegesis. Take into consideration every element that might affect how you interpret the piece of text for your art. What is your cultural lens through which you are reading the text? (Think back to your spiritual autobiography in Unit I.) Who is the author of the text? What is the author’s culture? Who was the intended audience of the text and what is their culture like? What is the purpose of the format of the text (Scripture, poem, story, etc.)? What is the grammar and sentence structure like? These are all elements to consider as you analyze your chosen text.

Follow each step in the list below.

1. Choose a text to analyze. (It can be as small as one or two sentences from a piece of work. You do not need to choose an entire piece of work, as that would be too much to contain in one piece of art.)
2. Read the text several times and write a short summary of what it means to you. This can be just a list or words. Consider this to be a brainstorming activity.

3. Decide what form of art you think would best convey the meaning the text has for you. Ask your professor if you have any questions about whether or not what you want to create would be considered art for the purposes of this assignment.

4. Create the piece of art. (Try to make it something fairly simple that will not take up too much time using whatever supplies you might have around the house.)

5. Write an essay, at least 250 words in length, explaining the choices you made with your art and how each choice reflects the text you chose. Be sure to consider the list of exegetical questions provided in the paragraph above.

6. Submit your essay. As we are in an online setting, you will need to take a digital picture of your art and include it with the essay document. Only one document can be submitted. If you have created something on the computer, you can copy and paste that into the essay document. If you have created something on the internet, such as a YouTube video, you can provide the link in the essay document. Be sure to contact your professor via email if you have any issues with submission.

Unit VI Scholarly Activity

Interview Questions

Imagine that you have been granted an interview by a world-renowned, female religious leader. What would you like to know concerning her beliefs, her struggles, and her successes? Two of the suggested readings would be excellent sources for choosing a religious leader for this project. (You will not actually interview this person, so feel free to choose any well-known, female religious leader.)

Compile a list of 10 questions that would tell you more about her religion and why she chose to be a leader in it. Do not ask any "yes/no" questions. Good interview questions take just as much critical thinking to develop as answering the questions does. Your questions should demonstrate that you have some knowledge of her religious tradition. Your questions should dig deeper to get to information that cannot be found in the textbook or on the internet, but use that research to guide "the digging" in the interview.

Below are some possible topics for exploration in your research and in forming your questions. You are not limited to these topics:

- Textual interpretations/misunderstandings
- Cultural expectations of women
- Influence of globalization
- Influence of other religions
- Religious traditions/practices
- Effects on her personal life
- Pressures of being a pioneer
- Support system

Click here for a list of tips for writing interview questions.

As this interview is for an academic setting, you must use APA citations and references to support the research you conducted to create the 10 questions. You do not need a title page, running head or page numbers for this assignment, but be sure to put your name in the top left hand corner along with the date. Your interview title should include the name of the potential interviewee, and your references should be on a separate page. Use double spacing and Times New Roman size 12 font.

Unit VIII Final Project

Your task is to create an argument for both sides of a debate. You are to create "notecards" that you would use in your debate. You should have three “for” notecards and three “against” notecards. Each notecard should have one statement that supports one side of the argument along with three supports from a credible source. Click here for a template of the "notecard" format. (The format looks like an outline—but the concept is that you are creating notecards for a verbal debate. This means you need to write in complete sentences, but you do not need the introduction, conclusion, and transitions of a formal paper.)
Debate Topic Options:

1. Is it possible to believe in both science and Christianity?
2. Is Buddhism truly compatible with science?

Research tip: Use various combinations of the keywords religion, Christianity, Buddhism, science, theology, technology, and evolution within the Academic OneFile or Academic Search Complete databases in the Waldorf Online Library. At least two of your sources must come from the Waldorf Online Library.

Include a title page and a separate reference page. The title of your debate should be the question you are answering. No abstract is needed.

Submitting Course Papers/Projects

Once you have completed your papers/projects, submit your completed papers/projects by uploading through the Assignment tab in each unit. Do not e-mail your paper directly to your professor. By using the Assignment tab, your record will automatically be updated to indicate you have submitted your papers/projects and the assignment will be provided to your professor for grading. Instructions for submitting your assignment can be found under the Assignment tab in each unit.

APA Guidelines

Waldorf University requires that students use the APA style for papers and projects. Therefore, the APA rules for formatting, quoting, paraphrasing, citing, and listing of sources are to be followed. Information about using APA style can be found in APA Style Help in the Course Menu. This area provides links to internet sites, tutorials, and guides that provide comprehensive information on APA formatting, including examples and sample papers.

Grading Rubrics

This course utilizes analytic grading rubrics as tools for your professor in assigning grades for all learning activities. Each rubric serves as a guide that communicates the expectations of the learning activity and describes the criteria for each level of achievement. In addition, a rubric is a reference tool that lists evaluation criteria and can help you organize your efforts to meet the requirements of that learning activity. It is imperative for you to familiarize yourself with these rubrics because these are the primary tools your professor uses for assessing learning activities.

Rubric categories include: (1) Discussion Board, (2) Assessment (Written Response), and (3) Assignment. However, it is possible that not all of the listed rubric types will be used in a single course (e.g., some courses may not have Assessments).

The Discussion Board rubric can be found within Unit I’s Discussion Board submission instructions.

The Assessment (Written Response) rubric can be found embedded in a link within the directions for each Unit Assessment. However, these rubrics will only be used when written-response questions appear within the Assessment.

Each Assignment type (e.g., article critique, case study, research paper) will have its own rubric. The Assignment rubrics are built into Blackboard, allowing students to review them prior to beginning the Assignment and again once the Assignment has been scored. This rubric can be accessed via the Assignment link located within the unit where it is to be submitted. Students may also access the rubric through the course menu by selecting the “Grades” link.

Again, it is vitally important for you to become familiar with these rubrics because their application to your Discussion Boards, Assessments, and Assignments is the method by which your instructor assigns all grades.

Communication Forums

These are non-graded discussion forums that allow you to communicate with your professor and other students. Participation in these discussion forums is encouraged, but not required. You can access these forums with the buttons in the Course Menu. Instructions for subscribing/unsubscribing to these forums are provided below.
Click here for instructions on how to subscribe/unsubscribe and post to the Communication Forums.

Ask the Professor

This communication forum provides you with an opportunity to ask your professor general or course content questions. Questions may focus on Blackboard locations of online course components, textbook or course content elaboration, additional guidance on assessment requirements, or general advice from other students.

Questions that are specific in nature, such as inquiries regarding assessment/assignment grades or personal accommodation requests, are NOT to be posted on this forum. If you have questions, comments, or concerns of a non-public nature, please feel free to email your professor. Responses to your post will be addressed or emailed by the professor within 48 hours.

Before posting, please ensure that you have read all relevant course documentation, including the syllabus, assessment/assignment instructions, faculty feedback, and other important information.

Student Break Room

This communication forum allows for casual conversation with your classmates. Communication on this forum should always maintain a standard of appropriateness and respect for your fellow classmates. This forum should NOT be used to share assessment answers.

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Unit Assessments (8 @ 4.5%)</td>
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<td>Article Review (1 @ 10%)</td>
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<td>Reflection Paper (1 @ 10%)</td>
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<td>Scholarly Activity (2 @ 10%)</td>
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<td>Final Project (1 @ 10%)</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Course Schedule/Checklist (PLEASE PRINT)

The following pages contain a printable Course Schedule to assist you through this course. By following this schedule, you will be assured that you will complete the course within the time allotted.
## REL 2350, Philosophies of World Religions

### Course Schedule

By following this schedule, you will be assured that you will complete the course within the time allotted. Please keep this schedule for reference as you progress through your course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit I</th>
<th>What is Religion?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit Study Guide</td>
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<td><strong>Learning Activities (Non-Graded):</strong> See Study Guide</td>
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<td><strong>Read:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Preface Map Religions of the World Today and Timeline, pp. xvi-xvix</td>
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<td>Chapter 1: Religious Responses, pp. 1-13</td>
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<td>Chapter 2: Indigenous Sacred Ways</td>
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<td><strong>Suggested Reading:</strong> See Study Guide</td>
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<th>Unit II</th>
<th>Religious Actions</th>
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<td>Chapter 1: Religious Responses, pp. 14-15</td>
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<td>Chapter 3: Hinduism</td>
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<td>Chapter 4: Jainism</td>
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<td>Chapter 11: Sikhism</td>
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# REL 2350, Philosophies of World Religions

## Course Schedule

### Unit III

**The Texts of Religions**

- **Review:** Unit Study Guide
- **Read:**
  - Chapter 1: Religious Responses, pp. 16-20
  - Chapter 5: Buddhism
  - Suggested Reading: See Study Guide
- **Discuss:**
  - Discussion Board Response: Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)
  - Discussion Board Comment: Comment on another student’s Discussion Board response by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)
- **Submit:**
  - Assessment by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)
  - Article Review by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)

### Notes/Goals:

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### Unit IV

**Religion Expressed Through the Arts**

- **Review:** Unit Study Guide
- **Read:**
  - Chapter 6: Daoism and Confucianism
  - Chapter 7: Shinto
- **Discuss:**
  - Discussion Board Response: Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)
  - Discussion Board Comment: Comment on another student’s Discussion Board response by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)
- **Submit:**
  - Assessment by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)
  - Scholarly Activity by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)

### Notes/Goals:
## REL 2350, Philosophies of World Religions

### Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit V</th>
<th>Death and the Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review:</td>
<td>☐ Unit Study Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read:</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 8: Judaism</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit VI</th>
<th>Leadership and Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review:</td>
<td>☐ Unit Study Guide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Read: | ☐ Chapter 1: Religious Responses, pp. 26-28  
☐ Chapter 9: Christianity  
☐ **Suggested Reading:** See Study Guide |
| Discuss: | ☐ **Discussion Board Response:** Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)  
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**Notes/Goals:**
## REL 2350, Philosophies of World Religions

### Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit VII</th>
<th>Food and Clothing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review:</strong></td>
<td>□ Unit Study Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Read:</strong></td>
<td>□ Chapter 10: Islam</td>
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<th>Unit VIII</th>
<th>Science and Religion</th>
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<td><strong>Review:</strong></td>
<td>□ Unit Study Guide</td>
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</table>
| **Read:** | □ Chapter 1: Religious Responses, pp. 20-26  
□ Chapter 12: New Religious Movements  
□ Chapter 13: Religion in the Twenty-First Century |
| **Discuss:** | □ Discussion Board Response: Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)  
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