

THEO 342: WORLD RELIGIONS

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SUMMER INTERSESSION 2009

Mon-Fri 1:00-4:45 p.m. (Alter 202)

May 11-22, 2009

Office Hours: by appointment

ONLINE COURSE WEBSITE

<http://www.jonathantan.org/342/>

Please bookmark and visit the online course website regularly for announcements, research resources, required readings for class discussions, and other materials that are necessary for this course.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course is an introduction to four of the world's major religious traditions: (1) Hinduism, (2) Buddhism, (3) Confucianism, and (4) Daoism. Using a combination of lectures, video documentaries and class discussions, we will approach these religions through their socio-historical developments, major doctrinal and philosophical patterns, moral-ethical teachings, devotional practices, and their place in today's world.

II. COURSE PROCEDURES & REQUIREMENTS

1. Organizational Structure and Procedures of Class Discussion

Unless otherwise indicated, all class sessions will be held in the discussion format as follows:

- (i) The instructor will begin each class session by introducing the background, context, principal ideas, key issues, and/or important events for class discussion on that day.
- (ii) For the remainder of the class, the instructor will moderate a discussion and analysis of the materials and relevant issues among the students.

2. Attendance and Participation

As the primary format of this course is discussion, it is imperative that students complete all reading assignments before class, as well as attend and participate at all class sessions. Students are expected to do all the required readings assigned for every class before coming to class on that day, and encouraged to read the readings marked "Additional Readings," which complement the required readings and provide additional discussion for those who are interested to explore further. The instructor will deduct 5% from the final grade for each class you miss without excuse. Excuses will be accepted only for grave emergency situations (e.g., major illness with proper written documentation, death in family) or university-approved activities off-campus (e.g., varsity sports) and only at the instructor's discretion. Every two late arrivals will count as an unexcused absence and 5% will be deducted accordingly. Please note that any student with three or more unexcused absences will receive a grade of F for this course.

3. Examinations

Three examinations, covering materials in the textbook and classes. The examinations are non-cumulative. All examinations must be taken on the assigned date and time. As a rule, substitute examinations will not be given. Exceptions may be made for grave emergency reasons (e.g.,

major illness with proper written documentation, or death in family) or university-approved activities off-campus (e.g., varsity sports), but only if: (i) the request was made before the examination, and (ii) at the professor's sole discretion.

4. **Prohibition against the Use of Electronic Devices**

Please turn off all cellphones, pagers, laptops, notebook computers, tablet PCs, PDAs, and other electronic devices when class is in session. Laptops, notebook computers, and tablet PCs may not be used in this class. A first-time offender will receive a one-time warning and the confiscation of the electronic device in question for the duration of the class. Thereafter, subsequent violations will result in the loss of all extra credit privileges for this course, as well as the reduction of the student's final grade for this course by 5% for each violation.

5. **Academic Honesty**

According to the provisions on Academic Honesty in Xavier University's Undergraduate Academic Policies and Regulations:

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon the integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include ... cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests ... All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own.

Please be warned that there is a zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty in this course. The instructor expects all work that appears under the student's name to be that student's own, and will follow up on evidence that a student has contravened the university's regulations on academic honesty. If an incident of academic dishonesty is established, the student will automatically receive a grade of F for the entire course, in addition to a letter of warning from the Dean and details of the offense being noted down in the student's record file.

III. REQUIRED BOOK

The following required textbook is available for purchase at the university bookstore and on the course website (via Amazon.com):

Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions, 7th Ed* (Prentice Hall, 2008)

Please visit Professor Tan's Amazon store (<http://store.jonathantan.org/>) for book recommendations.

IV. COMPUTATION OF GRADES

The final grade for this course is computed as follows:

- (1) Examinations [3 x 25%] (75%)
 - (2) Attendance and in-class Discussion (25%)
- LESS: absences/deductions (if any)

V. THEOLOGY DEPARTMENT'S GRADING GUIDELINES

(approved by the Theology Department: 20 March 2002 and 22 August 2005)

The full version of the Theology Department's Grading Policy is available on-line at:
http://www.xavier.edu/theology/grading_policy.cfm

Grades indicate a professor's assessment of a student's academic performance and not a student's effort. **Grades are not an entitlement – you have to earn your grade for this course.** In accordance with University policy and the Theology Department grading guidelines, letter grades in undergraduate theology courses mean the following:

- A:** Exceptional academic performance (that is, uncommonly high academic achievement, which demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, uncommon skills in critical analysis and effective communication, and imagination).
- B:** Good academic performance (that is, high quality academic achievement; demonstrated competency in the discipline above the average or standard).
- C:** Satisfactory academic performance (that is, academic achievement that meets an average or standard level of competency in the discipline).
- D:** Minimal academic performance, sufficient to pass.
- F:** Failure.

This course uses the following plus/minus grading scale:				
A (94-100)	B+ (90-91)	C+ (82-83)	D+ (74-75)	F (0-67)
A- (92-93)	B (87-89)	C (79-81)	D (71-73)	
	B- (84-86)	C- (76-78)	D- (68-70)	

The Grading of Class Participation

- A:** The student is consistently well prepared for class, actively listens, and contributes thought provoking insights.
- B:** The student is prepared for class and demonstrates thoughtful engagement with the material.
- C:** The student is inconsistently prepared for class and is infrequently engaged with the material.
- D:** The student is minimally prepared for class and shows a lack of interest in the course material.
- F:** The student shows a lack of interest in the course, is frequently late or absent, and regularly demonstrates a lack of commitment to the class.

The Grading of Written Assignments (including Extra Credit Assignments)

Grades reflect the accuracy, coherence, clarity, and completeness of your written assignments. In grading your assignments, the following elements will be evaluated:

1. comprehension of the materials under consideration,
2. ability to articulate one's understanding with clarity,
3. correct usage of standard English grammar, spelling and punctuation,
4. organization of material,
5. ability to establish relationships and synthesize ideas, and
6. ability to reflect on the material with an eye to raising serious, critical questions.

VI. COURSE OUTLINE, SCHEDULE & READINGS

11 May: Introducing Hinduism. The Vedas and Sacrifice. The Caste System and the Stages of Life

12 May: The Interiorization of the Sacrifice. The Upanisads. The Bhagavad-Gita

13 May: Gods and Goddesses in Hinduism. Hinduism in the United States

14 May: Exam #1 (Hinduism). Introducing Buddhism. The Life of Buddha Sakyamuni.

15 May: The Four Ennobling Truths. The Three Characteristics (Impermanence, Dissatisfactoriness, No-Self). Karma and Rebirth. Theravada Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism. Emptiness, Compassion and the Bodhisattva Ideal.

18 May: Pure Land Buddhism. Zen Buddhism. Buddhism in the United States.

19 May: Exam #2 (Buddhism). Introducing Chinese Civilization, Culture & Religion.

20 May: Confucius and his Ethical Vision. Mencius. Xunzi. Contemporary Confucianism.

21 May: Laozi & the Daodejing. Zhuangzi. Contemporary Daoism.

22 May: Exam #3 (Confucianism & Daoism).