

## HISTORY 100 FOR GENERAL EDUCATION

### The Comparative Study of Religion

**Instructor & Office: Rick Rogers (701-H Pray-Harrold)**

**Section: W 5:30-8:10 in 402 Pray-Harrold**

**Office Hours: MWF 10:00-10:50, 1:00-1:50, and W 5:00-5:30**

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#### **Description:**

This General Education course is an introduction to the academic discipline of Religious Studies. Religious Studies is an interdisciplinary field that draws on approaches from both the humanities and the social sciences. Because this course focuses primarily on the questions and methods of the humanities, it counts toward the Knowledge of the Disciplines requirement in the Humanities Area. Students in this class will develop their ability to interpret religious texts and other religious expressions, to analyze religious ideas about human existence and the nature of the world, and to understand religions as historical traditions characterized by conflict and change. In this discussion-oriented and reading- and writing-intensive section of History 100 we will achieve these objectives using case studies based on the history, beliefs and practices of various religious traditions from around the world. Students are invited to participate fully in analyzing, comparing and discussing these cases, which are designed primarily to broaden their perspective and to develop their skill as critical thinkers who can refute unwarranted stereotypes. Toward that end, students will work with a textbook that provides a large variety of primary and secondary materials that will enable them to discern the similarities many traditions share and the differences separating them. Furthermore, students will be introduced to religiously oriented music, sacred chants, and religious art, and will discuss important issues and events in world religious news, as well as, religious themes presented in a few clips from recent feature-length movies. Attendance is mandatory for this course.

#### **Required Materials:**

Gary E. Kessler's *Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

#### **Assessments:**

There are two short-answer/essay exams (30% each),<sup>1</sup> twelve Q&A Papers (15% collectively), based on questions posed in the textbook<sup>2</sup> and twelve Religion & Ethics Papers (15% collectively) based on issues & discussions during a religious news program.<sup>3</sup> Honor students may apply for an honor's credit project.<sup>4</sup> The final grade will include an assessment of participation (10%).

## Course Schedule:

- 9/5            **Orientation**
- Discussion of Course Syllabus
  - YouTube.com Clip: “Introducing the Book”
- 9/12            **Thinking about Being a Student of Religion**
- Assignments:
    - Read Kessler, 3-17
    - Hand in Q&A Paper
    - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
  - Discussion Focus:
    - Bias v. Prejudice
    - Sympathetic Imagination
    - Critical Tolerance
    - Teaching Religion v. Teaching about Religion
- 9/19            **On Defining and Studying Religion**
- Assignments:
    - Read Kessler, 18-44
    - Hand in Q&A Paper
    - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
  - Discussion Focus:
    - Scholarly Classes of Definitions
    - Types of Religion Studies
    - First Order v. Second Order Evaluation
    - Beyond Scholarly Assessment
- 9/26            **Sacred Powers**
- Assignments:
    - Read Kessler, 47-70
    - Hand in Q&A Paper
    - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
  - Discussion Focus:
    - Comparative Case Studies:
      - Tao in the *Tao-te-ching* by Lao-tzu
      - God in the *Proslogion* by Anselm of Canterbury
    - Forms of Sacred Power:
      - Selection from *Bhagavad Gita*
      - *The Sun Dance* by J. R. Walker
      - *The Nicene Creed*
      - *The Essence of Christianity* by L. Feuerbach
    - Research Case: Ganesha
      - *Studies of an Asian God* by R. L. Brown
      - Classroom Online Research

10/3

### **Myth as Sacred Story**

- Assignments:
  - Read Kessler, 71-94
  - Hand in Q&A Paper
  - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
- Discussion Focus:
  - Comparative Case Studies:
    - Marduk in the *Enuma elish*
    - Moses in the *Torah*
  - Understanding Mythology:
    - *Myth and Reality* by Mircea Eliade
  - Research Case: Primal Man
    - Selection from *Rig Veda*
    - *Myth, Cosmos and Society* by Lincoln Bruce
    - Classroom Online Research

10/10

### **Ritual as Sacred Action**

- Assignments:
  - Read Kessler, 95-117
  - Hand in Q&A Paper
  - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
- Discussion Focus:
  - Comparative Case Studies:
    - Babylonia *Akitu* Festival
    - Oglala Sioux *Ishna Ta Awi Cha Lowan* Ritual
  - Understanding Ritual
    - *Black Elk & The Sacred Pipe* by Joseph Epes Brown
  - Research Case: The Seder
    - Selections from *The Passover Haggadah* by Nahum N. Glatzer
    - Classroom Online Research

10/17

### **Sacred Space, Time, and Art**

- Assignments:
  - Read Kessler, 118-145
  - Hand in Q&A Paper
  - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
- Discussion Focus:
  - Comparative Case Studies:
    - Mount Kilimanjaro
    - The Dreamtime
  - Understanding Sacred Aesthetics
    - *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* by Diane Eck
  - Research Case: The Cathedral of St. Andrew at Wells
    - Classroom Online Research

10/24 (F)

### **First Exam**

10/31

### **Experiencing the Sacred**

- Assignments:
  - Read Kessler, 146-179
  - Hand in Q&A Paper
  - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
- Discussion Focus:
  - Comparative Case Studies:
    - Conversion & Muhammad in *Sahih al-Bukhari*
    - Nirvana & the Buddha in *The Life of the Buddha*
  - Understanding Mysticism
    - *The Christian Faith* by Friedrich Schleiermacher
    - *The Idea of the Holy* by Rudolf Otto
  - Research Case: St. Teresa of Avila
    - *The Interior Castle* by Teresa of Avila
    - Classroom Online Research

11/7

### **The Problem of Evil**

- Assignments:
  - Read Kessler, 180-206
  - Hand in Q&A Paper
  - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
- Discussion Focus:
  - Comparative Case Studies:
    - Karma in the *Upanishads*
    - The Mahdi in Twelver Shia
  - Understanding Theodicy
    - Selections from *Buddhist Traditions in India, China & Japan*
    - Selections from *Poems from the Divant Shamsi Tabriz*
    - *The Trial of God* by Elie Wiesel
  - Research Case: Manichaeism
    - Classroom Online Research

11/14

### **Religion and Morality**

- Assignments:
  - Read Kessler, 207-236
  - Hand in Q&A Paper
  - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
- Discussion Focus:
  - Comparative Case Studies:
    - Divine Command Theory: *Shariah*
    - Confucian Virtue in the *Analects*
  - Understanding Morality & Natural Law Theory
    - *Fear & Trembling* and *The Sickness Unto Death* by Soren Kierkegaard
    - *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* Paul Reps
  - Research Case: Jain Nonviolence
    - Selections from *Jain Sutras*
    - Classroom Online Research

11/21

## **Thanksgiving Recess**

11/28

## **Organizing the Sacred**

- Assignments:
  - Read Kessler, 237-278
  - Hand in Q&A Paper
  - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
- Discussion Focus:
  - Comparative Case Studies:
    - Tibetan Buddhism & Lineage
    - Jonestown & Charisma
  - Understanding Benefits & Dilemmas of Institutionalization
    - *The Grand Inquisitor* by Fyodor Dostoevsky
    - *Gender & Religion* by Lori Beaman
    - *Civil Religion in America* by Robert Bellah
  - Research Case: Shinto
    - Selections from the *Kojiki*
    - *Shinto & the State* by Helen Hardacre
    - Classroom Online Research

12/5

## **Human Existence and Destiny**

- Assignments:
  - Read Kessler, 279-316
  - Hand in Q&A Paper
  - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper
- Discussion Focus:
  - Comparative Case Studies:
    - Sikhism
    - Christianity
  - Understanding Paths to Salvation
    - Founder Selections from *Guru Adi Granth Sahib* by Nanak
    - *Sutra on the Merit of Bathing the Buddha*
    - *A Modern Sermon on Merit Making* by Donald K. Swearer
    - *Lectures on Romans* by Martin Luther
    - *A Treatise on Christian Liberty* by Martin Luther
    - *I Corinthians 15:40-44* by Paul
    - *Digha Nikaya 2:6ff* by the Buddha
    - *Sukhavativyuka 15-16* by Amida Buddha
  - Research Case: Zen Buddhism
    - Selections from D. T. Suzuki
    - Classroom Online Research

12/12

## **Religious Diversity and Truth**

- Assignments:
  - Read Kessler, 319-345
  - Hand in Q&A Paper
  - Hand in Religion & Ethics Paper

- Discussion Focus:
  - Perspective on Others
    - *A Defense of Religious Exclusivism* by Alvin Plantinga
    - *A Defense of Religious Inclusivism* by Karl Rahner
    - *A Defense of Religious Pluralism* by John Hick
  - Truth & Language Games
    - Proposals of Gavin D’Costa & Keith Ward
    - Proposal of Hans-Georg Gadamer
    - Proposal of S. Radhakrishnan
  - Critical Tolerance & the Principle of Charity
    - *The Blind Men & the Elephant*
  - Research Case: Baha’i
    - *Guidance for Today & Tomorrow* by Shoghi Effendi
    - Classroom Online Research

## 12/19            Second Exam

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<sup>1</sup> If a student cannot take an exam at the assigned time, they must tell the instructor well in advance (or in the case of illness, on the day of the exam). In order to take the make-up exam a student must bring a note from a physician, clergyperson, coach, instructor, academic advisor, or residence director, explaining the reason for the absence. The make-up exam is different from the one taken in class. The make-up exam will be taken at the instructor’s convenience in the H&P offices (701 Pray-Harrold).

<sup>2</sup>The Q&A papers consist of reflective answers based on all Review, Exploration and Research Case Questions at the end of chapters 1-12 of the textbook. Students are required to type up their answers to those questions and hand them in personally at the beginning of each class period. Students should make an extra copy for themselves to use during class discussions and, on their copy, leave sufficient space for taking notes. Your answers to these questions will be the basis of much of the class discussion and also, with those discussions, become the primary material for both exams. In other words, all students will be creating their own highly individualized study guides for the exams. Of course, the value of these study guides is contingent upon the seriousness of the student. All papers are scored Credit and No Credit. All papers must demonstrate significant effort to receive credit. Only the No Credit papers will be returned. Twelve credits will earn a grade of A+ for 15% of the course grade (11 = A, 10 = B, 9 = C, 8 = D & less than 8 = E).

<sup>3</sup>Every Sunday morning at 7:30 a.m. on the PBS station WTVS (channels 56 Detroit and 6 in Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor, Brighton, Saline, Van Buren, Caton and Adelpia), students have access to a religious news program called “Religion & Ethics News Weekly.” Students also have access to podcasts of this program via <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics>. Also, student may record the program using their VCR or Tivo for later viewing. Students are required to write a one-page paper chronicling each story in the program and offering a thoughtful reaction on one of those stories. These stories will be an important part of the following Wednesday discussions and also, with those discussion, will become secondary material for both exams. Therefore, students should make an extra copy of their typed papers for themselves to use in class. All papers must be handed in personally at the beginning of each class period and must demonstrate significant effort to receive credit. All papers are scored Credit and No Credit. Only the No Credit papers will be returned. The value scale for these papers is similar to the Q & A papers.

<sup>4</sup>The honor’s credit project must be arranged during the first week of the course (see the instructor and written description).