Introduction to the Study of Religion

DESCRIPTION

This course is about how religions are studied critically within frameworks of knowledge advanced in the humanities and social sciences. It introduces major concepts and theories, and examines their utility in understanding, comparing, and explaining religious phenomena in their variety. Rather than considering religion solely within the purview of theology, which is largely a Christian project, we will work under the premise that religion and religions are best understood when examined relationally and in comparative perspective. This undertaking is multidisciplinary and encourages informed understanding of new, different, and alternative formations of religious belief and practice.

We will explore the study of religion in four ways: through 1) how scholars name and classify religions; 2) historical explanations of how religions have formed and developed; 3) key concepts used in comparing religions (myth, experience, ritual, doctrine, and politics); and 4) examination of ethics in comparative perspective. All four levels will be studied as they occur in two important “families” of religion: the Dharmic family (Hinduism and Buddhism) and the Abrahamic family (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).

By taking this course, you will acquire knowledge of several of the world’s religious traditions and their mutual interactions with human history and social life. You will acquire skills for thinking critically about people’s religious beliefs and practices and placing them in relational and comparative perspective. The paper assignment will sharpen writing skills while engaging you in the analysis of contemporary works of literature that have religious subjects.

MATERIALS

Required:
J.E. Campo, Religious Journeys (at Grafik Art in I.V. by April 6)
Dalai Lama, Ethics for the New Millennium

and ONE of the following:
S. Endo, The Sea and Poison
K. Hosseini, The Kite-Runner
C. McCarthy, The Road
T. Morrison, A Mercy

Recommended

REQUIREMENTS

1. Being up-to-date with all reading assignments
2. Attending & participating in discussion sections—(10%)  
3. Midterm Exam, Tues, 5 May—(25%)  
4. Book Paper assignment, First Draft due Thursday, 14 May in class, Final Draft due Thursday, 28 May, in class—(25%)  
5. Participation in section group book discussion (dates TBA)—(10%)  
6. Final Exam, Tuesday, 9 June—(30%)
**Communications:** Take advantage of Professor Campo’s office hours to discuss course-related and academic matters. Only email him in emergencies. General communications about readings, assignments, etc. should be through your TA during her/his office hours. Do not email any class assignments to the professor or TAs unless you are given explicit permission to do so.

The TAs for this class are:

- Rana Ajrawat (MW sections)  ranaajrawat@gmail.com
- Wyatt Rounds (TR sections)  awr@umail.ucsb.edu

**Electronic Reserve:** The Syllabus, Book Paper Assignment, study guides and other materials are available on the library’s ERes:  www.eres.ucsb.edu

**Cell Phones, iPods, etc.:** To enhance your learning experience, cell phones must be turned off during the lecture. iPods and other listening devices are not allowed.

**Exams:** The Midterm will consist of objective questions and map questions. The Final will be comprised of a mix of objective, map, short answer, & essay questions. There will be only one scheduled make-up exam for the Midterm for students who have received prior permission from their TA. Final exams must be taken on the scheduled date and time, unless Prof. Campo has given prior permission.

**The Course Standard of Academic Honesty and Responsibility:** The Student Code of Conduct clearly sets forth the standard of academic honesty and responsibility in which a student’s work must be his or her own work. The faculty in Religious Studies believes that plagiarism is one of the most serious violations of student standards of conduct and the intellectual values of the university. Faculty members have agreed that we will pursue disciplinary actions in all cases of plagiarism and that, if warranted, we will ask the Dean of Students and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies to suspend the offending student from the university. Make certain that you attribute all materials (including materials downloaded from the web) cited directly or indirectly, verbatim or paraphrased in your paper. Students caught cheating on the midterm or final exam will receive an automatic fail.
Outline & Readings

Note: Readings listed as with an asterisk (*) are in Campo, Religious Journeys

I. INTRODUCTION (3/31-4/9)
   A. Approaches and Definitions
   B. Religious Power and Beliefs in Supramundane Beings
   C. Ethics and the Afterlife

Readings: Kessler, chaps 1-3 and ch. 9
          Dalai Lama, xi-33
          *Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious"

II. HINDUISM (4/9-21)
   A. Concept: Myth
   B. What is “Hinduism”?
   C. Cosmogony, Sacrifice & Society
   D. Hindu Ethics and Afterlifes

Readings: Kessler, ch. 4, *Crawford, "Hindu Ethics for Modern Life"
          Dalai Lama, pp. 35-62

Hindu Texts: *The Rig Veda (selections), *Laws of Manu (selection)

III. BUDDHISM (4/21-30)
   A. Concept: Religious Experience
   B. What is “Buddhism”? 
   C. The Buddha & Enlightenment
   D. Buddhist Ethics and Afterlifes

Readings: Kessler, ch. 7 (optional: pp. 152-157)
          Dalai Lama, pp. 81-158


Midterm Exam: Tuesday, May 5

IV. JUDAISM (5/7-14)
   A. Concept: Ritual
   B. What is “Judaism”?
   C. Temple and Torah
   D. Jewish Ethics and Afterlife

Readings: Kessler, ch 5
          Dalai Lama, pp. 161-237

V. CHRISTIANITY (5/14-5/21)
   A. Concept: Existence and Salvation
   B. What is “Christianity”? 
   C. Jesus Christ: God and Human Being
   D. Christian Ethics and Afterlife

Readings: Kessler, ch. 12 (optional: pp. 296-298) and 152-157

   Christian Texts: *Bible: Selections from the New Testament; * “Apostles’ Creed;”
   and Christian Faith;” MacGregor, “The Ethical Consequences of the Christian
   Way” (on ERES)

Paper First Draft Due: Thursday, 14 May in class

VI. ISLAM (5/21-28)
   A. Concept: Religion & Politics
   B. What is “Islam”?
   C. God, Prophet and the Law
   D. Islamic Ethics and Afterlife

Readings: Kessler, ch. 10

   Islamic Texts: *Qur’an (selections); *Hadith (selections); *Rahman, “Law and Ethics in
   Islam”

Paper Due: Thursday, 28 May in class

VII. CONCLUSION: RELIGION AND MODERNITY (5/28-6/4)
   A. Religion, Modernity & Globalization
   B. Ethics in Modernity

Readings: Kessler 13, *Declaration toward a Global Ethic

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, 9 June, 8-11 AM