

Rel 3640
Alternative Religions of the World

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Course Description:

An examination of the religions of the world not typically counted among the major world religions. The course will include the religions of Africa, South America, the Pacific and Atlantic islanders, and Wiccan and Neo-Pagan religions. The focus will be on the traditions as they are expressed and experienced by the followers of the religions.

Detailed Course Outline:

This course is designed to explore the many world religions that are not covered in the existing world religions courses because of time constraints. The course will look at religions including African, South American as well as Pacific and Atlantic islanders. The course will also look at Wiccan and Neo-Pagan religions. The course is designed to introduce the student to religions in the area of spirituality, ritual, social justice and ethics. The focus will be on the traditions as they are expressed and experienced by the followers of the religions.

VSU General Education Outcomes:

- #2. Students will demonstrate cross-cultural perspectives and knowledge of other societies.
- #4. Students will express themselves clearly, logically, and precisely in writing and in speaking and they will demonstrate competence in reading and listening.
- #6. Students will demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultural heritages in the arts, the humanities, and in the social sciences.
- #8. Students will demonstrate knowledge of principles of ethics and their employment in the analysis and resolution of moral problems.

Religion Selected Educational Outcomes:

1. To encourage an understanding of the world's religious traditions and their influence on values, norms, and public policies.
2. To develop students' critical and analytical skills and their abilities to articulate clearly an attention to multiple religious perspectives.
3. To enable students to challenge their own ideas and to develop self-understanding in the context of diverse ideas that informs contemporary controversies and social conflict.
4. To enable students to engage in independent research, to increase their sense of problem and to communicate their understanding of the issues researched and developed in the context of current theories and research methods in the discipline.

Course Outcomes:

1. The student will demonstrate a basic knowledge of differing world religions with an emphasis on religions of the southern hemisphere. (VSU #2, #6, #8)

2. The student will demonstrate a basic historical knowledge of these religions and worldviews as well as knowledge of current social, political, ethical and religious issues. (VSU #2, #8)
3. The student will demonstrate an ability to rationally discuss and analyze the difference between differing epistemology, ontology, metaphysics, religion and spirituality concepts involved in different religions of the world and be able to discuss these rationally and logically. (VSU #4, #8)
4. The student will demonstrate a basic knowledge involving issues of ethics, politics and religious issues. (VSU #8)
5. The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of inter-cultural interaction between differing world religious cultures in the area of education, health and poverty in terms of international concerns. (VSU #2, #8)

Special Needs:

Students requiring classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability should discuss this need with me at the beginning of the semester. If you are such a student, but are not registered with the Special Services Program, you should contact the Special Services office in Powell Hall. The phone number is 245-2498. The student success center is also available.

Academic Honesty:

Students in this course are held to the highest levels of academic honesty. Plagiarism or otherwise unethical behavior will not be tolerated. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, consult the student handbook, or ask your professor. Violations of policy on academic honesty and integrity will be dealt with as per established University procedure. See for reference, <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>

Attendance:

Because of the nature of this course, attendance is required. Students missing more than two classes, without an approved excuse, may be subject to a drop in grade. The professor determines excused and unexcused.

Reading List:

The pace of this course will be determined by the abilities of the students. Assignments will be given in class. The dates of the exams will also be based on the pace of student understanding. These dates will also be given in class at least one week in advance. An initial schedule outline is given below for student reference.

Late Work:

Students must complete all homework on time unless approved by the professor. All quizzes and tests must be taken on time unless approved by the professor.

Cell Phones:

Because some students have family responsibilities, cell phones will be allowed in class. As the ring of a phone is disruptive, phones should be placed on silent ring. **NO** text messaging will be

allowed in class. If you must communicate with someone by phone, you need to leave the classroom.

Evaluations:

Evaluations will be done in the student's Banner account at the end of the semester. These will be completed in class.

Text:

African Religions and Philosophy second edition by John S. Mbiti

Other readings will be placed in WebCT

Grades:

Reading Quizzes 100 pts.

Discussion papers/Group projects 100 pts.

Five-page paper (2) 100 pts. Each

Final Paper 200 pts.

Attendance/Participation 50 pts.

Total Points: 650

Five-page papers:

Each student will write two five-page papers. The student may pick the topic, with the professor's approval. These papers are to be researched, with at least 3 sources. The papers are to be typed according to standard APA/MLA/Chicago style sheet depending on which style sheet is used by the student's major.

Final Paper:

The final paper will be a topic of the student's choice (approved by the professor). This paper will be researched and manufactured according to APA/MLA/Chicago style sheet. These papers will be due during the finals period.

Reading Assignments

Week 1: Introduction/ **Africa** Mbiti pp.15-27 & 39-47

Week 2: Mbiti pp. 74-89 & 145-157

Week 3: Mbiti pp. 189-222

Week 4: Mbiti pp. 223-271 **Group project**

Week 5: Central & South America WebCT

Week 6: WebCT

Week 7: WebCT **First 5-page paper due**

Week 8: WebCT

Week 9: Caribbean WebCT

Week 10: WebCT

Week 11: Wicca/Neo-Pagan/Romani WebCT

Week 12: WebCT **Group project**

Week 13: WebCT **Second 5-page paper due**

Week 14: Pacific WebCT

Week 15: WebCT

Week 16: WebCT
Week 17: Finals

10-page paper due