

World Religions (PHIL 210-H01)
Spring 2014
Monday 1:00pm-3:50pm DAW 101
Dr Jeffrey Crouse



Course Description

This is an introduction to many of the world's major faith traditions. The religions being studied are: shamanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This course will cover the history and development of these religions, as well as their core beliefs and practices. Within such analysis, vital topics like the nature of suffering, the experience of death, the ingredients for a meaningful life, the idea of what constitutes happiness, and the relationship between self and society will be looked at for the way each religion approaches these questions. Each major faith tradition will be explored within a two-week unit (six class hours) that includes any combination of the following pedagogical tools: reading, lecture, discussion, DVD presentation, and a guest speaker. There will also be a class field trip to a house of worship to immerse students in an actual religious environment.

Course Objectives

A working knowledge of the world's leading religions is non-negotiable for any informed person's understanding of human activity, including but not limited to: history, art, sociology, anthropology, politics, science, philosophy, economics, medicine, psychology, gender and sexuality, dietary practice, and ideas regarding the role of nature. In other words, to grasp the values that underpin human decision-making it is necessary to be aware that they arise from a religious culture(s), even if one is agnostic or atheist. It has even been argued, somewhat controversially, that human consciousness paralleled what has been interpreted as expressions of religious feeling reflected in cave art dating back 30,000 years. Nevertheless, while the course will possess a sympathetic bent toward religious

belief and practice, it will balance such a stance with a critical eye. As such, this class is ecumenical and inclusive and seeks to draw involvement from students from religious *and* secular backgrounds.

This course will not explore or analyze the traditional philosophical proofs for the existence of a deity, although it will certainly explore the philosophical aspects, dimensions, and assumptions raised by the answers that religions provide about life's major questions. Yet in addition to such a framework, this course will also undertake a social, historical, and psychological approach. Altogether, the aims of the class will delve into the following areas:

- Exploring the historical origin and development of each religion, with a special focus on its founder (if known);
- Delving into the sacred text(s) of each religion (if it enjoys a written or literary tradition);
- Learning about the central dogmas and aspects that make up the essence of each religion;
- Studying the devotional practices of each religion;
- Applying these questions to each religion for the answers or perspectives they offer:
 - What is the source of human suffering? Why does it exist? Can it be relieved?
 - What is the role of death in the life cycle of human existence?
 - What qualities and practices must one do to experience the fullest possible life?
 - What is the source of human happiness? Of joy?
 - Is humanity's natural "default setting" one that reveals a basic direction toward well-being or ill-being?
 - Are human beings inherently individualistic or group-minded?

Instructor Information

E-mail: Jeffrey.Crouse@nsc.nevada.edu

Do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to set up time to see me outside of class for any question(s).

Course Textbook

Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (HarperOne, 1991) ISBN: 978-0-06-166018-4

Huston Smith, 94 years old, is the son of Protestant missionaries who served in China for decades. He is the most widely regarded authority on comparative religion, and is the author of 15 books on the subject. His most well-known book, *The World's Religions*, has been continuously in print since 1958 and has sold 2.5 million copies. For more information about him read: <http://www.hustonsmith.net/>.

Textbooks can be purchased on-line (<http://nsc.nsbookstore.org>) thru the college owned bookstore, Nevada State Bookstore. Purchases made through it have no additional sales tax and the revenue contributes to projects that support the Nevada State College community. Textbooks can be purchased on-line or at the Dawson Campus Store.

Course Etiquette

Students must arrive to class prepared and on time. Cell phones must be turned off and stored out of

sight. Text messaging or viewing is not permitted. The use of laptops during class is limited to note taking and information gathering the instructor may invite you to look up during a discussion; otherwise their use for music listening, game playing, web browsing, or Internet chats will not be tolerated. Classroom behavior should be courteous, mindful of others in the class who wish to add their voice to discussions (in other words do not hijack the class by thinking that it is a one-to-one tutorial with the instructor), and consistent with the expectations set forth by NSC – yet also lively, challenging, fun and informative.

Each member of the Nevada State Community is responsible for fostering an atmosphere imbued with dignity, respect, tolerance, appreciation of diversity and positive regard for all members of our collegiate community. A fundamental tenet of the college's mission is to nurture a community free from racism, religious intolerance, sexism, ageism, homophobia, harassment, discrimination against those with disabling conditions, or discrimination based on a person's political views or beliefs. Within this context, all members of the college community are accountable for their own actions. The college will not tolerate behavior that violates or infringes upon the civil and statutory rights of any individual or group. As members of our Nevada State community, each of us can feel free to express ourselves in ways that promote openness within a diverse society.

Course Schedule, Reading, and Assignments

Disclaimer: It is expected that the following schedule will be observed. Should a change arise, I reserve the right to make any alteration as long as it is made entirely clear to the students.

Week 1: Martin Luther King Day (20 January) – No Class

INTRODUCTION

Week 2: Course Overview and the Roots of Religion: Shamanism (27 January)

§ Reading: Smith, “The Primal Religions” (Chapter IX) pp. 365-383.

→ Screening: Graham Hancock, “The War on Consciousness” (TED Talk, 12 January 2013) 18 min. And if time allows:

Terence McKenna, “Hallucinogens and Culture,” Interview by Jeffrey Mishlove (ThinkingAllowedTV, PBS, 1992) Approximately 30 min.

Week 3: Shamanism (3 February)

▣ Guest Speaker: Arnold Hermann is an independent researcher and philosopher specializing in Presocratic philosophy, Metaphysics, and methods of thinking. He is the founder and director of the HYELE Institute for Comparative Studies in Athens, Greece, and the author of To Think Like God: Pythagoras and Parmenides – The Origins of Philosophy (2004), and Plato's Parmenides: Text, Translation and Introductory Essay (2010). He is an honorary member of the Greasewood Clan of the Hopi tribe located in the Four Corners region of the US Southwest.

HINDUISM

Week 4: Hinduism (10 February)

§ Reading: Smith, “Hinduism” (Chapter II) pp. 12-81.

|| Due: Assignment 1

Week 5: Presidents' Day (17 February) – No Class

Week 6: Hinduism (February 24)

☞ Guest Speaker: TBA

BUDDHISM

Week 7: Buddhism (3 March)

§ Reading: Smith, "Buddhism" (Chapter III) pp. 82-153.

|| Due: Assignment 2

→ Screening: *The Buddha: The Story of Siddhartha* (David Grubin, 2010, PBS, narrated by Richard Gere). Approximately 2 hr. Questions and discussion to follow.

Week 8: Buddhism (10 March)

→ Screening: *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Way of Life* (Hiroaki Mori, Yukari Hayashi, Barrie McLean, 1994, NHK/National Board of Canada/Mistral Films of France, narrated by Leonard Cohen). 45 min. If time allows, we will also play the second part of this DVD (also 45 min.) titled *The Great Liberation*. The first part reveals the history of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and examines its traditional use in northern India, as well as its acceptance in Western hospices. Shot over a four-month period, the film contains footage of the rites and liturgies for a deceased Ladakhi elder and includes an interview with the Dalai Lama, who shares his views on the book's meaning and importance. The second part follows an old lama and his novice monk as they guide a Himalayan villager into the afterlife using readings from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The soul's 49-day journey towards rebirth is envisioned through actual photography of rarely seen Buddhist rituals, interwoven with groundbreaking animation by internationally acclaimed filmmaker Ishu Patel. Questions and discussion to follow.

Week 9: Spring Break (17 March) – No Class

JUDAISM

Week 10: Judaism (24 March)

§ Reading: Smith, "Judaism" (Chapter VII) pp. 271-316.

|| Due: Assignment 3

Week 11: Judaism (31 March)

× Field Trip: Congregation Ner Tamid, a Reformed Jewish synagogue, located in Green Valley, Henderson. Assistant Rabbi Sadie Reuben will be our tour guide and guest speaker as we visit this house of worship. She will answer questions about her faith, one founded around 1800 BCE, and go over Holocaust era torahs to explain how the Pentateuch (the first six books of what Christians refer to as the Old Testament) is actually the work of writers representing four different traditions or schools of thought. Reuben was ordained a rabbi three years ago after graduating from Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. She also holds a MA in Jewish education from the NYC affiliate of HUC.

CHRISTIANITY

Week 12: Christianity (7 April)

§ Reading: Smith, "Christianity" (Chapter VIII) pp. 317-364.

|| Due: Assignment 4

Week 13: Christianity (14 April)

☞ Guest Speaker: Julia Occhiogrosso. She has been the director of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker Community (the St. John the Baptist House) since she founded it in 1986. The Catholic Worker (CW) movement was started in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, creating

communities across the globe based on solidarity with the marginalized and resistance to social injustice based on the Gospel message of unconditional love in action. Like all CW communities, the LV house serves the poor and homeless and practices active nonviolence for transformation of war, injustice and institutional violence that perpetuates the cycle of poverty. In 1989 Occhiogrosso was asked to be part of the founding community for the Pace e Bene Franciscan Nonviolence Center. Motivated by the biblical injunction to practice the Corporal Works of Mercy, she and husband Gary (and their two boys) continue to serve Las Vegas' most forgotten men, women, teens, and children.

ISLAM

Week 14: Islam (21 April)

§ Reading: Smith, "Islam" (Chapter VI) pp. 221-270.

|| Due: Assignment 5

Week 15: Islam (28 April)

🔊 Guest Speaker: Imam Aslam Abdullah. He has a Masters in Arabic and Islamic Studies and a Ph.D in Journalism with focus on coverage of Islam in the world media. He is currently the director of the Islamic Society of Nevada, and he also edits an English language weekly focused on Islam and Muslims in North America called *The Muslim Observer*. He also regularly blogs at aslamabdullah.blogspot.com. Dr Abdullah teaches at UNLV and is giving up valuable class time in order to speak to us.

CONCLUSION

Week 16: Class summary and student feedback about the course shared. Journals due. (5 May)

NSC Assessment Program Information

NSC's Outcomes	Level	Course Objectives	Assessments and Key Performances
Develop Effective Citizenship	1	At level one, students are expected to communicate a recognition of their own cultural values, assumptions, and knowledge and demonstrate socially responsible behavior in and beyond the classroom.	You will be expected to communicate effectively in class discussions, assignments, and projects. Since we will be covering controversial topics, you will learn to voice your opinions about these topics in a honest and responsible manner. You will also need to pay attention to group dynamics in such a way that you balance the

			right for others to speak and be heard with your own input to the class.
Develop communication abilities	2	At this second level of communication, you will begin to develop a structured argument from a set of facts, impressions, and ideas.	This will manifest itself in the quality of your reasoning skills as found in your writing on your 5 assignments as well as the Journal Project in all of its aspects.
Develop critical deep thinking skills	3	At this level of critical thinking, you will begin to dissect the structure of arguments and identify central points and inherent assumptions, as well as ascertain the context (historical, philosophical, and social) of the religions analyzed.	Again, it is expected that you critically synthesize the information found in the films, lectures, discussions, assignments, guest speakers, field trip, and journal project.

Withdrawal from Course

NSC does NOT assign an automatic “W” or “Withdrawal” grade if you stop coming to class or handing in assignments. You will receive an “F” to denote you failed the course. It is your responsibility to officially drop or withdrawal from the course by the posted deadlines.

A copy of the campus academic calendar can be found here:

<http://nsc.nevada.edu/calendar.asp>

Important Registrar's Office Dates for Spring 2014

Date	Item
Monday, 27 January	Last Day to Add Individual Classes for Full Fall Session; Last Day to Drop Individual Classes w/o a “W” Grade and Receive a 100% Refund.

Friday, 31 January	Last Day to be Reinstated into Fall 2013 Courses w/o the School Dean's Approval.
Saturday, 1 March	Last Day for 50% Refund for Withdrawing COMPLETELY from the College.
Monday, 31 March	Last Day to Withdraw from Individual Courses with a "W" Grade and No Refund.
Tuesday, 1 April	Summer and Fall 2014 Registration Begins for Continuing Students.
Tuesday, 8 April	Spring 2014 Registration for New Students
Saturday, 10 May	COMMENCEMENT
Wednesday, 14 May	Fall 2013 Grades Due by 12pm

Grade Range

93.33-100% = A
 90.0-93.32% = A-
 86.67-89.99 = B+
 83.33-86.66 = B
 80.0-83.32 = B-
 76.67-79.99 = C+
 73.33-76.66 = C
 70.0-73.32 = C-
 60-69.99 = D
 Below 60 = F

Course Grading of Assignments, Attendance, and Exams

Course standards outline that for every hour of instruction at Nevada State College, that students typically have 2-3 hours of work outside the class. (Statement updated 9/28/10.)

Though this is a 200-level class, this will be an immersion experience and one that builds from week to week. As a result, it is necessary that you stay on top of the reading and attend each class.

To help you achieve your best performance, there will be a penalty for every class missed. To be specific, 2% points will be deducted from your final semester grade for each absence. If you know in advance that you will not be in class, please tell or e-mail the instructor. Such instances as an extreme family or medical emergency should be communicated right away, and I will work with you for the best possible way so that your performance does not suffer. One important area that does not count as a legitimate reason for not attending class is a change in a job schedule or shift. It is vital that you inform your employer from the start that you are enrolled in this course and it is just as mandatory that you show up for class as it is for your place of employment. So plan to be in class every week. Movie watching is a communal experience, and your presence in class enhances the class for everyone – including me.

Written Assignments (5) – 100 points each
Final Exam Project (Class Journal) – 500 points
Total = 1,000 points.

A description of the assignments and the final exam project will be explained in class.

*** Reminder: Two percentage points from the final semester grade deducted for every class missed after one absence.**

Also: Late work for the written assignments is accepted up until the following week (aside from the type of emergencies mentioned above), with a 10% deduction in the grade.

Students with Disabilities

Resource Center for Students with Disabilities (RCSD)
5/28/09

“The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) mandates accessibility in all facets of the learning environment. The Resource Center for Students with Disabilities (RCSD) on the Nevada State Campus coordinates support services and reasonable accommodations for students qualifying as disabled under the ADA guidelines. These services are free of charge.

Any student who believes that s/he may need an accommodation, based on the impact of a documented disability, should contact RCSD to speak privately with a representative about specific needs. To make an appointment, please contact the RCSD office at 702-992-2180 voice, 702-992-2098 TDD or by e-mail at nsc.rcsd@nsc.nevada.edu.”

Video- or Audio-recording of Lectures

Covert Surveillance of Faculty Lectures
1/10/12

“Students must seek expressed permission from the faculty or any guest lecturer before recording any lecture using either video or audio recording devices. Students under RCSD recommendation are covered by the nature of their accommodation letters. This notice aligns with the Board of Regents policy (Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 21) which states:

The covert use of video surveillance for anything other than a criminal investigation on campuses of the Nevada System of Higher Education is prohibited. If, in a criminal investigation, such video surveillance is used, it must be approved by the President or the President's designee. This policy shall not interfere with the legitimate use of videotaping for academic purposes.”

Plagiarism and Cheating

Plagiarism involves direct quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing the work of others without specific indication of sources, or handing in work that is not the student's own.

Cheating is the unauthorized giving or receiving of information in examinations or other exercises.

All assignments, quizzes, and exams, for both in-person and on-line classes, are to be completed by each student individually, unless otherwise documented by the instructor. The use of books, mobile devices, or other reference materials and/or collaboration with other students is strictly prohibited on all quizzes and exams unless specific permissions have been given by the instructor. Deviation from this rule is considered cheating.

The grade of "O" or "F" will be given for any assignment, quiz, or exam in which plagiarism or cheating is discovered. This grade will seriously affect the final grade in the course. Evidence of such dishonesty will be kept on file, and will not be returned to the student. Instructors have the responsibility to report such incidents to the Dean. Serious penalties may be imposed, depending on the nature of the incident.

For comprehensive instructions, students may refer to the following printed references:

APA Publication Manual: <http://www.apastyle.org/manual/index.aspx>

The Little, Brown Compact Handbook:

<http://www.mypearsonstore.com/bookstore/product.asp?isbn=0205651704>

E-Alert

Centralized Academic Advising Center

1/1/12

“Nevada State College (NSC) is committed to the early identification and support of students who are at risk of not passing or completing a course/degree requirement at Nevada State College. E-Alert is one of NSC's retention tools designed to provide students with resources to aid them in the successful completion of their academic endeavors.

The College's approach to identifying and supporting students at academic risk will be respectful of privacy and in line with FERPA regulations. Identification will be based on grade performance. Faculty may report students to the system at any time in any of the following areas: not keeping pace with the progression of the course; not completing mandated units of study, field/clinical work or practicum; failure to pass units of study or assessments; participating in on-line course studies, discussions, or assessments.

The Centralized Academic Advising Center (CAAC) will manage the campus E-Alert system and advisers will confidentially contact students submitted to the E-Alert system within 1 business day of an alert in order to provide academic support, strategies, and resources.”

DO EXPECT THAT THIS CLASS WILL BE AMAZING – I HAVE PREPARED MY ENTIRE LIFE FOR IT. IN ADDITION TO AN ACADEMIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE COURSE MATERIAL THERE MIGHT ALSO BE A THERAPUTIC DIMENSION AS WELL, OWING TO THE FACT THAT WE WILL DISCUSS SUCH MATTERS AS: THE MEANING OF LIFE, THE ROLE OF PAIN, HUMAN FULFILLMENT, ETC. A PRE-CONDITION OF THE CLASS IS THAT YOU HAVE AN OPEN MIND. IF YOU DO, THIS COURSE MIGHT BE LIFE-ALTERATING FOR YOU. I IMAGINE IT MIGHT BE FOR ME, TOO. - Dr Crouse