

Teaching About Religion

Philosophy 58
Online

Mr. Ric Machuga
Fall 2008

I. RECOMMENDED PREPARATION: Reading Level V; English Level IV

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: An introduction to the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, along with the major religious traditions of India and Asia, within the context of a practical exploration of the moral, legal, and educational issues raised in teaching about religions in public schools in the United States.

II. OBJECTIVES: 1) Students will develop an understanding of the Constitutional principles in teaching about religions in public schools in the United States. 2) Students will first be required to understand and then articulate in writing key philosophical terms in the understanding of arguments, especially when they involve large issues surrounding worldviews. 3) Students will become familiar with the history and beliefs of the major religious traditions of the world with special emphasis on their expression in the United States. 4) Students will apply their theoretical understanding to specific moral and legal controversies arising from the teaching of religions in the public schools in the United States.

SUBJECTS COVERED: 1) Religion, Public Schools, and the First Amendment; 2) Abrahamic Religion; 3) Religions of India; and 4) Religions of Asia

III. ASSIGNED READING: Weekly reading assignments will be made at the beginning of each class. Though the readings will not be long, they will be difficult. It is assumed that understanding this material will require two or three readings.

DISCUSSION POSTING: There will be regularly scheduled (roughly every other week) prompts that you will be asked to post responses to on Blackboard via the “Discussion Tool”. You are then asked to read several others student’s postings (the more the better) and make a substantive response commenting, correcting or expanding upon one of their points.

QUIZZES: There will be regularly scheduled (roughly every other week) quizzes that you will take in Blackboard via the “Assessments Tool”. You will have two attempts on each quiz; the average of your scores will be recorded. You may use your book and any notes you have taken during the quizzes, but you will only have 45 minutes to complete the quiz, so you must know the material well *before starting the quiz*.

ESSAYS: There will be regularly scheduled (roughly every other week) essays that you will write responding to an assigned prompt. These will then be uploaded to Blackboard via the “Assignments Tool”.

HOMEWORK: One of the legal standards for a college unit of credit is that represents 50 hours of work. Since this is a 3 unit course, it is designed to require approximately 150 of reading, studying and writing.

IV. GRADING POLICY: All work will be graded on the following 4-point scale.

4.0 – 3.5 = A

3.4 – 2.6 = B

2.5 – 1.6 = C

1.5 – 0.6 = D

The average of all your discussing postings and responses will constitute 20% of your course grade. The average for your quizzes will constitute 30% of you grade and the average of all your essays will constitute 50% of your course grade. There are no “extra credit” assignments for this course.

RUBRIC FOR ESSAYS: All essays will be grade by the rubric included at the bottom the syllabus

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: One of the advantages of an online course is that students can work on their courses any time they like, 24 hours a day. Therefore, since you will always have at least 7 days (or 168 hours) to complete roughly nine hours of work, there is **no such thing as a good reason** for missing an assignment. If you procrastinate and wait to the very end to do your work, you are taking a risk because **under no circumstance** will late work be accepted. If your computer fails or you get sick, you will have my sympathy, **but I will not give you an extension.**

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING: Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated. Any student who cheats or is discovered representing someone else's work as his will receive a failing grade in the course and be subject to further disciplinary action as outlined in the *Student Handbook*.

V. TEXT: *The World's Religions*, revised edition, by Huston Smith (Harper San Francisco, 1991)

VI. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION: Office Location—LRC 285. Phone 895-2438; Office Hours T-Th 9:30-11:00 and by appointment; Blackboard help desk 895-2925

VII. TIME SCHEDULE: see calendar

VIII. (Rubric for essay on the next page)

Rubric for Grading Essays

Points	4	3	2	1
Clarity of expression	The writing is free of spelling and grammatical errors. Paragraphs are well organized with a clear thesis sentence and can be understood in a single reading (1.0)	The writing contains only a few grammatical errors. Only minor editing is required. Superfluous words are kept to a minimum. (.7)	The writing contains many grammatical errors. It exhibits significant wordiness and reads more like a transcription of a conversation than a piece of formal writing. (.4)	The writing requires multiple readings before even partial understanding can be achieved. (0)
Content	The essay correctly represents the reading and responds directly to the question or prompt. (1.5)	The essay makes only minor misrepresentations and only occasionally wanders off topic. (1.1)	The essay makes significant mistakes in content and wanders significantly from the assigned topic. (.8)	The essay incorrectly represents the reading. (.5)
Depth of understanding	The essay shows an excellent understanding of the reading (more than can be achieved on a single reading). It includes significant analysis and/or explains ideas with insightful examples. (1.5)	The essay shows a good understanding of the reading and is more than a simple summary. (1.2)	The essay shows only a fair understanding of the reading and relies excessively on quotations. It is basically a summary of the reading. (.8)	The essay shows a poor understanding of the reading and/or does little more than string together quotes. (.5)