



Course Outline

2026-2027 Catalog

PHIL 16 - Western Religions

Catalog Description

Transfer Status: CSU/UC

Unit(s): 3.00

Lecture: 51.00 Contact hours/102.00 Out of class hours/153.00 Total hours/3.00 Unit(s)

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Course Description: This course is a study of the origins and development of three Western religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This course explores ways to study, interpret, and understand the beliefs and practices of these traditions, as well as their changes through history, and the relationship between religion and culture.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify significant formative events in the history and development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
2. Identify and explain important concepts, beliefs, and practices of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
3. Explain the importance of religious figures such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Paul, and Muhammad.
4. Explain the relationships between specific cultures and religious traditions.

Course Content

Topic Titles / Suggested Time Topic	
	<u>Lecture</u>
<u>Topics</u>	<u>Lec Hrs</u>
The academic study of religion: orientation and terminology	2.00
Early Judaism	5.00
A. Yahweh, Abraham	
B. Moses, Covenant, the Law	
C. The Prophets, Diaspora, Torah, Talmud	
Judaism in the Middle Ages	4.00
A. Philosophical flowering	
B. Mysticism	
C. Persecutions	
Judaism in the modern period	4.00
A. Assimilation	
B. The Holocaust	
C. Festivals and practices	
Origins of Christianity	5.00
A. Political and religious conditions	
B. Life and teachings of Jesus Christ	
C. Paul, spread of Christianity	
Church doctrines and history	4.00
A. Roman Catholicism	
B. Trinity, Incarnation	
C. Communion, Saints, Mysticism	
The Protestant Reformation	4.00
A. Martin Luther	
B. Denominations	
Pre-Islamic Arabia	4.00
A. Mecca, Kaaba, Black Stone	
B. Abraham	
C. Hagar and Ishmael	
Muhammad; The Qur'an	5.00
A. Life, career	
B. The Qur'an	
C. Reading the Qur'an	
Principles and social teachings of Islam	4.00
A. The Five Pillars	

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Lec Hrs</u>
B. Judgement; Heaven and Hell; Prohibitions	
C. Observances; Holy days; Economics	
D. Women; racial equality; war; peace; Islamic Law (Shari'a)	
Islamic Sectarianism	3.00
A. Sunni, Shi'a and Sufi	
Reform Movements in Islam	4.00
A. The Wahhabi Movement	
B. Islamic Fundamentalism	
C. Islam and Politics	
Modern challenges to religion	3.00
Total Hours:	51.00

Methods of Instruction

- A. Collaborative Group Work
- B. Discussion
- C. Homework: Students are required to complete two hours of outside-of-class homework for each hour of lecture
- D. Lecture
- E. Multimedia Presentations
- F. Reading Assignments

Methods of Evaluation

- A. Quizzes
- B. Homework
- C. Class participation
- D. Written Assignments
- E. Mid-term and final examinations
- F. Class Discussion
- G. Students will write at least 1,500 words on essay exams, reports, term papers, etc., which will be graded on the basis of both form and content.

Examples of Assignments

Reading Assignments

1. Read "Judaism and Modernity." Be prepared to discuss the modern divisions within Judaism, the development of the Zionist ideology, and the creation of the State of Israel.
2. Read "The Five Pillars of Islam." Apply the idea of religion as a path of self-transformation to The Five Pillars of Islam. Be prepared to discuss and analyze this in class.

Writing Assignments

1. Based on the excerpt from the Book of Genesis, in a 500-word essay, discuss the following topics: (a) what does the story tell us about the nature of God, what does he do, how does he do it, what's his relation to creation and to human beings; (b) what is unique about humans in all of creation and what role does God give them; (c) what does the story of Adam and Eve tell us about human nature and our relationship to God?
2. The Protestant Reformation was unknowingly initiated by a Catholic priest with no intention of creating a vast new branch of Christianity. In a 1000-word essay, discuss (a) what did Martin Luther do to spark this religious revolution; (b) what were his main issues with Catholic beliefs and practices; (c) what are two significant differences in Catholic and Protestant Christianity that resulted from the Protestant Reformation.

Out-of-Class Assignments

1. Religion in the Community. Using internet resources: (a) itemize the variety of religious organizations and communities in the Chico area or other area approved by the instructor, and (b) call one organization that interests you, ask for general information, and describe what you learned from that brief phone interview.
2. Places of Worship. Visit a place of worship associated with one of the Western religions. Describe the worship service of that community. In this assignment our purpose is simply to observe and describe, not to judge. Identify the place of worship you attended and when you attended, and write a thorough description of the worship service or practice of that community.

Recommended Materials of Instruction

Molloy, M. (2021). Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change. *McGraw Hill*, 8th. 9781260813760.

Esposito, Fasching, Lewis. (2011). Religions of the West Today. *Oxford Univ.*, 2nd. 9780199759507.

Ludwig, T. (2005). Sacred Paths of the West. *Routledge*, 3rd. 9781138462182.

Other Learning Materials

OER: Philosophy of Western Religions (<https://www.oercommons.org/courses/philosophy-of-western-religions>)

The Bible, Old and New Testaments, in translation

The Qur'an in translation

Fieser, Powers. Scriptures of the World's Religions, 3rd Edition, McGraw Hill, 2007

Minimum Qualifications

Philosophy (Masters Required)

Religious Studies (Masters Required)

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