

## **Comparative Religion Online Course Syllabus**

### **ANTH 234/INTST 234**

**ANTH 234            5 CR**

Same as **INTST 234**

Either ANTH 234 or INTST 234 may be taken for credit, not both.

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In this course we study the religions of humankind. We rely on a Socio-Cultural Anthropological perspective, we also learn about perspectives of other academic fields, particularly Religious Studies, History of Religions, Global Studies and Cultural Studies, in studying “the religious.”

The content of the course will consist of the weaving together of themes growing out of the following three perspectives and the questions they deal with:

- The Historical Perspective: How have religious traditions manifested themselves in world history?
- The Social Scientific Perspective: How are religious beliefs and practices related to their broader social, political and cultural contexts?
- The Contemporary Global-Local Perspective: What are some of the cotemporary global aspects and local practices of world and indigenous religions.

This is an **Inter-Active** or a **Seminar-Like class**.

**Class Participation, Questioning, and Critical Thinking are highly encouraged.**

This is also a **Research-Oriented class**. We **practice the process of doing research on religion-related topics**.

You are encouraged to **take an active part in your learning process**. You are asked to come to the class prepared, work on your and others’ research projects, share and actively participate in the class’s learning process, and critically reflect on what they hear, read or see.

### **Readings**

**1) Michael Molloy's Experiencing the World's Religions.**

**Highered McGraw-Hill**

**2) A series of short articles and chapters are also provided to complement the assigned book and the audio-visual materials.**

**Grading** -- Total of 1000 points

**Class Discussion Participation and Feedbacks:** 25 points for each unit - total of 250 points - 25% of total grade.

**Quizzes:** -- 5 quizzes (one quiz per two units) - 50 points each - Total of 250 points - 25% of total grade

**Final Exam:** 250 points -- 25% of total grade.

**Final Project:** 250 points -- 25% of total grade.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND MEANS OF ASSESSMENT**

**Class Discussion Participation and Feedbacks include:**

1. Posting a detailed, comprehensive and well cited answers to discussion questions on the discussion board for each unit, and at least two (2) additional well-thought messages (or feedbacks) in reply to other students' answers.
2. Clearly contributing information to further understanding of the concepts involved in the readings.
3. Derive information only from the course texts or other assigned or academic sources and properly cite source (author and title) and page.
4. Exhibit a correct and comprehensive understanding of the issues (given that later messages can revise earlier ones).
5. Be courteous and "scientific" in attitude and communication.

The purpose of discussions and feedbacks is to develop a deeper and more complete understanding of specific key concepts and problems in subjects studied. By fully participating in the week's discussion, you will be prepared for the questions in the exams.

## **Research Project**

**The focus** of the research project is the comparative study of some (historical, social, cultural and/or political) aspects of religion in two different religious traditions or contexts.

**Students choose the focus of their research project by the start of the second unit of the quarter.**

**Project topics** have to do with subjects and information from our readings, class discussions, and your own research and interest.

Length of Research Report– Minimum of four pages, excluding bibliography. The report should show the progress of the research process during the quarter and your thinking behind it.

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**For Each unit YOU WILL NEED TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Critically Read and Study the assigned Textual material
  2. Be involved in Discussions in the class and with your fellow students on related topics
  4. Get ready to the exams to demonstrate what you have learned.
  5. Show progress in working on your research project.
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**Class Content**

**Unit ONE: What is Religion and how is it studied?**

Definitions of Religion  
Aspects of Religion  
Culture, Language, Ideology and Religion  
Theology, Mysticism and Religion  
Philosophy and Religion  
Comparative Religion;  
Religious Studies  
History of Religions  
Psychology and Religion  
Sociology and Religion  
Anthropology and Religion  
Globalization and Religion  
Religion and Gender  
Religion and Communal Identity  
Religion and Violence/Non-Violence

Text Book Chapter 1

**Unit TWO: Indigenous Religions and Anthropology of Religion**

Anthropological Theories and Religion;

Human Evolution and Religion

Indigenous Religions, Religion in non-state communities

The World Religions

The Axial Age and The World Religions

Contemporary Globalization and World Religions

Contemporary Practices of Indigenous Religions

Text Book Chapter 2

**Unit THREE: Hinduism**

Pre-Vedic origins

Vedic Religions

The Upanishads and the Axial Age

Globalizations and Hinduism

Contemporary Practices of Hinduism

Text Book Chapter 3

**Unit Four: Buddhism**

Beginnings of Buddhism

The Life of Buddha

Dharma

Theravada

Mahayana Buddhism

Vajrayana

Zen

Contemporary Practices of Buddhism

Text Book Chapter 4

**Unit FIVE: Other Religions of Indian Origin**

Jainism

Sikhism

Globalization and Modern Indian Religious Transformations

Contemporary Practices of Non-Hindu Religions of Indian Origin

Text Book Chapter 5

**Unit SIX: Religions of Chinese and Japanese Origin**

Early Chinese philosophy

Taoism

Confucianism

Japanese Shinto

Globalization and Religions of Chinese and Japanese Origin

Contemporary Practices of Religions of Chinese and Japanese Origin

Text Book Chapters 6 and 7

## **Unit SEVEN: Abrahamic Religions**

*Abrahamic Religions*

*Judaism*

Early Hebrews

The Prophets

Rabbinical Judaism

Globalization and Modern Transformations of Abrahamic Religions.

Contemporary Practices of Judaism

Text Book Chapter 8

## **Unit EIGHT: Christianity**

Life of Jesus

The Gospels

Early Christianity

Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Developments

Globalization and Christianity

Contemporary Practices of Christianity

Text Book Chapter 9

## **Unit NINE: Islam**

the Arabian Setting

Life of Muhammad

The Qur'an

The Islamic Tradition

The Axial Age and the Expansion of Islamic Civilization

Globalization and Islam

Contemporary Practices of Islam

Text Book Chapter 10

## **Unit TEN: Religion, Modernity and Globalization**

New Religious Movements

Modernity, Science, and Secularism

the Future of Religion

Nationalism and Religion

Globalization and Religion

Text Book Chapters 11 and 12

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The following is from other BCC Anthropology syllabi. The subjects discussed also apply to our class.

### **“EQUIPMENT AND SKILLS REQUIREMENTS**

Taking an online course requires basic computer literacy and a little more. You must be proficient in navigating the World Wide Web (the Web) and may have to be able to download and install plug-ins. An online course often requires accessing the Web on a regular basis. You need a reliable ISP that seldom responds to your call with a busy signal. You need to be able to write English on a word processor, save

documents and organize the resulting files, copy documents into your clipboard and paste them into another application, and attach documents to e-mail and retrieve them.

## **COURSE ASSUMPTIONS**

All humans learn and all humans teach. Humans learn and teach in communities, and communities embody more knowledge than any one individual possesses. These characteristics have been fundamental first to human biological evolution, and then to the origin and evolution of cultures. Formal education takes place in a special community -- the learning community. The more cohesive the learning community and the more focused it is on shared goals, the more intense is the learning experience.

In the best of learning communities, both "instructor" and "students" are learners. The instructor takes responsibility for the overall goals and direction of the course, the materials, pacing, lessons, and assessment. But students must take responsibility for their own learning. They must bring questions to the table, and act critically upon the materials of the course. Learning cannot be passive; it's hard work. Certainly it's useful and rewarding, but like long distance running, it hurts a lot while you are doing it and feels great when you stop.

Online courses are in many ways more focused and intensive learning communities than those encountered in the classroom ("on the ground"). You will be reading a lot and writing a lot, and communicating intensively with your fellow class members. You will need to put in about 15 hours of study a week, and you should log into the classroom at least five times a week to receive the week's schedule, read your e-mail, post commentaries and other assignments, and read and discuss the work of others. It's assumed that we are all there to learn some anthropology, to develop and exercise critical thinking skills, and to stretch ourselves creatively in the exploration of ideas. But above all we are all there to discover ways the tools of anthropology can illuminate our daily lives and current problems of the human condition in the U.S.

## **STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

As your instructor, I have the responsibility to:

- provide a comprehensive syllabus and course weekly assignments calendar which displays all due dates for readings, assignments, and exams
- grade or otherwise respond to all submitted materials within a timely manner.
- monitor your group participation in the online classroom weekly and occasionally comment on it
- inform you of your current grade and relative class standing upon request
- respond to any e-mail and answer all appropriate questions in a timely manner

- behave professionally, respecting you as an individual of intelligence and sensitivity

As students, you have the responsibility to:

- behave to all others in the class in a professional manner, being especially careful in e-mail and other electronic communications to avoid personal attacks, harsh criticisms, and objectionable language
- keep up with the course work and submit your work in on time
- support your class members to establish a genuine learning community

#### Classroom Courtesy and Scientific Approach

Anthropology is a social science course. Physical anthropology is both a social and natural science course. What our studies will present is the current scientific understanding of biological evolution--especially human evolution--cultural evolution, the origin of language, human cognition, cultural organization, and the vast diversity of human cultures and values. The course may challenge many of your deepest beliefs about human nature and the origin and meaning of life. While the broad outlines of human biological and cultural evolution are agreed upon in the field, as in any science there are numerous outstanding questions yet to be resolved--that is the very nature and essence of science. To develop a learning community, we all need to be courteous and respectful of each other's work. Abrasive, abusive, sarcastic or intimidating messages directed to anyone in the class, including the instructor, will not be tolerated."