

Comparative Religion
ANTH 203A/INTST 203A

Spring 2008

ANTH 203A (5245) 5 CR

Same as INTST 203

Either ANTH 203 or INTST 203 may be taken for credit, not both.

Item 5245 Section A

T/Th 3:00p-5:10p Room: D101

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Office Hours (T/TH 1-3 pm, by appointment)

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 four 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 social organization and broader social, political and cultural contexts?
- The Contemporary Global-Local Perspective: What are 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. McGraw-Hill Higher Education

The text book is also accompanied by a website.

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

Audio-visual material: A major part of the information presented in the class is audio-visual in nature. Because of the comparative nature of anthropological method, we rely on films on other peoples--and also on the American culture/communities—to discuss various cultural anthropological concepts and ways of thinking regarding religion.

Grading -- Total of 100 points

Class Attendance and Participation: 15 points

Weekly Quizzes: 15 points

Mid-Term Exam: 15 points (5th week of the class)

Final Exam: 15 points (During the Finals Week)

Research Project: 30 points

Final Project

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

The students choose the topic of their final projects by the end of the second week of the quarter. The final project has to do with a subject or topic of your research interest, it could be related to the reading material from your books or class discussions and your research.

Group Work

You are encouraged to do your final project in small study and research groups (2-3 people). It should be shown that all team members are actively participating in every and all parts of the project.

EACH WEEK YOU WILL NEED TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

1. Critically Read and Study the assigned Textual material
2. Critically listen to, Watch and Think about the Audio-Visual material
3. Be involved in Discussions in the class and with your fellow students on related topics.
4. Do the quizzes and exams to demonstrate what you have learned.
5. Show progress in working on your research project throughout the quarter.

Weekly Class Content

Week 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

Week 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 Daily Practices of Indigenous Religions

Text Book Chapter 2

Week THREE: Hinduism

Pre-Vedic origins
Vedic Religions
The Upanishads and the Axial Age
Globalizations and Hinduism
Contemporary Daily Practices of Hinduism

Text Book Chapter 3

Week Four: Buddhism

Beginnings of Buddhism

The Life of Buddha

Dharma

Theravada

Mahayana Buddhism

Vajrayana

Zen

Contemporary Daily Practices of Buddhism

Text Book Chapter 4

Week FIVE: Other Religions of Indian Origin

Jainism

Sikhism

Globalization and Modern Indian Religious Transformations

Contemporary Daily Practices of Non-Hindu Religions of Indian Origin

Text Book Chapter 5

WEEK SIX: Religion of Chinese and Japanese Origin

Early Chinese philosophy

Taoism

Confucianism

Japanese Shinto

Globalization and Religions of Chinese and Japanese Origin

Contemporary Daily Practices of Religions of Chinese and Japanese Origin

Text Book Chapters 6 and 7

WEEK SEVEN: Abrahamic and Zoroasterian Religions

Abrahamic Religions

Zoroasterian Religion

Judaism

Early Hebrews

The Prophets

Rabbinical Judaism

Globalization and Modern Transformations of Abrahamic Religions.

Text Book Chapter 8

WEEK EIGHT: Christianity

Life of Jesus

The Gospels

Early Christianity

Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Developments

Globalization and Christianity

Contemporary Daily Practices of Christianity

Text Book Chapter 9

WEEK 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 Daily Practices of Islam

Text Book Chapter 10

Week TEN: Religion, Modernity and Globalization

New Religious Movements

Modernity, Science, and Secularism

the Future of Religion

Globalization and Religion

Text Book Chapters 11 and 12

Week Eleven: Review and Discussion of Research Projects