

CASPER COLLEGE COURSE SYLLABUS
RELIGION 1000, INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION

Fall 2015 **Lecture Hours: 3** **Lab Hours: 0** **Credit Hours: 3**

Class Time: 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm **Days:** Tuesday and Thursday

Room: Liesinger Hall, Room 184

Instructor's Name: Robert Barnes, MA Theology

Instructor's Contact: email robertbarnes@caspercollege.edu and Moodle email

Communication: Casper College email and the class Moodle email are the official methods of communication.

Information: This course will utilize both classroom and online learning methods.

Course Description: This course will introduce the major world religions and the role they play in shaping cultures and societies. Draws on various academic approaches to study religions emphasizing similarities and differences.

Statement of Prerequisites: None

Goal: Students will describe the basic tenets of religion in order that they may discuss, explain, and evaluate each faith and its corresponding history, practices, and relationships to other faiths.

Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate effective information sharing through written communication
2. Solve problems using critical thinking and creativity
3. Demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures and historical perspectives
4. Synthesize aesthetic and creative activities
5. Use appropriate technology and information to conduct research
6. Describe the value of personal, civic, and social responsibilities

Course Objectives:

1. Students will compare and contrast several religious traditions and employ key academic concepts in the study of religion.
2. Students will categorize and demonstrate an understanding of the diversity and commonalities of religious life in various religious and historical periods.
3. Students will practice understanding and appreciation for the major religions practiced throughout the world.
4. Students will recognize the wisdom behind and define the connections between the various religions.
5. Students will employ tolerance, understanding, critical thinking, and effective communication.

Methodology: This course will use several means of study including historical, sociological, and theological. To disseminate the required amount of information, a lecture/discussion format will be the primary means of classroom study. Students are required to contribute to class discussions and participate in online deliberations. There may also be exercises. Students will be asked to view PowerPoint presentations, videos and other electronic media, as well as interact with guest lecturers.

This course introduces students to several religious traditions including the five most widely recognized religions in the world today: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Students will be introduced to the academic study of religion, exploring concepts of myths, stories, symbols, rituals, ideas, and ethical practices. This introductory course will provide students with a framework to reflect upon their own experiences and prepare them for further academic or personal exploration and study. This course is developed and structured to assist students in answering the fundamental question, “What is it like to follow (Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, etc.)?”

Engage with the material, class, discussions, and assignments. Research shows that students who exert more psychological and emotional energy towards academics have higher satisfaction and grades in college. Plus, it makes class a lot more fun for all of us. Your feedback is valuable as the instructor uses course evaluations in determining course methodology.

Required Text, Readings, and Materials:

Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions (Plus)*. 50 ed. New York: HarperOne, 2009. Print. ISBN 978-00-06-166018-4

Sparks, Irving A. *Exploring The World's Religions, A Reading and Writing Workbook*. Rev ed. New York: HarperOne, 1992. Print. ISBN 978-0-06-250827-0

Supplementary reading as required. (See below)

Recommended Reading:

Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays 1st Edition
by Lewis Vaughn (Author) ISBN-13: 978-0195179569 ISBN-10: 0195179560

Evaluation Criteria: A variety of opportunities are provided for students to earn the grade of their choice.

1. Weekly Spark's Workbook (Moodle) Assignments: 15 points each (375 points total)
2. Reflection Paper: 300 points
3. Religious Interviews: 150 points each (300 points total)
4. Book Report: 400 points
5. Presentation: 300 points
6. Quizzes or Class Projects: 50 points each (200 points total)
7. Attendance/Participation: 270 points

Grading Scale:

2145 total points available.

A= 90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=59% and below

Casper College may collect samples of student work demonstrating achievement of the above outcomes. Any personally identifying information will be removed from student work.

Weekly Spark's Workbook (Moodle) Assignments (15 points each unit, 375 points total)

Unit assignments from the Sparks Workbook, "*Exploring the World's Religions*" are due each week through Moodle. Each unit is worth 15 points. The week begins on Monday morning and ends the following Sunday at 11:55 pm. Late assignments, forums posts, quizzes, and class work will not be awarded points.

Do all the required reading before submitting your weekly unit assignment. You are required to post thoughtful and substantive responses to each question. Responses must reflect depth of thought as well as evidence of reading the assigned material. Take time to formulate your response before submitting it. Grammar will be graded. College level work is the standard.

Professional and collegial behavior is expected and required. Use each other as resources—if you have experience in one of the areas we are learning about, share your experience.

Reflection Paper (300 points) Students are required to complete a reflection paper. Papers will be between four and five (4-5) pages in length, not including the cover page and reference page. Papers should be written in the MLA style, doubled spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font, and with proper grammar and punctuation. These are college level papers and should reflect college level work. Please see the class Moodle page for a sample MLA paper.

Provide a minimum of three (3) reputable references from either books, book chapters, or peer-reviewed journal articles that support your position or reflect your experience. Popular magazines, newspapers, Wikipedia, etc. are NOT acceptable references. Reflection Papers are submitted through Moodle and are due by 11:55 pm, 27 September, 2015.

The purpose of this paper is to challenge you to explore your spiritual journey to this point in your life, articulate your current religious or spiritual path, examine your personal spiritual position, and present your position in an organized and methodical manner. These are to be personal papers reflecting thought and experience, not merely a survey of published information.

Reflection is a means of working on what we already know or do. Reflection is a form of emotional processing used to fulfill or clarify a purpose. Put into the reflection that which you have experienced (thoughts, ideas, feelings, environmental, etc.). Be open to acquiring new information so that you may draw out something that challenges or confirms your experience or position.

Religious Interviews (150 points each, 2 interview reports, 300 points total) Students are required to complete two (2) Religious Interviews and provide written reports. Interview reports will be between two and three (2-3) pages in length, not including the cover page. Interviews should be written in the MLA style, doubled spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font, and with proper grammar and punctuation. These are college level papers and should reflect college level work.

Students will choose two (2) people to interview. A separate report will be required for each interview. You will be trying to learn about their religion and what it means to them. This is intended to be a descriptive or "phenomenological" account of their religious path, neither laudatory nor critical. For this assignment carefully discuss and empathetically report what their religion means to them and how they practice their religion. This report is to be based on first-

hand observation and discussion, deliberately avoiding the use of secondary sources; therefore, notes and bibliography are not needed. Remember to be respectful, appreciative, and appropriately dressed.

A significant part of your grade will be the depth of the interview. Choose your interviewee wisely. The more active and interesting the person, the better chance you have enjoying a good interview, and a good grade. The Religious Interview Reports are submitted through Moodle and are due by 11:55 pm, October 25, 2015.

Your interview reports should include the name, city, religious affiliation of the interviewee, as well as the date and time of the interview. Do not just say "a Hindu"; be sure to specify the branch or denomination.

Your report should include a personal reflection. This assignment requires you to take the role of a scholar. Equally important is to reflect upon what the interview experience meant to you. Consider questions like these: What did you learn from the interview? What was most surprising to you? Did this experience meet your expectations? How did this experience change how you view their religion?

Generally, an interview works best if you have prepared a set of questions to ask. Expect deviation as questions arise as you talk to the person, such as follow up questions to what they say. You will want to use a recording device (digital recorder, smart phone, digital video) for this assignment. If you do not have one, I am sure you can find someone who will lend one to you.

We will practice interviews in class. Please see the Addendum to the Syllabus- Religious Interviews for more details.

Book Report (400 points) Students are required to submit a book report. Book reports will be between six to seven (6-7) pages in length, not including the cover and reference pages. They should be written in MLA style, doubled spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font, and with proper grammar and punctuation.

Provide a minimum of four (4) reputable references from either books, book chapters, or peer-reviewed journal articles. Popular magazines, newspapers, Wikipedia, etc. are NOT acceptable references. Book reports are submitted through Moodle and are due by 11:55 pm, November 20, 2015.

The book chosen for this assignment must be: 1) a work exploring a life of religious discovery, pilgrimage, or seeking, 2) a work reflective of a religious path chosen by the author (or subject) and the impact that path had on their life, or 3) a book exploring various religious approaches to life.

A list of approved books will be provided on the course Moodle page. Please see the Addendum to the Syllabus – Book Report. You must choose a book from this list. The instructor must approve your book selection for this assignment in order for the student to receive points for the book report.

Presentation (300 points) Each student is required to provide a 6-10 minute oral presentation on their book report. Students will use PowerPoint, Prezi, or other comparable presentation software. The presentation will be graded on clarity, preparedness, and content. It is due on the assigned day during the last weeks of class. We will determine the presentation schedule as the date gets closer.

Quizzes or Class Projects (50 points each, 200 points) Throughout the semester I will assign a short quiz or project for you to complete. I will provide more guidance about these assignments as the semester progresses.

Attendance and Participation (270 pts) Attending class and participating in the class activities is expected from all students. Research shows there is a strong relationship between students attending class and grade performance. Students who attend class, on average, do better. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. Points are awarded for arriving on time and participation (not just for attending class). Each class attended is worth 10 points for a total of 270. You are responsible for all the assigned readings and all materials and lectures covered in class. **All materials and assigned readings are testable.** While many of the topics from the book will be covered in class, not all concepts from the readings will be discussed.

Absences: Students do not need to call/contact the instructor or bring an excuse when they are absent. It is assumed that when a student is absent there is a valid reason.

Writing Standards: College level writing is expected at all times. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are graded in every written assignment, including Moodle Forum posts. Please read the Addendum to the Syllabus - Writing Standards posted on the course Moodle page.

Addenda to the Syllabus: Any addenda to the syllabus are considered as part of the syllabus. Addenda will be posted on the course Moodle page.

Class Policies: Last Date to Change to Audit Status or to Withdraw with a W Grade: Please refer to the Casper College Academic Calendar, the Casper College catalogue, or the Casper College Student Handbook for all student related policies, procedures, and important dates (such as drop, add, withdrawal, and financial aid deadlines).

August 2015

24 Fall semester classes begin

September 2015

4 Census Date / Payment deadline / Last day for 100% refund

6 W grades issued for withdrawn classes

7 Labor Day – campus closed

October 2015

12-16 Mid-Term Week

19-20 Fall Break – no classes

November 2015

2-6 Advising

12 Withdrawal Deadline

25-27 Thanksgiving Break

29 Course evaluations begin

December 2015

1 Application for graduation deadline

14-17 Final exams
17 Fall semester classes end

Student Rights and Responsibilities: Please refer to the Casper College Student Conduct and Judicial Code for information concerning your rights and responsibilities as a Casper College Student. You are responsible for all of the assigned material. **All assigned readings are testable.** While many of the topics from the book will be covered, not all concepts from the readings will be discussed. Respect your peers and the instructor and do not be disruptive during class. Perpetual disruptive behavior may result in you being asked to leave the class and removed from the course. Unless you need a specific type of communication device (e.g. recorder) during class, cell phones and all other communication devices will be turned off. If you are expecting an emergency contact during class, please let me know and we will discuss a suitable arrangement for you to be contacted with minimal class disruption.

Chain of Command: If you have any problems during the class, you should first contact the instructor to attempt to solve the problem. If you are not satisfied with the solution offered by the instructor, you should then take the matter through the appropriate chain of command starting with the Department Head/Program Director, the Dean, and lastly the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Academic Dishonesty: (Cheating & Plagiarism) Casper College demands intellectual honesty. Proven plagiarism or any form of dishonesty associated with the academic process can result in the offender failing the course or expulsion from school. See the Casper College Student Code of Conduct for more information on this topic.

Official Means of Communication: Casper College faculty and staff will employ the student's assigned **Casper College email** account and the course **Moodle page** as official methods of communication. Students are responsible to check their email account and course Moodle page regularly. This is also where you will find course evaluation links.

ADA Accommodations Policy: If you need academic accommodations because of a disability, please inform me as soon as possible. See me privately after class, or during my office hours. To request academic accommodations, students must first consult with the college's Disability Services Counselor located in the Gateway Building, Room 344, (307) 268-2557, bheuer@caspercollege.edu. The Disability Services Counselor is responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting accommodations, determining eligibility for accommodations, and helping students request and use appropriate accommodations.

Calendar or schedule indicating course content: Please refer to the course Moodle page for topics, assignments, due dates, and topics. Please see the PDF "Course Schedule" posted on the course Moodle page for a draft overview of the class schedule, weekly assignments, and the dates your work is due. The Moodle page for this course is the primary location to learn about the class, assignments, and due dates. Adjustments will be made as necessary. The course calendar and syllabus are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Draft Course Calendar/Schedule Fall, 2015: Please refer to Moodle for due dates, updates, and topics. The course calendar and syllabus are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Week	Dates	Tuesday	Thursday	Reading from Smith Text	Sparks Workbook
1	August 24-30 Classes Begin	Review syllabus and evaluation criteria	Lecture 1 "Beginning to Study Religion" pt. 1	Forward, Preface, Point of Departure, and pages 402-431	Unit 1
2	August 31- Sept 6	Hinduism – Intro Video Discuss Reflection Papers	Lecture 1 "Beginning to Study Religion" pt. 2	Chapter 2	Units 2, 3,
3	Sept 7-13 Labor Day September 7	Meet at the Goodstein Library classroom, 6 pm. Research Asst.	Lecture 2 "Examining and Defining Religion" pt. 1	Chapter 2	Units 4, 5
4	Sept 14-20	Buddhism – Intro Video	Lecture 2 pt. 2 Discuss Book Reports	Chapter 3	Units 6, 7
5	Sept 21-27	Lecture 3 "First Amendment" Discuss Religious Interviews	Buddhism Reflection Papers Due 27 September	Chapter 3	Units 8, 9
6	Sept 28-Oct 4	Confucianism Lecture 3 pt. 2	Taoism Intro Video	Chapters 4, 5	Units 10, 11, 12, 13
7	Oct 5-11	Judaism Lecture 4 "The Issue of Evil"	Judaism Lecture 4 pt. 2	Chapter 7	Units 14, 15
8	Oct 12-18 Midterm Week	Judaism Religious Interviews No Class Meeting	Judaism No Class Meeting	Chapter 7	Units 16, 17
9	Oct 19-25 Fall Holiday 19-20	Christianity Religious Interviews No Class Meeting	Christianity No Class Meeting Religious Interviews Due 25 October	Chapter 8	Units 18, 19
10	Oct 26-Nov 1	Christianity Lecture 5 "Scriptural Development"	Christianity Lecture 5 pt. 2 Video	Chapter 8	Unit 20
11	Nov 2-8 Advising	Lecture 6 "Religious and Ethical Issues"	Islam Video	Chapter 6	Units 21, 22
12	Nov 9-15 Withdrawal Deadline	Islam	Primal Religions	Chapter 6	Units 23, 24
13	Nov 16-22	Presentation	Native American Video Book Reports Due 19 November	Chapter 9	Unit 25
14	Nov 23-29 Thanksgiving Holiday 25-27	Student Presentations	THANKSGIVING	None	None

15	Nov 30-Dec 6	Student Presentations	Student Presentations	None	None
16	Dec 7-13	Student Presentations	Student Presentations	None	None
17	Dec 14-17 FINALS		FINALS WEEK		

