

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

**REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF A COURSE IN THE  
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:  
EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

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DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

COLLEGE: ARTS AND SCIENCES

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1. Subject Code, Number, and Title: HIST 100 The Comparative Study of Religion

2. Credit Hours: 3

3. Course Description

An introduction to the systematic study of religious experience and expression; organized around representative motifs, phenomena and institutions, and illustrated with relevant examples from the various historical religious traditions.

4. This course is (check one):

- an existing course with no revisions (need not go through the input system)
- an existing course with revisions (attach this form to Request for Course Revision form)
- a new course (attach this form to Request for New Course form)

5. Check the General Education requirement this course is intended to meet. If the course is to be proposed for more than one requirement, submit a separate form for each one.

- Effective Communication**
- Quantitative Reasoning (*QR designation*)**
- Writing Intensive (*WI designation*)**
- Perspectives on a Diverse World**
- Global Awareness
- U.S. Diversity
- Knowledge of the Disciplines**
- Arts  Humanities
- Science  Social Science
- Learning Beyond the Classroom (*LBC designation*)**
- Self and Well Being

- Community Service, Citizenship, and Leadership
- Cultural and Academic Activities and Events
- Career and Professional Development
- International and Multicultural Experience
- Undergraduate Research

6. Rationale. Provide a concise, clear, jargon-free explanation of why this is a General Education course and how it fits into this specific area of the program. (The rationale should explain to students why they are taking the course. It should address both why it is part of the General Education program and why it fits into the particular category.) This rationale should appear on the general course syllabus provided here and should be included in specific course syllabi given to students.

This General Education course is an introduction to the academic discipline of religious studies. Religious studies is an interdisciplinary field that draws on approaches from both the humanities and the social sciences. Because this course focuses primarily on the questions and methods of the humanities, it counts toward the Knowledge of the Disciplines requirement in the Humanities area. Students in this class will develop their ability to interpret religious texts and other religious expressions, to analyze religious ideas about human existence and the nature of the world, and to understand religions as historical traditions characterized by conflict and change.

7. Clearly and concisely explain how this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for the requirement checked in number five (all outcomes should be addressed). To do this, (a) list the General Education outcomes for the requirement and explain how the course meets each outcome; and (b) explain, in general terms, the method(s) of evaluation to be used in the course and how these methods assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this requirement.
1. Recognize how the humanities cultivate aesthetic appreciation, imagination, and empathic understanding of others.
    - a. A fundamental task of religious studies is to cultivate empathic understanding of different religions, i.e., to begin to see the world as members of different religious traditions see it. Developing such an empathic understanding requires both imagination and an appreciation of the aesthetic and moral sensibilities of other people (although it does not require that we surrender our ability to evaluate critically the truth claims of different religious traditions).
    - b. Students will demonstrate their ability to use their aesthetic appreciation, imagination, and empathic understanding in the study of religion through class discussions, written responses on exams, and/or papers. Examples of questions that would allow the instructor to assess achievement of this outcome include:
      1. Explain the meaning and religious significance of the following lines by Mirabai:
 

"I listen close to the sounds of Murali [flute]  
And my body withers away—  
Lost thoughts, lost even the power to think.  
Mira's Lord, clever Mountain Lifter,  
Come quick, and snatch away my pain."

2. The Dalai Lama states, "That is true compassion. That is because the compassion is based on reason, not just on emotional feeling." Explain why Buddhists believe that it is rational to have compassion for other beings. In other words, why would understanding the true nature of reality lead one to be compassionate toward others?
  3. Compare how Raphael and Grünewald depict the crucifixion of Jesus. What different understandings of this event do their paintings suggest?
2. Demonstrate basic competency in reading and understanding literary, philosophical, or religious works both in their original historical context and as they inform debate and dialogue today.
    - a. A central concern of religious studies is to articulate the multiple meanings of religious texts, actions, objects, and other forms of religious expression. Understanding a religious text requires understanding its meaning for its original author and audience, as well as the meanings it has had for later interpreters.
    - b. Students will read excerpts from classic and exemplary religious texts and will discuss their meaning in their original and contemporary contexts. Examples of questions that would allow the instructor to assess achievement of this outcome include:
      1. Explain the following quotation in your own words, and tell how it represents a rejection of older ideas about fire from the Vedic tradition.

"Bhikkhus [ascetics], all is burning. .... Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion; I say it is burning with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with griefs, with despairs."
      2. Compare the ways that God is represented in the first creation story (Genesis 1:1-2:4a) and in the second creation story (Genesis 2:4b-3:24). For example, how does God make things in the two accounts?
      3. Compare how Maimonides (in his "Thirteen Principles of Faith") and the Pittsburgh Platform view the Torah. Does the Torah consist of true and reliable words of God? Are Jews obligated to obey the 613 commandments of the Torah?
  3. Analyze and write about literary, philosophical, or religious works.
    - a. Important methods for the analysis of a religious work include identifying the historical context of the text's production, comparing the text with historically related texts and with texts from other cultures, identifying important symbols and tropes within the text, and examining the arguments and modes of argumentation employed by the text's author.
    - b. Students will analyze and write about classic and exemplary religious texts. Examples of questions that would allow the instructor to assess achievement of this outcome include:
      1. Identify the speaker of the following quotation, and explain its meaning and significance:

"I am repelled and humiliated  
By this foul, putrid body,  
Subject to break up, fragile:  
I've uprooted sensual craving."
      2. Is the following passage from Mark or John? Explain how you can tell. (In other words, how is this passage typical of the book from which it is taken?)

"[Jesus] also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'"
      3. Is the following passage by Wink or Ratzinger? Explain how the ideas expressed here are typical of this author's approach to interpreting the Bible, but not the other author's.

"It is likewise essential to recognize that the Scriptures are not properly understood when they are interpreted in a way which contradicts the Church's living Tradition. To be correct, the interpretation of Scripture must be in substantial accord with that Tradition."
4. Demonstrate basic knowledge of the history of literary works, or philosophical or religious ideas.

- a. Essential to understanding any religious tradition is a knowledge of the major intellectual conflicts and innovations in that tradition.
  - b. Students will demonstrate basic knowledge of the history of three or more religious traditions through objective format exam questions, written responses on exams, and/or papers. Examples of questions that would allow the instructor to assess achievement of this outcome include:
    1. How did the Renouncer movements of the 6th to 4th centuries BCE challenge and transform the older Vedic religion?
    2. What event in the year 70 CE led to the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism as the main form of Judaism? Explain how this event transformed Judaism.
    3. What disagreement led to the division of Islam into Sunni and Shi'ite branches?
5. Become familiar with the discursive practices particular to the study of the humanities.
- a. Important discursive practices in religious studies include the analysis of texts and the construction of argumentative prose.
  - b. Students will analyze arguments made in religious texts, and they will also formulate claims and support them with appropriate evidence. In doing so, students will recognize the difference between arguments made within the context of a religious tradition (theological or faith-based arguments) and arguments appropriate to a non-sectarian academic context. Examples of questions that would allow the instructor to assess achievement of this outcome include:
    1. Explain the meaning and religious significance of the following lines by Kabir. As part of your answer, tell who Kabir is criticizing here.

"If the union yogis [people who practice yoga] seek  
Came from roaming about in the buff,  
every deer in the forest would be saved.  
If shaving your head  
Spelled spiritual success,  
heaven would be filled with sheep."
    2. How does Origen support his claim that the Bible should not always be interpreted literally?
    3. Agree or disagree with the following statement, and support your position with specific information.

"The emergence of Mahayana radically transformed Buddhism."
    4. Agree or disagree with the following statement, and support your position with at least two specific examples from the Qur'an or hadiths.

"Islam greatly improved the status of women in Arabian society, but Islam did not establish equal rights for men and women."
6. Begin to recognize how society influences humanistic thought and how the humanities transform society.
- a. Religions are social phenomena which both shape and are shaped by other social institutions and events. An appreciation of the social dimension of religion is essential to any understanding of religion as a human institution.
  - b. Students will consider such issues as the relationship between religion and the state in premodern and modern societies, religion's support for both social stability and social change, and the changing roles of religion in modern societies. Examples of questions that would allow the instructor to assess achievement of this outcome include:
    1. Explain how Rig Veda 10.90 presents a justification for the Vedic social system. As part of your answer, identify the four classes of Vedic society.
    2. In "Untouchability," what change does Gandhi advocate? Identify and explain two of the arguments he makes to support his call for change.

3. Identify a traditional Buddhist concept or value that the Dalai Lama discusses in his Nobel Evening Address, and tell how the Dalai Lama applies that concept or value to a particular social or political problem.
7. Become practiced in the interpretation and generation of ideas.
    - a. Religious studies is concerned with two distinct kinds of thought: it engages in the interpretation of religious ideas as well as the analysis and generation of ideas about religion.
    - b. Students will engage in the interpretation of religious thought through the analysis of religious texts and other religious expressions. Students will engage in thinking about religion through all activities of the course, including all classroom activities and all evaluation methods. Examples of questions that would allow the instructor to assess achievement of this outcome include:
      1. Explain the meaning and religious significance of the following lines from Rig Veda 10.129:  
"There was neither existence nor non-existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor the sky which is beyond. What stirred? Where? In whose protection?"
      2. What do Buddhists mean by "no self"? Tell how Buddhists use the example of a chariot to explain this idea.
      3. Which of the following passages is by Khomeini and which is by Engineer? Compare their approaches to interpreting the Qur'an in these two quotations:
        - A. "The religious texts were revealed or evolved in a very different social environment and one must take today's relevance into account."
        - B. "According to one of the noble verses of the Quran, the ordinances of Islam are not limited with respect to time or place; they are permanent and must be enacted until the end of time."

This course is taught by several instructors who select different readings and who employ various teaching and evaluation methods. Instructors in this class will utilize some combination of the following evaluation methods. The evaluation methods utilized by every instructor will include evaluation of student writing.

1. Examinations. Exams may be used to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of course content and students' ability to apply religious studies methodologies. Exams will include objective, short answer, and/or essay questions.
  2. Essay papers. Essay assignments may be used to evaluate students' understanding of course content and ability to apply religious studies methodologies to particular questions and religious texts.
  3. Fieldwork reports. Reports on visits to religious communities may be used to evaluate students' ability to describe and analyze religious phenomena.
  4. Homework and informal writing. Homework and informal writing assignments may be used to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of course content and students' ability to apply religious studies methodologies.
8. Attach a syllabus (1-inch margins and 10-12 pt. font). The syllabus must include the rationale from #6 above and clearly reflect the outcomes and methods of evaluation detailed in #7 above.

**Please submit all materials in electronic form.**

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## Action of the Department/College

### 1. Department



# HISTORY 100: THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RELIGION

Instructor: James Egge  
[Instructor's information]

## THIS IS A GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DISCIPLINES: HUMANITIES AREA

This General Education course is an introduction to the academic discipline of religious studies. Religious studies is an interdisciplinary field that draws on approaches from both the humanities and the social sciences. Because this course focuses primarily on the questions and methods of the humanities, it counts toward the Knowledge of the Disciplines requirement in the Humanities area. Students in this class will develop their ability to interpret religious texts and other religious expressions, to analyze religious ideas about human existence and the nature of the world, and to understand religions as historical traditions characterized by conflict and change.

In this section of History 100, we will achieve these objectives through a survey of five major religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

### READINGS:

Robert S. Ellwood and Barbara A. McGraw, *Many Peoples, Many Faiths: Women and Men in the World Religions*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, Prentice Hall, 2005.

Several short primary readings from each of the religions we study. These readings will be distributed by electronic reserve. Please print these out, read them for the day assigned, and bring them with you to class. These readings are very important, and you will have to know these readings well in order to do well on exams.

### COURSE SCHEDULE:

Topic	Assignment
Introduction to the class	
Introduction, part 1: What is religion?	MPMF 1-24.
Hinduism: Origins	MPMF 57-9.
Hinduism: Origins	Rig Veda 1.1, 10.90, and 10.129; MPMF 69-77.
Hinduism: Origins, Way of life	MPMF 77-99 and 102-8.
Hinduism: Way of life	Poems by Kabir and Mirabai.
Hinduism: Worldview, Modernity	MPMF 99-102, 108-113.
Hinduism: Modernity	"Experiments with Truth" and "Untouchability" by Gandhi.
Hinduism: Concluding discussion	Review for first exam.
<b>First Exam: Introduction, part 1, and Hinduism</b>	
Introduction, part 2: Why is there religion?	No assignment.
Buddhism: Origins	MPMF 128-139.
Buddhism: Origins, Worldview	"Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth," "The Fire Sermon," and "Universal Love."
Buddhism: Worldview, Way of life	MPMF 139-144.

Buddhism: Worldview	"Connected Discourses with Bhikkhunis."
Buddhism: Mahayana	MPMF 144-151, 159-163, and 167-169.
Buddhism: Modernity	"The Nobel Evening Address" by the Dalai Lama.
Buddhism: Concluding discussion	Review for the second exam.
<b>Second Exam: Introduction, part 2, and Buddhism</b>	
Judaism: Origins	MPMF 272-8; Genesis 1-3..
Judaism: Origins	Genesis 17:1-22, Exodus 6:2-8, 19:1-6, and Deuteronomy 29-30.
Judaism: Origins	2 Samuel 7:1-17; MPMF 278-82 (middle of page), 284-96.
Judaism: Way of life, worldview	"The Haggadah" (excerpt); "Thirteen Principles of Faith" by Maimonides.
Judaism: Modernity	MPMF 282 (middle of page)-284, 296-8; "The Pittsburgh Platform."
Judaism: Modernity	Excerpts from "Night" by Wiesel.
Judaism: Concluding discussion	Review for the third exam.
<b>Third Exam: Judaism</b>	
Christianity: Origins	MPMF 305-316.
Christianity: Origins	"Excerpts from Mark's Gospel and John's Gospel."
Christianity: Origins, Worldview	MPMF 316-324.
Christianity: Worldview, Way of life	"How to Interpret Scripture" by Origen; "Christian Hymns."
Christianity: Protestantism; Modernity	MPMF 324-335.
Christianity: Modernity	"Homosexuality and the Bible" by Wink; "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons" by Ratzinger
Christianity: Concluding discussion	Review for fourth exam.
<b>Fourth Exam: Christianity</b>	
Islam: Origins	MPMF 388-396.
Islam: Origins, Worldview	"The Beginning of Muhammad's Revelation" and "The Night Journey"; MPMF 411-414.
Islam: Worldview	"Islamic Scripture: The Qur'an"; "Islamic Theology and Spirituality."
Islam: Way of life	MPMF 396-405 and 418-422.
Islam: Way of life, Modernity	"Rabe`a al-Adawiya"; MPMF 422-430, 438-439.
Islam: Modernity	"The Necessity of Islamic Government" by Khomeini; "Is Islam Compatible with Democracy and Modernity?" by Engineer.
Islam: Concluding discussion	Review for fifth exam.
<b>Fifth Exam: Islam</b>	

Reading assignments will be distributed at the beginning of each unit of the course.

This is a tentative schedule; if you miss a class, please ask a classmate whether there has been any change in assignments.

**EXPECTATIONS:**

1. Regular attendance and active participation during class sessions.
2. Completion of readings assigned for each class.
3. Five exams.

**CLASS SESSIONS:**

In order to do well in this class, you need to prepare for class and attend class regularly. I expect you to bring the assigned primary texts (the online readings) with you to class, so that we can refer to them during discussion.

Although it is primarily my responsibility to make sure that we use our class time productively, you will help to determine how enjoyable and useful class sessions are for all of us. I encourage you to take responsibility for your education in this class by asking questions when you don't understand something, and by sharing your opinions with the class. If you are uncomfortable asking a question in class, please send me an e-mail or speak to me outside of class.

I expect that you will respect your classmates, me, and yourself in class. Respectful classroom behavior includes arriving on time, removing your hat, turning off cell phones and pagers, refraining from private conversations, and paying attention when others are speaking.

I reserve the right to adjust the participation grade of any student on the basis of their demonstrated effort. In particular, if a student's final average falls close to the line between two grades, I may take into consideration his or her attendance and class participation in determining the final grade.

**EXAMS:**

You will have the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of religious studies methods and of the five religious traditions covered in this class through five exams. Exams will include questions in multiple choice and short answer formats. If you cannot take an exam at the assigned time, please tell me so in advance (or in the case of illness, on the day of the exam). *You must bring me a note from some responsible person, such as a physician, clergyperson, coach, instructor, academic advisor, or residence director, explaining the reason for your absence.* If you can show that your absence could not be avoided, we will schedule a makeup test time.

**ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO RAISE YOUR GRADE:**

You may raise your final grade in this class by one percentage point by attending a Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, or Muslim religious service and by writing a 1½ page description (or description and analysis) of the service. This extra credit will only be granted if your paper reflects careful thought and work. You may complete up to five of these papers, thereby raising your grade up to five percentage points. Full directions and deadlines for completion of these assignments will be distributed in class.

**DETERMINATION OF FINAL GRADE:**

Each exam will count for 20% of your final grade.  
A grade of Incomplete will be granted only under unusual circumstances.

**GRADING SCALE:**

93.34-100% = A; 90.00-93.33 = A-; 86.67-89.99 = B+; 83.34-86.66 = B; 80.00-83.33 = B-;  
76.67-79.99 = C+; 73.34-76.66 = C; 70.00-73.33 = C-; 66.67-69.99 = D+; 63.34-66.66 = D;  
60.00-63.33 = D-; 0-59.99 = E

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

In completing course requirements, you should conform to high standards of academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity include cheating, plagiarism, falsification, facilitating others' violations, and impeding others' work. Students need to be especially careful to avoid plagiarism, which consists of using other another author's words or ideas without giving that author credit for them. If you have any questions about academic integrity or about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please ask me.

Students who violate academic integrity will receive a grade of 0 for the assignment, or a grade of E for the entire course. In such cases make-up is not possible. Each violation of academic integrity will be reported to the Office of Student Affairs for disciplinary action.

**E-MAIL:**

If I need to contact you individually or as a group between class meetings, I will e-mail you at your my.emich account. If you would like to receive e-mail at a different address, log in to your my.emich account, select Options, and then select Auto Forward.