

HISTORY OF WORLD RELIGIONS Course Syllabus

Mr. Bradley

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Course Description:

Students will explore current trends in religion, the major religions of the world (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) and the major sects associated with them, as well as the basic arguments made by atheists and the common responses to those arguments. Students will research an area of their choice that ties in with religion and then present the results of their research to the rest of the class. Students are required to visit and critique two religious services from traditions they are unfamiliar with. The primary purpose of the class is to gain an understanding of the worldviews and teachings of these religions by comparing and contrasting central themes (e.g. god, afterlife, morality, rituals...etc.) as well as an appreciation for the impact religion has had throughout history. We will focus on remaining objective.

Learning Goals:

1. Students will be introduced to the basic facts, vocabulary and theories belonging to the study of history and sociology of religion.
2. Students will be introduced to three primary models of understanding the relationship between science and religion, namely, the mutually exclusive model, the complimentary model, and the convergence model.
3. Students will be involved in individual research projects on a subject of their choice related to religion, which will culminate in a teaching opportunity before the rest of the class.
4. Students will visit and evaluate religious gatherings outside of class as a sort of "laboratory" experience.
5. Students will understand the history, vocabulary and concepts related to Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, as well as the major sects associated with them.
6. Students will understand the major arguments of atheism, as well as the major responses from the field of apologetics.
7. Students will identify common features of dangerous religious sects (cults).
8. Students will compare and contrast Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism using the following categories: origins, divisions/sects, scriptures, leadership, deities, ethics time/history, and death/afterlife.

Tentative Timetable:

Introduction and Sociology of Religion

Origins and Primitive Religions

Judaism

Christianity

Islam

Hinduism

Buddhism

Research and Presentation:

You will choose a subject to research for a 5-10 minute class presentation (date given later). Your subject must deal with religion and cannot be something covered in detail in this class. You will need to get approval from the instructor before beginning research. You will receive a copy of the rubric used to grade your presentation and can use that as an aid in preparation. The purpose of this project is to make you the teacher so that you, other students, and the instructor can benefit from your research.

Religious Service Visits and Critiques:

You will attempt to visit at least two religious services outside of class during this semester. These visits should be to sites other than that which you are accustomed. Forms will be provided for you to fill out as you think about and evaluate these experiences. You should include a copy of the bulletin or some other informational piece so we can compare/contrast.