

**Introduction to World Religions**  
Ms. Stephanie Wong

*"No one who has not examined patiently and honestly the other religions of the world can know what Christianity really is, or can join with such truth and sincerity in the words of St. Paul. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."*

*Friedrich Max Müller*

*"If you only know one religion, you don't know any."*

*Martin Marty*

*"The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. It regards with respect those ways of acting and living and those precepts and teachings which, though often at variance with what it holds and expounds, frequently reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens everyone."*

*Nostra Aetate, 2*

**Course Description:** This course is a survey of the major world religions. It will begin with the origins of religious thought in the East –Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Confucianism and Taoism, and then to the major religions of the West – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It will analyze each of the religions from a perspective of empathy and neutrality, looking at its beginnings, its major teachings, and its modern practice.

**Goal:** To become literate in and to enhance one's appreciation of the ways each tradition answers the religious questions common to all religions.

**Course Benchmarks:** Students completing the 12<sup>th</sup> grade World Religions course will:

- Understand the stance of the Roman Catholic church toward other religions as explicated in *Nostra Aetate* and additional documents.
- Demonstrate a working vocabulary for and a mature understanding of major world religions.
- Appreciate the beauty and complexity of the beliefs of major religions and the expression of those beliefs.
- Be able to explicate the ultimate questions out of which religions grow and how these are answered by the major world religions.
- Understand some of the factors that shape religions, including cultural, geographical and political factors.
- Identify and appreciate the commonalities as well as the basic differences between the major world religions.
- Understand that there is diversity within each religion as to how its adherents interpret its basic truths and interact with the wider world.
- Develop an awareness of the impact of religions in the world today.

**Text:** Jeffrey Brodd, *A Voyage of Discovery* (St. Mary's Press, Winona, MN; ISBN 0-88489-725-7)

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

Weeks 1-2     Introduction to the course  
                  *Nostra Aetate*  
                  Chapter 1: Studying the World's Religions  
                  ESSAY

Weeks 3-6     **South Asian Religions**  
                  Chapter 3: Hinduism  
                  Chapter 4: Buddhism  
                  Chapter 6: Sikhism

Weeks 7-10    **East Asia**  
                  Chapter 7: Confucianism  
                  Chapter 8: Taoism  
                  Chapter 9: Zen Buddhism

Weeks 11-14 **The Ancient West**  
Chapter 12: Judaism  
Chapter 13: Christianity  
Chapter 14: Islam

Weeks 15-16 **A Comparative Study of Religions**  
Poster assignment

Week 17 Review and Final Exam

### Grading and Expectations

Plagiarism - Students are expected to comply with IHHS's policy on academic integrity.

Study materials – You are expected to bring your textbook and a journal to class every day.

Responsibility – Students are responsible for turning in all assignments on time, including responses to news articles posted on the website. Assignments turned in late will lead to a low “Responsibility” score (up to 10% of your grade). A valid request for an extension on any assignment or project will be considered *in advance* or in the case of a family or personal emergency. Please see me, as this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. When using a computer for your assignments, SAVE OFTEN and PRINT EARLY!

Class Participation – Students are expected to participate actively and respectfully in class with thoughtful questions, reflections, or other input. Disrespectful behavior such as interrupting others or making scornful remarks and facial expressions will reflect negatively on your grade.

Attendance – If you are absent, it is *your* responsibility to find out about any assignments missed and to catch up on class notes. Please check the class website for assignments. If you miss a test due to an excused absence, you must meet with me to make it up. Field trips and guest speakers are important components of the course. Consequently attendance on these days are mandatory. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence, you must let me know beforehand. An alternate assignment will be given. In the case of field trips, this will usually involve a visit to a comparable site.

Tardiness and Personal Needs – You are expected to be on time for class with all the study materials necessary, and having taken care of all your personal needs such as snacks, beverages and bathrooms visits. Students will not be allowed to go to their lockers during class.

Extra credit – Extra credit assignment will be allowed in the form of a 15-18 minute presentation about a religion that was not covered in this course. You must get the material approved by me at least two days before your presentation. It should include some form of visual aid, e.g. powerpoint, video, poster. Each student may only do one extra credit assignment. The maximum score for each assignment is 15 points

Grades will be based on total points, except for the Final Exam (25%) and Participation and responsibility (10%)