



# World Religions

## Course Details

**Course Designator & Number: MADR 3006**

**Number of Credits: 3 credits**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**Contact Hours: 45 hours**

**Instructor: Carlos Colón, PhD**

**E-mail: [carlos.conlon@gmail.com](mailto:carlos.conlon@gmail.com)**

## Course Description

This course explores the basic precepts and cultures of the world's major religions through reading, reflection, study, and dialogue.

The major religions to be explored will be: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Students will be invited to claim their own faith, while embracing openness to learn from all faiths.

Equal time will be dedicated to each faith; however, because the Iberian culture has been historically shaped by the influence of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, a special unit will be dedicated to the blending of these three traditions. Students will be encouraged to travel to such cities as Toledo, Cordoba, Seville, Granada, Segovia, Santiago de Compostela or Avila to taste the full flavor of religious syncretism within Spain.

Requirements include a mid-term examination, one research paper, a final examination and thoughtful participation in classroom discussions. All classes will be taught in English.

## Course Objectives

The intended outcome is to gain knowledge and understanding of each faith theologically/philosophically, and to encourage religious tolerance and promote the celebration of theological diversity among the peoples of the Earth.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Gain foundational knowledge of the worlds' religions, with the capacity to reflect upon important categories in the study of religion such as gender, race, revelation, scripture, ethics, myth, etc.
2. Critically evaluate and analyze one's understanding of world religions.
3. Comprehend the historic development of the religions at hand, including significant leaders, gurus, prophets, teachers, events, sacred sites, and sources of revelation.
4. Ability to critically consider one's own religious tradition, while growing in one's understanding of religious traditions previously unknown.
5. Cultivate curiosity and empathy for other religions that will continue to flourish outside the college classroom and throughout one's professional and personal life.

## Methodology

A wise prophet once taught about love, "The surest way to the heart of people, is through their faith." History reveals, however, the centuries of hearts broken by religious and political leaders who could not sit at the feet of their neighbors and learn from their faith.

All of us come to religion with a great deal of theological baggage! Due to the way persons were raised (taught) within a certain faith or not instructed in any religion, leads to a variety of perceptions and often misperceptions about religion.

It was once said; "If we take the world's enduring religions at their best, we will discover the distilled wisdom of the human race" (H. Smith). This is the most sacred reason for which to study world religions, that we might grow in wisdom, and therein discover the way to life richly and peacefully celebrated.

## Required Reading / Materials

Textbook/Course Materials:

Smith, Huston (SWR) *The World's Religions* (a Revised and Updated Edition of *The Religions of Man.*)

Assorted Articles to Be Distributed in Class: Articles from journals, periodicals, international and local newspapers.

Required Films (videos to be watched outside of class.) Movies will be discussed in class, and discussion questions will be disseminated at the beginning of the semester to facilitate classroom participation.

Movies will be presented by instructor during the course.

Finally, the bibliography is composed of texts specific to each religion. Students desiring a more detailed commentary will find herein in-depth information.

## Grading

### Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Score or Percentage</b>	<b>Description</b>
		agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

## Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation in class	10%
Mid-term examination	30%
Final examination	30%
Term paper	30%
Overall grade	100%

## Assessment Details

### Team Research Theme Presentation:

Students will be required to give a team research theme presentation in one topic chosen either from a list provided by the instructor or chosen by the student teams (with previous approval of instructor). The presentations will be around 10-15 minutes long and open to questions.

### Term Research Paper (10 pages or roughly 3000 words)

The research paper will be on a topic of your choice, as it is relevant to the study of our five great wisdom traditions. You will work with course materials and scholarly resources. This is a thesis-based paper, based on a topic raised by classroom materials and discussions. This is not a reflection or opinion-based paper, and should be written in a formal, academic style with footnotes.

Cutting and pasting from websites is plagiarism and a breach of Academic Integrity, as are quotations and paraphrases without citation. Your paper must be on an original topic, and cannot be substantially the same paper written for another class.

# Course Content

## Unit 1

### Day 1

- Introduction to Course
- Purpose, Expectations, Syllabus Review
- SWR pgs. 1-11

### Day 2

- Introduction to Hinduism
- What People Want
- The Beyond Within
- Four Paths to the Goal
- SWR pgs. 12-50

## Unit 2

### Day 1

- The Stages of Life
  - Student
  - Householder
  - Retirement, Sannyasin
- Article Handout
- SWR pgs. 51-59

### Day 2

- The Stations in Life
- (The Caste System)
- Movie: Portion of Gandhi (Movie)With Discussion
- SWR pgs. 59-78

## Unit 3

### Day 1

- The Moral Law of Karma

- Transmigration of the Soul
- Term Sheets

## Day 2

- Introduction to Buddhism
  - Siddhartha Gautama
  - Karma
  - The Four Noble Truths
- SWR pgs. 82-98
- SWR pgs. 99-118

## Unit 4

### Day 1

- Movie: Portion of Seven Years in Tibet or similar with Discussion

### Day 2

- The Eightfold Path
- SWR pgs. 119-148

## Unit 5

### Day 1

- Mahayana & Theravada Buddhism
- Assorted Articles

### Day 2

- Cultural Trip

## Unit 6

### Day 1

- Introduction to Islam
- SWR pgs. 221-268

## Day 2

- Muhammad
- The Koran
- SWR pgs. 221-268

## Unit 7

### Day 1

- The Traditions
- The Development of Islam
- Hijrah
- SWR pgs. 221-268

### Day 2

- The Five Pillars
- Jihad

## Unit 8

### Day 1

- Introduction to Judaism
  - Meaning in God
  - Meaning in History
- SWR pgs. 249-268

### Day 2

- **Mid Term**
- SWR pgs. 271-288

## Unit 9

### Day 1

- Meaning in Morality
- Meaning in Justice
- SWR pgs. 271-288



## Day 2

- The Practice of Judaism
- The Central Doctrines
- Jewish Distinctiveness
- SWR pgs. 288-316

## Unit 10

### Day 1

- Judaism Movie with Discussion

### Day 2

- Intro to Christianity
- Jesus Christ, The Redeemer

## Unit 11

### Day 1

- Roman Catholicism

### Day 2

- Eastern Orthodoxy
- SWR pgs. 317-346

## Unit 12

### Day 1

- **Break**
- SWR pgs. 329-346

### Day 2

- **Break**
- SWR pgs. 329-346

## Unit 13

### Day 1

- Spain and the Counter-Reformation
- Movie with discussion
- Special Reading

### Day 2

- Protestantism

## Unit 14

### Day 1

- General Course Review

### Day 2

- Team Research Theme Presentations

## Unit 15

### Day 1

- Final Exam

## Policies

### Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

## University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

### Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

### Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).