

**ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE**  
**Social Sciences Division**  
**REL 105 – Comparative Religion**  
**Course Outline**

**Course Number & Name:** REL 105 Comparative Religion

**Credit Hours:** 3.0    **Contact Hours:** 3.0    **Lecture:** 3.0    **Lab:** N/A    **Other:** N/A

**Prerequisites:** Grades of “C” or better in ENG 096 and RDG 096 or permission of the Divisional Chair

**Co-requisites:** None

**Instructor:** TBA

**Email:** TBA

**Office Hours:** By appointment

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**Course Description:** This course is an introduction to the world’s great religions. In addition to learning about these religions, the student will also be exposed to methods used to study and compare religions. The student needs no prior experience in the study of religion. Through this course, students will survey and discuss: the nature of religion, the indigenous religions of Africa, the Americas, China, and Japan, and the great religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

**Textbook:** *MANY PEOPLES, MANY FAITHS: Women and Men in the World Religions*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, by Robert Ellwood and Barbara McGraw; published by Pearson, 2009; ISBN-13 #:978-0-13-601761-5.

NOTE: Other suggested texts include the following:

- Confucius. *The Analects* (<http://Trans.D.C.Lau.New York: Penguin Book, 1979>).
- De Barry, W Theodore, ed. *The Buddhist Tradition in China, India and Japan* (New York: Modern Library, 1969).
- Fazlar, Rahman. *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980).
- Greenberg, Rabbi Steven. *Wrestling with God and Men*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).
- Heidel, Alexander. *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).
- Idowu, E Bolaji. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press, 1973).
- Kee, Howard Clark. *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History* (New York: MacMillan, 1991).
- Matthews, Warren. *World Religions*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007).

- Neusner, Jacob. *Judaism's Theological Voice: The Melody of the Talmud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
- Tanakh. *The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Society, 1985).

**General Education Goals:** REL 105 is affirmed in the following General Education Foundation Categories: **Humanistic Perspective** and **Global and Cultural Awareness of Diversity**. The corresponding General Education Goals are respectively as follows: Students will analyze works in the field of art, music, or theater; literature; and philosophy and/or religious studies; and will gain competence in the use of a foreign language; and Students will understand the importance of global perspective and culturally diverse peoples.

**Course Goals:** Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. identify the main tenants and history of primal religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam;
2. discuss the major beliefs and practices of Asian religions, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism;
3. explain the cultural, political and economic impact each religion has on societies in which it is prevalent;
4. identify the geographic origins, differentiate the rituals associated with, and identify the symbolism associated with each religion;
5. employ the vocabulary of philosophical/religious discourse in all verbal and written communication designed to discuss or ask key questions regarding the comparability of religions;
6. read and interpret (paraphrase) well-known literary and cinematic works of religion.

**Measurable Course Performance Objectives (MPOs):** Upon successful completion of this course, students should specifically be able to do the following:

1. Identify the main tenants and history of primal religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam:
  - 1.1 list the four types of religious systems and tell where each may be found;
  - 1.2 define animism;
  - 1.3 distinguish magic from religion;
  - 1.4 identify and discuss the two primary sources of information about basic religions and explain why the term “basic” rather than “primitive” is used; and
  - 1.5 discuss why Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are called the “Religions of the Book”
2. Discuss the major beliefs and practices of Asian religions, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism:
  - 2.1 outline the early history of Hinduism;

- 2.2 *discuss selections from the Rig-Veda;*
  - 2.3 *describe the movement begun by Mahavira as a reaction to classical Hinduism;*
  - 2.4 *explain the major tenets of life and teachings of the Buddha; and*
  - 2.5 *discuss The Analects of Confucius*
3. Explain the cultural, political and economic impact each religion has on societies in which it is prevalent:
    - 3.1 *describe examples of religion and violence;*
    - 3.2 *explain why the Fourth Lateran Council is significant;*
    - 3.3 *list the major implications of the Diaspora for Jewish Society; and*
    - 3.4 *describe the role of women in Islam*
  4. Identify the geographic origins, differentiate the rituals associated with, and identify the symbolism associated with each religion:
    - 4.1 *identify the religions originating in Africa, India, China, and the Middle East;*
    - 4.2 *describe examples of Sacrifice and Rite of Passage;*
    - 4.3 *explain Holi Divali;*
    - 4.4 *describe Zoroastrian Holy Days;*
    - 4.5 *identify Jewish Festivals and Holy Days;*
    - 4.6 *explain Christian Sacrament; and*
    - 4.7 *identify Muslim calendar and Holy Days*
  5. Employ the vocabulary of philosophical/religious discourse in all verbal and written communication designed to discuss or ask key questions regarding the comparability of religions:
    - 5.1 *maintain and use a glossary of 200 key terms;*
    - 5.2 *make a group oral presentation, which utilizes appropriate terminology and vocabulary;*
    - 5.3 *attend and/or describe an observation of religious practices at a local religious center;*
    - 5.4 *summarize an interview of a religious leader who is not of one's own faith*
  6. Read and interpret (paraphrase) well-known literary and cinematic works of religion:
    - 6.1 *interpret a passage of religious scripture in both the traditional and comparative senses;*
    - 6.2 *discuss art as a tool of religious worship; and*
    - 6.3 *compare and contrast creation stories, such as the Book of Psalms of Guru Nanak Nirankari, the Bhagavad Gita, the Epic of Gilgamesh, Genesis, and the Old Testament Book of Psalms, present in religious literature*

**Methods of Instruction:** Instruction will consist of, but not be limited to, lectures, group assignments, field trips, guest speakers, computer-based assignments and media-supported instruction.

**Outcomes Assessment:** Quiz, test and exam questions (if applicable) are blueprinted to course objectives. Rubrics are used to evaluate research papers and presentations for the presence of measurable course performance objectives. In addition, students are administered a non-graded knowledge assessment on World Religions (based upon the measurable performance objectives)

during the first week of class. At the end of the semester, students are given a non-graded exit knowledge assessment based upon the performance objectives. Data collected will be analyzed to provide direction for the improvement of instruction, viability of class assignments, relevancy of assigned literature, and evaluation of instructional time spent on specific topics. A rubric will be developed to guide the assessment and assist in examining the course grade distribution. These non-graded exercises, while mandatory, will not replace graded assignments.

**Course Requirements:** All students are required to:

1. Maintain regular and prompt attendance to all class sessions. The attendance policy for REL 105: Comparative Religion is one excused absence is allowable. More than one excused absence will result in a reduction of grade. NOTE: Excused absences are those absences considered to be a medical emergency. The instructor will determine if an absence is excused or unexcused. Students with excessive absences may be referred to a counselor.
2. Have access to a computer having MS Word and internet availability. This course will make extensive use of the Internet. Some electronic readings will require the software, Acrobat Reader, which is free and easy to download.
3. Use inclusive language in their writings. Inclusive language means language that is not gender-specific and which attempts to include as many people as possible. For example, instead of writing that "most religions believe that God created mankind," the use of inclusive language would require "Most religions believe that God created humankind."

**Attendance Policy:** Regular and prompt attendance is essential for academic success. Faculty members take attendance at each scheduled class session. Students are expected to attend and be on time for all classes. Individual faculty members may establish specific attendance policies. Attendance records will be turned in to the appropriate Division/Department Chair and/or Program Director at the end of the term and in the interim upon request. Any students with more than three unexcused absences will automatically fail the course.

**Methods of Evaluation:** Final course grades will be computed as follows:

<b>Grading Components</b>	<b>% of final course grade</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Attendance/Class Participation</b> Students are allowed one documented emergency absence. All students are expected to actively participate in class discussions and contribute to the class discourse.</li> </ul>	<b>5%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quizzes</b></li> </ul>	<b>15%</b>

3 quizzes will be given, covering the history of primal religions, Asian religions geographic origin, symbolism and rituals of various religions, several of the course objectives.

- **Research Paper** **25%**  
Students must select an instructor-approved topic from a given list. Papers will be assessed utilizing a rubric to determine the degree that the measurable performance objectives are incorporated by students within the context of the material presented in the research paper.
  
  - **Reaction Paper** **10%**  
Students will write papers focusing on course objectives, namely (a) comparative scripture interpretations, (b) comparison and contrasting of creation stories in religious literature, and (c) violence and religious beliefs. Students must present the content of their paper in a lecture presentation utilizing a format of their choosing.
  
  - **Midterm Exam** **15%**  
The multiple choice/essay midterm examination will show evidence of the extent to which students are meeting course objectives at the midpoint of the semester. Data will be collected utilizing a rubric, and findings will guide the instructor in revamping instructional methodologies as necessary.
  
  - **Presentation** **10%**  
Students must present the contents of their papers with a PowerPoint/video component showing art/literature as a tool of religious worship/expression, which directly relates to a course objective.
  
  - **Final Exam** **20%**  
The cumulative final examination will consist of essay and objective questions designed to determine the extent to which students have met the measurable performance objectives as delineated in the course outline.
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- Total** **100%**

**Grading System:**

<b>A</b>	<b>90% - 100%</b>	<b>Superior</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>87% - 89%</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>80% - 86%</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>C+</b>	<b>77% - 79%</b>	<b>Above Average</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>70% - 76%</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>60% - 69%</b>	<b>Passing</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>59% - 0</b>	<b>Failing</b>

**Academic Integrity:** Dishonesty disrupts the search for truth that is inherent in the learning process and so devalues the purpose and the mission of the College. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- plagiarism – the failure to acknowledge another writer’s words or ideas or to give proper credit to sources of information;
- cheating – knowingly obtaining or giving unauthorized information on any test/exam or any other academic assignment;
- interference – any interruption of the academic process that prevents others from the proper engagement in learning or teaching; and
- fraud – any act or instance of willful deceit or trickery.

Violations of academic integrity will be dealt with by imposing appropriate sanctions. Sanctions for acts of academic dishonesty could include the resubmission of an assignment, failure of the test/exam, failure in the course, probation, suspension from the College, and even expulsion from the College.

**Student Code of Conduct:** All students are expected to conduct themselves as responsible and considerate adults who respect the rights of others. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. All students are also expected to attend and be on time all class meetings. No cell phones or similar electronic devices are permitted in class. Please refer to the Essex County College student handbook, *Lifeline*, for more specific information about the College’s Code of Conduct and attendance requirements.

**DOCTRINAL STATEMENT** ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE is a non-sectarian, non-denominational school. ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE does not advocate any particular belief, creed, doctrine, or idea regarding the existence of God. ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE does not require students and faculty to subscribe to any particular belief, creed, doctrine, or idea other than a willingness to be changed and a commitment to an investigation into truth.

**Course Content Outline:** This is a tentative course schedule; the instructor reserves the right to make changes on it to make it better for the student's development. Notice will be given should any changes take place.

**Class Meeting  
(90min)**

**Topics of Discussion**

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1 – 2	Orientation & Course Introduction Writing Research Papers Course Expectations <b>Knowledge Assessment</b> Introduction to Comparative Religions
3	Introduction to Comparative Religions
4	Origins in Nature Religions of Tribal People
5	<b>Quiz 1:</b> Religions of Tribal People
6 – 7	Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism
8 – 9	Buddhism
10	<b>Quiz 2:</b> Asian & Far Eastern Religions
11	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
12 – 13	Monotheism
14	<b>Quiz 3:</b> Religious Symbolism & Rituals
15 – 16	Judaism
17 – 18	Christianity Discuss Research Paper
19 – 20	Islam <b>Research Paper due</b>
21 – 22	New Religious Movements <b>Reaction Paper</b> (comparison of creation stories) <b>due</b>
23 – 25	<b>Class Presentations</b> on Religious Art/ Literature – Worship - Expression

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NOTE: Quizzes and examinations will be equally distributed throughout the semester at the instructor's discretion.

## REL 105 Research Paper Guidelines

**Research Paper Assignment:** This 4– 8 primary research paper must include a title page (5 points), thesis statement (5 points), outline (5 points), and bibliography (5 points). The title page, outline, and bibliography pages are not part of the 4 – 8 pages. Secondary research must be from any combination of a minimum of five books and/or on-line sources (6 points). Other points will come from originality, compliance to APA style manual, use of citation, completed on time, etc. Primary research paper must focus on one topic from the list of choices below. All papers must be submitted on time.

A good research paper will have a thesis, which will be defended with arguments and evidence. Since REL 105 focuses on studying and writing about world religions, students should write about a religion other than their own. Sources must be cited (i.e., all ideas and writings of others must be cited in the paper). The recommended system of citation for the footnotes and bibliography is the American Psychological Association (APA) Style Manual.

**Topics for Research Papers:** One of the followings topics should be chosen:

- 1) Shamanism in traditional African or Native American religions
- 2) Mysticism in one of the religions covered in the text book
- 3) Contemporary application of one of the following traditional world religions:
  - a. Hinduism
  - b. Jainism
  - c. Sikhism
  - d. Buddhism
  - e. Judaism
  - f. Christianity
  - g. Islam
  - h. New Religions, including Santeria, Yoruba, etc.
- 4) Explain the philosophical, theological, and/or social contributions of one of the following religious leaders:
  - a. Kanada (founder of the Vaisesika school of Hinduism; see also Nyâya-Vaisesika)
  - b. Shankara (founder of the Advaita Vedanta school of Hinduism)
  - c. Saicho (founder of the Tendai school of Japanese Buddhism)
  - d. Maimonides (Medieval Jewish philosopher and theologian)
  - e. John Wycliffe (professor at Oxford and father of Protestant Reformation)
  - d. Zayd ibn Thabit (chief editor of the Qur'an)

- e. Al Ghazali (Islamic philosopher who legitimized Sufism for orthodox Muslims)

Note: Late assignments will result in a deduction of five (5) percentage points per class period. A late assignment may be excused for one (1) class period with medical or other appropriate documentation.

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