Course Description

Studies religions of the world with attention to origin, history, and doctrine. Part II of II. Lecture 3 hours per week.

General Course Purpose

To introduce the student to the history, teachings, organization, and practices of Western religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) with an emphasis of their role in motivating, shaping and inspiring their adherents through myths, rituals, symbols, ethical codes and religious experiences, and to examine the varied issues, problems and concerns of the religions studied.

Course Prerequisites/Corequisites

None

Course Objectives

At the completion of the course, the student will be able to examine the history, belief and the practice of Western religious traditions. Specifically, the student will be able to:

- Identify and define relevant terminologies such as Tanakh, covenant, Torah, Bar mitzvah, diaspora, prophets, Talmud, Gospels, Christ, Trinity, atonement, salvation, sacrament, resurrection, Quran, Hadith, Tawhid, jihad, Sunnis, Shiites, Shari’ah, Five Pillars of Islam, etc.
- Explain the role great religious founders have filled in human history
- Summarize the history, teachings, organization and practices of the religions studied
- Interpret some of the sacred writings and mythic imagery of Western religions
- Compare and contrast recurring themes in the religions studied such as teachings, mysticism, scripture and tradition, religious leadership, worship and ritual, ethics, etc.
- Discuss the historical connections among the religions studied
- Analyze the complex relations between religion and society/culture in various historical and contemporary contexts
- Respectfully discuss previously unfamiliar religious events/communities or his/her participation in them

Major Topics to be Included

Critical attention will be given to the following topics:

- Judaism: Biblical history, patriarchs, the Holocaust, Zionism, contemporary forms of Judaism, Jewish holy days and rituals
- Christianity: Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles, New Testament, Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestant Reformation and denominations, recent variations of and offshoots from Christianity, contemporary moral and political challenges
- Islam: Muhammad, Qur’an, early Islamic history, the Five Pillars, Islamic Law, Articles of Faith and contemporary issues
- May also include: Baha’i, Zoroastrianism, New Religious Movements and religion in the twenty-first century