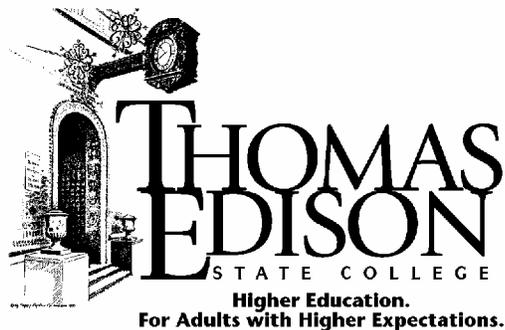


Directed Independent Adult Learning

COURSE SYLLABUS

EASTERN RELIGIONS

REL-406-GS



Course Syllabus
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EASTERN RELIGIONS
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Course Essentials

Eastern Religions is an introductory course, offering a foundation in religious literacy. The religious traditions encountered in this course are those that are alive today and involve the lives of a significant number of people worldwide--Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto.

The course is interdisciplinary in that it includes historical and social materials, literary and artistic expressions, and philosophical and theological insights of world religions. In a world that has become increasingly aware of its cultural diversity and richness, it is clear that one way to gain access to that diversity and richness is by exploring the religious consciousness and practice of a people.

Objectives

The basic goal of **Eastern Religions** is to explore the meaning of religion, its broad characteristics, and religious consciousness, practice, and expression exemplified in the history and religions of Asia. After studying this course, you should be able to:

- Discuss the roles and functions of religion in human history and contemporary life, especially Eastern religions.
- Name, define, and discuss some of the important features and concepts used in religious studies, and give examples of each of these features from the religious traditions under study.
- Recognize the differences among the religious traditions under study.
- Explain the patterns for comparison and contrast of the religions under study.
- Appreciate the religious-based issues and conflicts in the modern world and contribute to their mediation in whatever ways touch your life.
- Develop insights into the religions under study that can enrich life.
- Analyze the value and benefits of studying the religions under study.

Course Materials

In addition to the Course Syllabus, you will need the following materials to do the work of the course. These materials are available from the textbook supplier, MBS Direct.

Required Textbooks

Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change, 3rd ed., Michael Molloy (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005).

An Anthology of Living Religions, Mary Pat Fisher and Lee W. Bailey (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000).

Course Structure

Eastern Religions is a 3-credit, 16-week course consisting of 14 weekly lessons with study assignments, 6 written assignments, and 2 examinations.

Periodically, you will complete a written assignment and send it to your mentor for correction and grading. In addition, the course requires you to take two proctored examinations, a midterm during Week 8 and a final during Week 16 of the semester.

Written Assignments

Eastern Religions has six (6) written assignments. These assignments consist of sometimes specific and sometimes general problems or questions connected with a particular religion or the interconnections between and among religions. The "Course Calendar" will tell you when your assignments should be submitted, and the "Written Assignments" section of the syllabus provides the written assignment questions you are asked to reflect upon and submit to your mentor.

Responses to written assignment questions are expected to be well developed and reasonably detailed essays. Your answers should be at least three (3) double-spaced typewritten pages each.

Your answers should clearly demonstrate your understanding of the required texts. Refer primarily to these texts for your answers, but also complement this information, when necessary, with material from other print or online sources. Do not merely copy answers from your required texts or from other sources, but when you make use of such material, be sure you cite it properly (i.e., with footnotes or endnotes).

Examinations

Eastern Religions requires you to take two proctored examinations, a midterm during Week 8 and a final during Week 16 of the semester in which you are enrolled.

You may take examinations only during the designated exam weeks, at approved locations, and with approved proctors. During the first week of the semester you must submit a Proctor Request Form with the necessary documentation to the Office of Test Administration.

The midterm and final are closed-book exams. Both are two hours long and each consists of ten multiple choice and four essay questions. The midterm covers material in Weeks 1–7; the final covers material in Weeks 9–15.

Grading

Your final grade in the course is weighted as follows:

Written Assignments (6)	40 percent
Midterm Examination	30 percent
Final Examination	30 percent

Letter grades equate to numerical grades as follows:

A	=	93–100	C+	=	78–79
A–	=	90–92	C	=	73–77
B+	=	88–89	C–	=	70–72
B	=	83–87	D	=	60–69
B–	=	80–82	F	=	Below 60

To receive credit for the course, you must earn a letter grade of D or higher on the weighted average of all assigned course work (e.g., exams, assignments, projects, papers, etc.). You will receive a score of 0 for any work not submitted.

Strategies for Success

To succeed in this course, consider following these steps:

1. Read carefully the entire "Course Essentials" section of this syllabus, making sure that all aspects of the course are clear to you and that you have all the materials required for the course.
2. Take the time to read the entire Student Handbook section of the Course Manual. The handbook answers many questions about how to proceed

through the course, how to schedule exams and arrange for proctors, and how to get the most from your educational experience at Thomas Edison State College.

3. Each week, consult the "Course Calendar" in the syllabus to determine which chapter(s) you are to read in the required texts. The "Course Calendar" also indicates due dates for submitting written assignments and when you should schedule your examinations. It is essential that you follow the "Course Calendar" each week to ensure that you stay on track throughout the course.
4. Before you begin working on your assignments, take the time to fill in the dates for the current semester on the "Course Calendar." The week-by-week dates you will need to plan your semester's work are located in the General Course Instructions section of the Course Manual. Once you fill in the calendar, you will know exactly when to begin your assignments, when your written assignments are due, and when to schedule your examinations.
5. Before starting the first lesson, take time to look at the course materials, including the required texts and assignments.
6. It is recommended that you prepare a complete set of notes based on your readings of the texts used in the course. This will help organize your thinking and improve your memory, which will, in turn, better prepare you for the midterm and final examinations.

Course Calendar

Using the table of week-by-week dates in the General Course Instructions section of the Course Manual, write the dates for the current semester in the second column. In the last column, fill in the actual date for sending each assignment and taking examinations.

Week	Dates	Topic	Textbook Readings	Written Assignment/ Examination	Due Date/ Exam Date
1		Background and Oral Religions	Molloy, Chapter 1; Fisher, Chapter 1		
2		Background and Oral Religions (continued)	Molloy, Chapter 2	1 Submit by Monday of Week 3	
3		Hinduism	Molloy, Chapter 3; Fisher, Chapter 3		
4		Hinduism (continued)		2 Submit by Monday of Week 5	
5		Jainism and Sikhism	Molloy, Chapter 5; Fisher, Chapters 4 & 11		
6		General Background on Buddhism	Molloy, Chapter 4, pages 119–138; Fisher, Chapter 5, pages 111– 117		
7		General Background on Buddhism (continued)		3 Submit by Monday of Week 8	
8		MIDTERM EXAMINATION (covers material from Weeks 1–7)			

Week	Dates	Topic	Textbook Readings	Written Assignment/ Examination	Due Date/ Exam Date
9		Buddhism: Theravada and Mahayana	Molloy, Chapter 4, pages 138–180; Fisher, Chapter 5, pages 117– 138		
10		Buddhism: Theravada and Mahayana (continued)		4 Submit by Monday of Week 11	
11		Taoism and Confucianism	Molloy, Chapter 6; Fisher, Chapters 6 & 7		
12		Taoism and Confucianism (continued)			
13		Taoism and Confucianism (continued)		5 Submit by Monday of Week 14	
14		Shinto	Molloy, Chapter 7		
15		Shinto (continued)		6 Submit by Monday of Week 16	
16		FINAL EXAMINATION (covers material from Weeks 9–15)			
Please remember to submit your DIAL Course Evaluation.					

Written Assignments

Please respond to each of the following assignments as completely as possible. Responses to written assignment questions are expected to be well developed and reasonably detailed essays. Your answers should be at least three (3) double-spaced typewritten pages each.

Your answers should clearly demonstrate your understanding of the required texts. Refer primarily to these texts for your answers, but also complement this information, when necessary, with material from other print or online sources. Do not merely copy answers from your required texts or from other source materials, but when you make use of such material, be sure you cite it properly (i.e., with footnotes or endnotes).

Written assignments should be typed or, at the least, written legibly in ink. Submit the assignments in accordance with the instructions in the Student Handbook.

Assignment 1 (Weeks 1–2)

Respond in essay form to the following questions.

1. Name and discuss the three patterns presented by Molloy in Chapter 1 of his textbook to approach the study of religions in a comparative and historical sense.
2. What roles does the shaman typically perform in oral religions? List and compare three contemporary professions that involve work that might be undertaken by a shaman. Evaluate the differences between these and the shaman's work.

Assignment 2 (Weeks 3–4)

Respond in essay form to the following questions.

1. What is the goal of the spiritually minded Hindu? What are the means to achieve the goal?

2. What are the four stages of life for the upper-caste Hindu, and what are the obligations associated with each?

Assignment 3 (Weeks 5–7)

Respond in essay form to the following questions.

1. Jainism, like Buddhism, derived many of its key teachings from Hinduism. Describe the differences between the Jain and Hindu ideas of karma, the soul, and the goal of life. What kinds of behaviors have Jains adopted to avoid accumulating karma? How has this affected them as a religious group?
2. What are the Four Noble Truths, and what is the role of the Eightfold Path in Buddhism? Explain the reasoning involved with the different parts of this teaching.

Assignment 4 (Weeks 9–10)

Respond in essay form to the following questions.

1. Mahayana Buddhism has taken different forms in different times and places. Discuss the characteristic features of each of the following: Vajrayana, or Tibetan, Buddhism; Zen Buddhism; Pure Land Buddhism; and Nichiren Buddhism. Compare the formative factors and characteristics of Tibetan and Zen Buddhism as part of your answer.
2. Discuss the relations of Buddhism with the West in the modern era. Include in your answer considerations of why Buddhism appeals to Westerners and how this influence has been manifest in the arts. Also include in your answer new forms of Buddhism that have arisen in the modern era and what effect the contact and expansion has had on Buddhism.

Assignment 5 (Weeks 11–13)

Respond in essay form the following questions.

1. What are the five relationships and the five main virtues of Confucianism? How would you evaluate the harms and benefits of defining society and reciprocal duties as Confucius did?

2. Discuss the nature of the Tao as taught in the Tao Te Ching. What are the key images used to represent the Tao in the Tao Te Ching? How does this teaching differ from that of Confucianism?

Assignment 6 (Weeks 14–15)

Respond in essay form to the following questions.

1. Discuss the essential beliefs of Shinto and how they are tied to the Japanese land. Could the essential features of this religion operate outside Japan, or for that matter within modern Japan?
2. Shinto appears to be a gentle religion geared toward nature worship, and yet as a state religion it became an inspiration for extreme militarism. Discuss these aspects of Shinto and the history that brought about State Shinto. What does this suggest to you about the issue of church and state separation? Discuss.