

Common Course Outline  
HUM 180  
World Religion  
3 Semester Hours

The Community College of Baltimore County

Description

### **World Religion**

**Studies major world religions; emphasizes the traditions, scriptures, philosophies, forms of worship and artistic expressions of Hinduism, Buddhism, the traditional religions of China, and Islam.**

Overall Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. develop and apply critical and analytical skills to studies in comparative religion
2. detail and analyze comparatively selected relevant religious texts and artifacts
3. analyze selected relevant religious manifestations and expressions in their cultural contexts, synchronically and diachronically
4. recognize and describe the development of religious traditions, including factors of race, class and gender
5. view religious texts and artifacts with a more sophisticated intellectual and multicultural appreciation
6. analyze critically the formal qualities and characteristics of selected religious texts and artifacts
7. assess the different cross-currents of cultural influences that have shaped religious development in different historical and geographical milieux
8. develop a greater openness to different cultural criteria of religious value and meaning
9. produce a careful and thoughtful scholarly or creative project with written and oral components
10. recognize, analyze and assess the historical importance of selected relevant religious texts and artifacts

Major Topics

I. Evolution and development of religious tradition in given cultural contexts, in a comparative perspective.

II. Evolution and development of artistic forms used in religious

traditions in given cultural contexts, in a comparative perspective.

III. Evolution and development of musical and theatrical forms in the given cultural context, in a comparative perspective.

IV. Formation and role of individuals or groups crucial to the development of religious tradition in given cultural contexts.

V. Relationship of religious traditions to other manifestations of the given societal context: political, economic, literary, artistic.

VI. Concepts and vocabulary relevant to the academic study of comparative religion.

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#### Course Requirements

1. Regular and punctual attendance and active participation in class
2. Written essay-style examinations
3. Reading and writing assignments
4. Annotated scholarly or creative project with written and oral components

#### Other Course Information

Humanities 180, World Religion, is an academic study of world religious traditions in comparative perspective; the course is devoted to the understanding of the different religious traditions, not to the evaluating of them. Students are made aware that religious proselytizing, promoting or debunking of religious traditions is inappropriate to the academic study of religion.

The Community College of Baltimore County is committed to providing a high-quality learning experience that results in a growth of knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to function successfully as a transfer student, in a career, and as an informed and concerned citizen. To accomplish this goal, we maintain high academic standards and expect students to accept responsibility for their individual growth by attending class, completing all homework and other assignments, participating in class activities, and preparing for tests.

World Religion  
Humanities 180

A study of major world religions, with emphasis on the traditions, scriptures, philosophies, forms of worship and artistic expressions of Hinduism, Buddhism, the traditional religions of China. The course will be a

survey of major religious traditions in Asia, beginning with an emphasis on

India and China with a focus on Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.

the course will consider both the historical development of each tradition,

in its cultural context, and its existential and phenomenological character.

The Fenton text will be the guide to the historical matters, and Huston Smith

will provide one renowned student's "take" on the existential character of

each tradition, one to build on and critique. In addition to these two rather

distinct text-book approaches, there will in each case be major primary texts

("scriptures") representing each tradition; analysis and discussion of these

primary texts will be the lynchpin of the encounter with each tradition.

Moreover, as the course also emphasizes the expressive aspects of each religious tradition, it will pay considerable attention to the art

forms

characteristic of each, such as architecture, painting, and sculpture; thus,

the slides and films presenting images, temples and festivals will be considered just as central to the course content as the written texts.

The course begins with an Introduction to the study of comparative religion; definitions of religion, religious experience and expression; Eliade's concepts of sacred and profane; patterns of religion in the ancient

Near East, the Indus Valley civilizations and arrival of the Aryans. The

first unit is on Hinduism: the religion of the Vedas and Upanishads: the

Vedic world-view; analysis of the Upanishads and the Way of Knowledge; renunciation and moksa (release). Discussion of the 3 Ways of Action, Knowledge and Devotion; karma and rebirth; the Way of Devotion and teachings

of the Bhagavad Gita; the Saivite and Vaisnavite traditions; the cult of

Krishna, and devotion to Devi, the Goddess . Attention is devoted to Hindu

temple architecture and symbolism of early cave temples; southern and northern temple styles. The second major unit is devoted to Buddhism: origins

of Buddhism in India. Life of Buddha. The Four Noble Truths; the early tradition. Jainism; ahimsa. The next topic is the schools of Buddhism: the

Theravadin, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions; the Buddha and the Bodhisattva; views of samsara and nirvana; Buddhist shrines and iconography:

cave temples of Ellora and Ajanta. Next the focus is on the Vajrayana tradition: Buddhism in Tibet & Nepal. Finally, a unit is devoted to Buddhism in Japan, Zen, in relation to the traditional religions of Japan. A final major unit is devoted to the religious Traditions of China: Buddhism in China, in relation to the traditional religions of China. Ancient China and the advent of Confucianism; Confucian texts and teachings. The Taoist tradition; writings and teachings of Lao-Tzu (the Tao Te Ching) and Chuang-Tzu.