

Undergraduate

Prepared By: David M. Kaplan

Phone: 565-3521

REQUEST FOR  
**ADDITION OF COURSE TO  
CORE CURRICULUM**

College/School: College of Arts and Sciences

Department: Philosophy and Religion Studies

Subject Prefix: PHIL Course Number: 2070 Semester Credit Hours: 3

TCCNS Number (if applicable)	_____	Hours Per Week:	<u>3</u>	Lecture
	(common course number)		_____	Lab
Title	<u>Great Religions</u>		_____	Recitation
Short Course Title :	<u>GREAT RELIGIONS</u>		_____	Other
	(maximum 22 characters including spaces)		<u>3</u>	_____

Category of Core Curriculum course is to be added: Humanities

Catalog Description:

Philosophical and social dimensions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Humanism and Islam. Emphasizes the diversity of religious experience and traditions.

Prerequisite(s):

None

If course is cross-listed, indicate below:

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject Prefix/Course Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject Prefix/Course Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Justification for course to be added to Core Curriculum (Include how course would satisfy each exemplary objective.):

PHIL 2070 Great Religions was recently in the Understanding Human Community section of the Core but would now be placed in the Humanities area. The course will satisfy the exemplary objectives for the Humanities in the following ways:

- To demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities.  
Students will study both primary and secondary texts of the world religions, exposing them to the works of other cultures and other traditions. They will encounter works from the Christian traditions, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and African religious traditions.
- To understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within diverse historical and social contexts.  
Students will learn how to relate the texts and traditions of world religions to the understanding of reality and the understanding of the human condition they embody. Religions will be considered in light of their historical and social manifestations as meaning-giving frameworks.
- To respond critically to works in the arts and humanities.  
Students will learn how to appreciate the similarities and differences among world religions. They will develop the skills necessary to question their own religious traditions, to analyze the meaning and nature of religions, and to analyze the way religions embody social and metaphysical understandings.
- To demonstrate knowledge of the influence of the humanities on cultures.  
Students will develop a deeper understanding of how religions influence individuals and cultures in African, Asia, India, Europe, and North America.
  - explore the humanities

Students will read examine number of great religious traditions in this course, and encounter ideas of religious theory and practice that have been influential throughout history. The readings in this course will span centuries and continents, from antiquity to the present.

- make connections between different areas of knowledge and different ways of knowing

Students will learn about the convergence of philosophical, historical, and theological understandings of the religious traditions. Students will encounter both Western and non-Western traditions and have the opportunity to learn from different ways of knowing.

- locate, evaluate and organize information including the use of information technologies

Essay writing – short research papers -- will be assigned throughout the semester requiring each student to examine an issue, explain a theme or position, take a reasoned stand on it, and present it in a well-written form. Students will undoubtedly rely on information technologies to help locate, evaluate, and organize information for their research projects.

- think critically and creatively, learning to apply different systems of analysis

Students will learn about several different religious traditions and have the opportunity to compare, contrast, and consider these theories critically, in relation to one another. Often the claims within religious traditions will flatly contradict one another. Students will learn to evaluate and discern among competing claims, belief systems, and practices. They will have the opportunity to question the idea of truth in religion and to consider how to examine the same question from the perspective of different religious traditions.

- develop problem solving skills that incorporate multiple viewpoints and differing contexts in their analysis

Discussion groups based around shared problem solving will be used. Sometimes group projects and group presentations are used. The instructor poses a question (e.g., a vexing problem of internal coherence within a religious schema, or a question of textual interpretation) and students are required to think through the problem together, reach consensus, and present their conclusions to the class.

- cultivate intellectual curiosity and self-responsibility, building a foundation for lifelong learning

Essay writing – short research papers -- will be assigned throughout the semester requiring each student to examine an issue, explain a philosophical theme or position, take a reasoned stand on it, and present it in a well-written form. These short research papers will be required; each student must complete the assignment for course credit. Written and communication skills gained through reading and writing about religions are transferable throughout a university and professional career – and beyond.

- engage with a variety of others in thoughtful and well crafted communication

The course will be taught Socratically, based on student participation, class discussion, and discussion groups. Group projects may also be used.

- broaden and refine their thinking as a part of the give and take of ideas, seeking to better understand other's perspectives as well as their own

The course will be taught Socratically, based on student participation, class discussion, and discussion groups. Group projects may also be used.

- deepen their understanding of the variety of human experience and gain the capacity to see situations from another's viewpoint

The course will be taught Socratically, based on student participation, class discussion, and discussion groups. Group projects may also be used.

- express ways that exposure to different ideas, perspectives, cultures and viewpoints have enriched their thinking

The course will be taught Socratically, based on student participation, class discussion, and discussion groups. Group projects may also be used.

- demonstrate self-responsibility for learning, for physical, mental and emotional health and for participation as local and global citizens

Essay writing – short research papers -- will be assigned throughout the semester requiring each student to examine an issue, explain a theme or position, take a reasoned stand on it, and present it in a well-written form. These short research papers will be class requirements; each student must complete the assignment for course credit. Written and communication skills gained through reading and writing about religions are transferable throughout a university career, a professional career, and beyond. These skills are vital for civic participation. They not only help students express themselves more clearly, rationally, and convincingly but also help them learn to listen and to see things from

the perspectives of others – a vital skill for public deliberation and participation in local and global affairs.

Consultation with University Curriculum Assessment Committee member:

Department: LIBR Contact: Jim Conover Date: \_\_\_\_\_

New Core Curriculum Requests must include:

Syllabus:  Maximum 4-page syllabus attached

Assessment:  Consultation w/University Curriculum Assessment Committee member in this core component group.

Assessment procedures (criteria to be used in assessing this course) must be attached separately

**APPROVED:**

Department Chair: J. David Bellcott Date: 4/19/09

College/School Curriculum Committee Chair: B. Schrahe Date: 5/7/09

Dean of College/School: B. Schrahe Date: 5/7/09

Core Oversight Committee Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

University Curriculum Committee (VPAA): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS  
Philosophy 2070.001  
Great Religions

Spring 2007  
MWF 10:00 - 10:50 p.m.  
EESAT 391

Dr. George James  
Office: EESAT 225e  
Hours: M W 4:00  
-5:00 p.m. *and by  
appointment*

**Scope of the Course:**

The purpose of this course is to assist you in achieving an *informed appreciation* for the religious life of humankind as this is reflected in some of the most influential religious traditions in the world. It is intended neither to convert you to any particular religion nor to persuade you to reject any or all religions. But to achieve an informed appreciation for this material it is necessary to approach the material with the right frame of mind. If you approach this material with the assumption that all religion but your own is wrong, is nonsense, is a distortion of reality, you are unlikely to achieve a fair hearing of the insights that have given birth to these traditions, or the ideas and practices that have shaped the lives of the human beings who for millennia have participated in these traditions. Assuming such a standpoint, we can hardly hope to be properly informed. If, on the other hand, we assume that all religions are essentially the same, we are unlikely to take seriously the uniqueness of each tradition or the claims that many traditions make to a unique revelation. The attitude appropriate to this subject matter is one of genuine curiosity about the nature of religion and the distinguishing features of the many differing traditions. We want to appreciate the *understanding of reality* and the *understanding of the human condition* they embody. It is appropriate to place the question of the *truth* of religions within brackets until an adequate understanding of the religions in question is achieved.

In order to achieve an informed appreciation of differing religious traditions we need first to formulate a *working definition* of our subject. The purpose of a definition is to become clear in our minds about what it is that we are seeking to explore. It is a preliminary exercise that can be revised over time. An adequate definition of religion would have to be faithful to the religious tradition with which you are familiar from your own religious training and experience if you have had such experience and training, but it must also be faithful to all those forms of behavior we would all recognize as religion that are not a part of your experience. For instance: if we were to define religion as "belief in God" or "belief in the supernatural," we should be prepared to show (1) that all religions involve *beliefs*, and (2) that among these beliefs there is a universal doctrine of God or the supernatural. In fact there are many historical traditions that we would all recognize as religions that are *without specific beliefs* and there are religions that have certain beliefs which include the rejection of any doctrine of God. In order to help us formulate a definition of religion that is faithful to the available data, we will consider the insights offered in a short book by Paul Tillich called *The Dynamics of Faith*.

Having formulated a workable preliminary definition of our subject, we need then to become familiar with the most influential traditions of religions life that we find in

human civilization. This will entail the exploration of a considerable body of information concerning the manifestations of religion in human history. This will include information from cultures and historical epochs very different from our own. Our purpose in examining this material is to begin to grasp the understanding of reality embedded in these traditions and the significance of this understanding of reality for the adherents of these religious traditions. The information now available concerning the religious traditions of humankind, however, is too vast to encompass even in a lifetime. Thus the material we examine will be necessarily cursory and selective. Nevertheless, it will include a span of material sufficient to engender an appreciation of the great variety of the forms of religious life that exist in the world, as well as those pervasive features of such phenomena that justify our referring to them all as *religions*.

The material we turn to first will focus upon the religion of Africa. Classroom lectures in this part of the course will be supplemented by the reading of *African Religions and Philosophy* by J. S. Mbiti, a specialist in African religion, and by the reading of the contemporary novel *Things Fall Apart* by the renowned African novelist Chinua Achebe. In our study of African religion, we will also seek to understand the principal features of African religion that appear in other religious traditions, including your own.

Following our study of African religion, we will turn to one of the great religious traditions of human history that contains some of the elements of religious life we found in Africa, but also incorporates a sophisticated literary, intellectual, and mystical tradition. Our second subject of study will be Hinduism. Our study of the Hindu religious tradition will also provide background for an appreciation of Jainism, Buddhism, and the Sikh religious tradition. Your reading for this part of the course will include the relevant Chapters of *The World's Religions* by Huston Smith.

Following our introduction to Hinduism and related traditions we will turn briefly to the traditions of East Asia. The lectures you will hear on these subjects will be supplemented by your reading of relevant chapters from *The World's Religions* by Huston Smith. Following our treatment of these traditions, we shall be looking at the prophetic tradition that appears in the religion of Ancient Israel, the development of early Christianity, early Rabbinic Judaism, and Islam. Our study of Islam will explore the distinctive features of the Muslim tradition, and the role it has played in traditional life in the Middle East, and in social and political movements in the world today. The course will conclude with an effort to draw together a general conception of the nature of religion on the basis of the data we have encountered in the course of the semester.

### **Requirements:**

1. Your understanding of the issues of this course will require a genuine encounter with the material presented in the lectures and discussed in class. This cannot occur if you are repeatedly absent from class.
2. An informed appreciation for the religions of the world can occur only if you conscientiously apply yourself to the reading material assigned. Please read the material with care and think about the ideas being offered. Compare as much as possible the information you are hearing about the religion you are studying with your own knowledge of the religion, if any, in which you were raised. Try imaginatively to enter

**Policy on Absences from Exams:**

If you are absent from any major exams because of accident or serious illness, arrangements for a makeup exam will be made only on receipt of a letter or other notification from the appropriate medical authority. There are no makeup exams for unannounced quizzes.

**Policy on Grades of I (Incomplete):**

A grade of "I" will be given for the course only in the case of extenuating circumstances such as accident or serious illness that make it impossible to complete all the course requirements on time.

**Drop Policy:**

A student may drop the course with instructor's permission until the last day allowed by the university to drop the course with instructor's permission. That day is Tuesday October 31, 2006.

**Textbooks:**

Books for the course are available at the University Book Store, Voertman's, and North Texas Book and Supply:

John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd Edition (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann) 1990  
 Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, (New York: Bantam Doubleday) 1959  
 Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*, (New York: Harper Collins) 1991  
 Paul Tillich, *The Dynamics of Faith*, (New York: Harper Collins) 1957

**Approximate Schedule of Topics and Reading Assignments:**

Week of:

- |     |    |  |
|-----|----|--|
| Jan | 15 | Introduction: What is Religion? Paul Tillich, <i>The Dynamics of Faith</i> , pp. 30-40, Huston Smith <i>The World's Religions</i> , pp. 1-11.            |
|     | 22 | A Provisional Definition of Religion: Tillich, pp. 30-41   |
|     | 29 | The Symbolic Expression of Religious Faith: Tillich, pp. 41-54 (first exam).   |
| Feb | 5  | The Traditional Religion of Africa: The African Ontology and the African concept of Time, <i>African Religions and Philosophy</i> , pp. 1 – 28, 74 – 89. |
|     | 12 | The Africa Regard for Ancestors, the Living Dead, the deities and God <i>African Religion and Philosophy</i> , pp. 107 – 161.                            |

- 19 The Traditional Religion of Africa continued: Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*. All pages.(second exam).
- 26 The Origins of the Hindu Religious Tradition: Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*. "Hinduism" pp. 12 – 50.
- Mar 5 The Hindu View of Life: Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*. pp. 50 - 77.
- 12 Medieval Devotional Hinduism and the Origin of the Sikh Religion: Hand out. (third exam).
- 19 Spring Break
- 26 Buddhism as Philosophy and Religion: Early Buddhist Thought, Huston Smith, "Buddhism." pp. 82 – 119.
- Apr. 2 Confucianism, Taoism, and the Religions of East Asia: Huston Smith, pp. 154 - 218.
- 9 Buddhism: The Mahayana Tradition: Huston Smith, pp. 119 – 149 (fourth exam).
- 16 Religion in the Ancient Near East, the Hebrews and the Origins of the Christian Faith: Huston Smith, pp. 271 - 362.
- 23 The Origins of the Islamic Faith, The Five Pillars of Islam, and their Implications for Human Order: Huston Smith, pp. 221 – 257.
- 30 Pre-Finals Week: Islamic Mysticism and related topics: Huston Smith, pp. 257 – 268.
- May 7 Final Exam Week: The Final Exam is Friday May 11, 2007, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

**PHIL 2070 Great Religions  
Assessment Procedures**

PHIL 2070 Great Religions will assess its success in meeting each Exemplary Educational Objectives for Humanities as follows:

1. To demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities.

Students will study both primary and secondary texts of the world religions, exposing them to the works of other cultures and other traditions. Questions on the final exam will be used to measure the basic understanding of students to see if they are capable of demonstrating awareness of works in the humanities. For each assessment-designated question, 66% of the students would be expected to answer it either correctly or satisfactorily, depending on whether the instructor poses the question as a simple response (e.g., multiple choice exam, T-F, or fill-in-the-blank) or short answer (e.g., a complete sentences, paragraph-length response), respectively. If fewer than 66% of the students capably answer the exam questions then the instructor will modify either the substance of the course or introduce alternative classroom strategies, such as discussion groups or individual or group presentations.

2. To understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within diverse historical and social contexts.

Students will learn how to relate the texts and traditions of world religions to the understanding of reality and the understanding of the human condition they embody. Religions will be considered in light of their historical and social manifestations as meaning-giving frameworks. Questions on the final exam will be used to measure student understanding of the relationship between the values religions express and their diverse social contexts. For each assessment-designated question, 66% of the students would be expected to answer it either correctly or satisfactorily, depending on whether the instructor poses the question as a simple response (e.g., multiple choice exam, T-F, or fill-in-the-blank) or short answer (e.g., a complete sentences, paragraph-length response), respectively. If fewer than 66% of the students capably answer the exam questions then the instructor will modify either the substance of the course or introduce alternative classroom strategies, such as discussion groups or individual or group presentations.

3. To respond critically to works in the arts and humanities.

Students will learn how to appreciate the similarities and differences among world religions. They will develop the skills necessary to question their own religious traditions, to analyze the meaning and nature of religions, and to analyze the way religions embody social and metaphysical understandings. To measure this, instructors will give essay writing assignments that require a critical analysis of a choice of topics. If more than one writing assignment is given, by the last assignment 66% of students would be expected to receive grades of C or higher. If fewer than 66% of the students receive such grades then the instructor will modify either the substance of the course or introduce alternative classroom strategies, such as discussion groups or individual or group presentations.

4. To demonstrate knowledge of the influence of the humanities on cultures.

Students will develop a deeper understanding of how religions influence individuals and cultures in African, Asia, India, Europe, and North America. Questions on the final exam will be used to measure the basic understanding of students to see if they are capable of demonstrating awareness of the influence of the humanities on cultures. For each assessment-designated question, 66% of the students would be expected to answer it either correctly or satisfactorily, depending on whether the instructor poses the question as a simple response (e.g., multiple choice exam, T-F, or fill-in-the-blank) or short answer (e.g., a complete sentences, paragraph-length response), respectively. If fewer than 66% of the students capably answer the exam questions then the instructor will modify either the substance of the course or introduce alternative classroom strategies, such as discussion groups or individual or group presentations.

PHIL 2070 Great Religions will assess its success in meeting the overarching objectives for Humanities in the following ways:

- explore the humanities

Students will read a number of great religious traditions in this course, and encounter ideas of religious theory and practice that have been influential throughout history. A class at the start and the end of the semester would be devoted to class discussion about the nature and substance of the world religions. The instructor would evaluate the discussion to assess if the number of students contributing increases and quality and sophistication of the discussion improves. If, in the instructor's opinion, more students participate by the end of the class and the quality and sophistication of the discussion improves, then the OAO will be met.

- make connections between different areas of knowledge and different ways of knowing

Students will learn about the convergence of philosophical, historical, and theological understandings of the religious traditions. Students will encounter both Western and non-Western traditions and have the opportunity to learn from different ways of knowing. To measure this, instructors will give essay writing assignments that require a critical analysis of a choice of topics. If more than one writing assignment is given, by the last assignment 66% of students would be expected to receive grades of C or higher. If fewer than 66% of the students receive such grades then the instructor will modify either the substance of the course or introduce alternative classroom strategies, such as discussion groups or individual or group presentations.

- locate, evaluate and organize information including the use of information technologies

Essay writing – short research papers -- will be assigned throughout the semester requiring each student to examine an issue, explain a theme or position, take a reasoned stand on it, and present it a well-written form. Although students will undoubtedly rely on computer information technologies to help locate, evaluate, and organize information for their research projects, the use of such technologies would not be required. 75% of the students would be expected to have completed each writing assignments. If fewer than 75% of the students complete all assignments

then the instructor will modify either the nature of the writing assignments or even the substance of the course to ensure that 75% complete all assignments.

- think critically and creatively, learning to apply different systems of analysis

Students will learn about several different religious traditions and have the opportunity to compare, contrast, and consider these theories critically, in relation to one another. To measure this, instructors will give essay writing assignments that require a critical analysis of a choice of topics. If more than one writing assignment is given, by the last assignment 66% of students would be expected to receive grades of C or higher. If fewer than 66% of the students receive such grades then the instructor will modify either the substance of the course or introduce alternative classroom strategies, such as discussion groups or individual or group presentations.

- develop problem solving skills that incorporate multiple viewpoints and differing contexts in their analysis

A class at the start and the end of the semester would be devoted to class discussion about the nature and substance of the world religions. The instructor would evaluate the discussion to assess if the number of students contributing increases and quality and sophistication of the discussion improves. If, in the instructor's opinion, more students participate by the end of the class and the quality and sophistication of the discussion improves, then the OAO will be met.

- cultivate intellectual curiosity and self-responsibility, building a foundation for lifelong learning

Essay writing – short research papers -- will be assigned throughout the semester requiring each student to examine an issue, explain a theme or position, take a reasoned stand on it, and present it a well-written form. 75% of the students would be expected to have completed each writing assignments. If fewer than 75% of the students complete all assignments then the instructor will modify either the nature of the writing assignments or even the substance of the course to ensure that 75% complete all assignments.

- engage with a variety of others in thoughtful and well crafted communication

A class at the start and the end of the semester would be devoted to class discussion about the nature and substance of the world religions. The instructor would evaluate the discussion to assess if the number of students contributing increases and quality and sophistication of the discussion improves. If, in the instructor's opinion, more students participate by the end of the class and the quality and sophistication of the discussion improves, then the OAO will be met

- broaden and refine their thinking as a part of the give and take of ideas, seeking to better understand other's perspectives as well as their own

A class at the start and the end of the semester would be devoted to class discussion about the nature and substance of the world religions. The instructor would evaluate the discussion to assess if the number of students contributing increases and quality and sophistication of the discussion improves. If, in the

instructor's opinion, more students participate by the end of the class and the quality and sophistication of the discussion improves, then the OAO will be met

- deepen their understanding of the variety of human experience and gain the capacity to see situations from another's viewpoint

A class at the start and the end of the semester would be devoted to class discussion about the nature and substance of the world religions. The instructor would evaluate the discussion to assess if the number of students contributing increases and quality and sophistication of the discussion improves. If, in the instructor's opinion, more students participate by the end of the class and the quality and sophistication of the discussion improves, then the OAO will be met

- express ways that exposure to different ideas, perspectives, cultures and viewpoints have enriched their thinking

A class at the start and the end of the semester would be devoted to class discussion about the nature and substance of the world religions. The instructor would evaluate the discussion to assess if the number of students contributing increases and quality and sophistication of the discussion improves. If, in the instructor's opinion, more students participate by the end of the class and the quality and sophistication of the discussion improves, then the OAO will be met

- demonstrate self-responsibility for learning, for physical, mental and emotional health and for participation as local and global citizens

If there are more than one instructors of PHIL 2070 in a semester, they will confer at the end of the term, either in a meeting or by email, about the degree to which their sections met each EEO and OAO in order to discuss what, if any, changes need to be made in either course substance or teaching strategies. Together instructors will ascertain if the reason a course failed to meet each EEO and OAO was due to the nature of the course content or because of the instructor's actions.