

Jackson College – JCCEP, Jackson MI

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD – PHL243

Fall 2021 Semester

Internet Based Learning

Fall 2021 Semester: Begins: September 20, 2021

Ends: December 10, 2021

Course Items in this Packet

1. Religions of the World – PHL243, Outcomes and Models
2. Course Guide
3. Weekly Assignments – Chapter Readings
4. Weekly Assignments – Chapter Study and Review Questions
5. Philosophical and Theological Categories to Evaluate Religions/Beliefs/Belief Systems
6. Final Project (Format and Explanation)
7. Final Examination

Assignment Pickup Dates:

October 8

October 22

November 5

November 19

December 3

December 10

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD – PHL243

COURSE OUTCOMES

To become better informed concerning the various religions, worldviews, beliefs and belief systems of the world.

To become familiar with belief system/religion terminology.

To become better informed concerning the history of religion in general and in particular.

To be able to dialogue with others concerning religion in general and in particular.

To be able to dialogue with others concerning their religious convictions without proselytizing.

To be able to reflect on our own convictions. (To better know why we believe what we believe.)

To develop and apply tools to evaluate religions and belief systems.

To understand the relationship between Philosophy and Theology in the study of religion.

MODELS FOR THE EVALUATION OF BELIEF/RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS (not in order of priority)

MODEL 1: A PHILOSOPHICAL MODEL TO EVALUATE ANY RELIGION/BELIEF SYSTEM

Definitions:

- Metaphysics
- Epistemology
- Axiology
- Death
- Redemption

Metaphysics – What are (or is) the foundational convictions and presuppositions of ultimate truth of the belief system. (The significance of –ism)

Epistemology – How does the belief system know or accept its metaphysical convictions and presuppositions.

Axiology – What ethical, moral, law codes are derived from the belief system’s metaphysical convictions and presuppositions? (How does the belief system’s ethics, morals, and law reflect its metaphysical orientations.)

Death – What does the belief system’s metaphysical orientation believe concerning life after death? (Is there life after death?)

Redemption – What does the belief system’s metaphysical orientation teach concerning salvation/redemption of the human soul after death?

MODEL 2: A TEXTUAL MODEL TO EVALUATE A RELIGION/BELIEF SYSTEMS

Definitions:

Textual the text of doctrine/teaching of the belief/religious system

Theology the doctrine/teaching of the belief system’s text, theology (not Exclusive to Christianity)

Doctrine the teaching(s) of the religion/belief system

Textual Doctrine/Teaching The text(s) that teaches the religion/belief system, written or unwritten.

Historical Doctrine/Teaching The history of the teaching of the religion/belief system.

Systematic Doctrine/Teaching The system of the teaching of the religion/belief system

Practical Doctrine/Teaching The “how do/should we then live” of the teaching of the religion/belief system (ethical and moral codes, law, etc...)

JCEP - PHL243 – GREAT WORLD RELIGIONS

Fall 2021 Semester

Instructor: Dr. George D. Belcher III

Course Weekly Assignments Schedule – Course Guide

UNIT 1

1. Read Chapter 1 and 2 (of the textbook)
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapters 1 and 2
3. View the professor's video session
4. Review the Philosophical and Theological Categories Handout
5. Journal Question for UNIT 1
How did you come to believe what you presently believe?

1. Read Chapter 3
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 3
3. View the professor's video session
4. Write your understanding of the philosophical term: Metaphysics
5. Journal Question for UNIT 1
In your experience, how have you seen most religious/belief system discussions end up and why?

UNIT 2

1. Read Chapter 4
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 4
3. View the professor's video session
4. Write your understanding of the philosophical term: Epistemology
5. Journal Question for UNIT 2
What is ultimately at stake when religion and beliefs are considered?

1. Read Chapter 5
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 5
3. View the professor's video session
4. Write your understanding of the philosophical term: Axiology
5. Journal Question for UNIT 2
Give 2 examples of a "self-stultifying" statement and explain why they are contradictory and false.

UNIT 3

1. Read Chapter 6
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 6
3. View the professor's video session
4. Write your understanding of the philosophical/anthropological terms: Sentience
5. Journal Question for UNIT 3
What is the core issue concerning the reality of Culture?

UNIT 4

1. Read Chapter 7
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 7
3. View the professor's video session
4. Write your understanding of the philosophical term: Truth
5. Journal Question for Week 6
Relating to the journal question for UNIT 4, what is the ultimate cause of conflict between people and nations?

UNIT 5

1. Read Chapter 8
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 8
3. View the professor's video session
4. Write your understanding of the difference between Science and Philosophy
5. Journal Question for UNIT 5
When considering, at least for the moment, that the "Big Bang Theory" is true, what is the most significant question this theory does not answer?

UNIT 6

1. Read Chapter 9
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Question for Chapter 9
3. View the professor's video session
4. Write your understanding of the difference between "conscious" and "conscience"?
5. Journal Question for UNIT 6
Define Anthropology. How does your metaphysical orientation reflect your definition and understanding?

UNIT 7

1. Read Chapter 10
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 10
3. View the professors video session
4. Write your view concerning how evidence for a belief and actual belief relate.
5. Journal Question for UNIT 7
How do Culture and one's Religious beliefs/belief systems relate to one another?

UNIT 8

1. Read Chapter 11
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 11
3. View the professors video session
4. How do you explain the vast number of beliefs that exists in human history?
5. Journal Question for UNIT 8
In the study of Religion and Religions, what place does evidence have in the development of the religion's metaphysics?

UNIT 9

1. Read Chapter 12
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 12
3. View the professor's video session
4. Write how you understand a process that can help discussions about religion to stay calm and meaningful?
5. Journal Question for UNIT 9 - What does the term "worldview" mean?

UNIT 10

1. Read Chapter 13
2. Write answers to the Study and Review Questions for Chapter 13
3. View the professor's video session
4. It has been said, "If you want to start an argument, just start talking about either politics or religion." How do you view this?
5. Journal Question for UNIT 10
How have the philosophical categories of Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Axiology helped your understanding of religions and beliefs? Have these categories been helpful to your comparing and evaluating the religions we have studied?
6. Hand in Final Project, Final Exam and any assignments that you have not yet submitted.

JCEP - PHL243 GREAT WORLD RELIGIONS

TEXTBOOK: World Relg4 by Van Voorst

Course Date: Fall Semester - 2021

Instructor: Dr. George D Belcher III (Del)

UNIT - Chapter Study and Review Questions (Answer these questions in your notebooks.)

UNIT 1

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1. What is Preunderstanding?
2. What is your "in general" Religious/belief system preunderstanding?
3. How does the text define Religion?
4. Why study Religion?
5. What 2 ways of studying Religion seems best to suit you?
6. List 4 dimensions of Religion that interest you most.
7. Briefly discuss why many times we experience conflict when discussing Religion.

Chapter 2 – Indigenous Religions

1. List the 8 types of Indigenous Religions the text presents.
2. Do all Religions have a written text?
3. List 4 common features that Indigenous Religions have with one another.
4. How do the Indigenous Religions understand the goodness of the world? (p.43)
5. How do the Indigenous Religions determine what is right and wrong?
6. How do the Indigenous Religions understand life after death?
7. How do the Indigenous Religions understand the purpose of Life?

Chapter 3 - Hinduism

1. Briefly comment on what you think of the long history of Hinduism.
2. What is Hinduism?
3. What are the 3 Hindu Doctrinal Concepts? (p.74)
4. Describe the Hindu Caste System.
5. What are the Four Stages of Life?
6. What are the 4 Goals of Life?
7. What is the place of meditation in Hinduism?
8. Briefly compare what you believe with what a Hindu believes.

UNIT 2

Chapter 4 - Jainism

1. Comment on the History of Jainism.
2. What is Jainism?
3. List 4 basic beliefs of Jainism.
4. What are the 5 Cardinal Virtues?
5. How are the lives of Monks and Nuns different from the Laity? (section 4-5)
6. What is the presence of Jainism in the world today?
7. What is the value of chastity to Jainism?
8. Briefly compare what you believe with what a Jainist believes.

Chapter 5 - Buddhism

1. Who is Gautama?
2. How was Gautama enlightened? (p.113)
3. What is Zen?
4. What are the 4 Noble Truths of Buddhism?
5. List 4 Ethical Standards of Buddhism?
6. What is the place of prayer and meditation in Buddhism?
7. How do the funeral rites of Buddhism reflect the belief in the after-life?
8. Briefly compare what you believe with what a Buddhist believes.

UNIT 3

Chapter 6 – Sikhism

1. What does Sikhism mean?
2. What is the significance of the 10 Gurus? (p.141)
3. How many Gods does Sikhism worship?
4. What part does “devotion” play in the life of a Sikh?
5. What is the Gurdwara?
6. What is the Langar?
7. Is Sikhism found today in North America?
8. Briefly compare what you believe with what a Sikh believes.

UNIT 4

Chapter 7 – Daoism and Confucianism

1. What are the Eternal Ways of each of these religions?
2. Where did these religions begin?
3. What would you say about how long/how old these religions are?
4. What are 3 essential beliefs of each of these religions?
5. What are 3 essentials to the ethics of each of these religions?
6. How does the traditional Chinese funeral reflect the beliefs of life after death?
7. What is the final comparison of these two religions? (p.181)

UNIT 5

Chapter 8 – Shintoism

1. What is the way of Kami?
2. In Shintoism, what is the standard of ethical purity?
3. What are 3 general characteristics of Shintoism?
4. What does a Shinto Priest do?
5. How does the Shinto funeral reflect belief in the afterlife?
6. Where do we find Shintoism today in the world?
7. Briefly compare what you believe with what Shintoism believes.

UNIT 6

Chapter 9 – Zoroastrianism

1. How ancient is Zoroastrianism?
2. What is the Ahura Mazda?
3. How does this religion understand moral dualism?
4. What is the judgement and final victory of Ahura Mazda?
5. What are 4 aspects of this religions ethics?
6. What is the general place of rituals in Zoroastrianism?
7. Compare what you believe with what a Zoroastrian believes.

UNIT 7

Chapter 10 – Judaism

1. What is the Western Wall?
2. Who is Abraham to Judaism?
3. How many Temples were built and then destroyed in Jerusalem?
4. What is the Tanak?
5. How many Gods does Judaism believe in?
6. What is the Torah?

7. What are 4 basic ethical principles of Judaism?
8. Compare what you believe with what a Judaist believes.

UNIT 8

Chapter 11 – Christianity

1. Who is Abraham to Christianity?
2. What is the Bible for Christianity?
3. Who is the central figure of Christianity?
4. What does has this central figure done for the redemption of God’s people?
5. Christianity claims what belief system’s history as its own...that it came out of that history?
6. In what 3 persons does Christianity believe God reveals Himself?
7. What are the foundational commands for Christian ethics?
8. Compare what you believe with what a Christian believes.

UNIT 9

1. Who is Abraham to Islam?
2. What is the Qur’an for Islam?
3. In Islam, who is considered Alah’s Messenger?
4. Is Islam fully unified or are there different beliefs of Islam in the religion of Islam?
5. Is Islam monotheistic?
6. What is the Hadith?
7. What is Shari’a?
8. Compare what you believe with you a Muslim believes?

UNIT 10

Chapter 13 – New World Religions

1. What are common features of new religious movements?
2. Upon analysis, are the new religious movements really “new” in the History of Religion”

PHL243 – GREAT WORLD RELIGIONS

Description of Course Project

Purpose: To provide opportunity for the student to formally use the philosophical theological model of belief system evaluation to evaluate a belief system other than their own and relate that system of belief to their own system of belief.

Process:

1. Evaluate a belief system that is not your own belief system.
2. Evaluate your personal belief system.
3. Reflect upon where these two belief systems are similar.
4. Reflect upon where these two belief systems are different.
5. How has this process helped you understand both belief systems better.
6. How has this process helped you be convicted of your belief system.

Pages: Minimum 6 pages
Maximum 10 pages

JCCEP – PHL243 GREAT WORLD RELIGIONS

Fall Semester - 2021

Examination: This exam asks you to write an essay answer to the questions below. It is our hope that you answer these questions on your own from what you have learned in the course.

Respond to 6 of the 8 following questions:

1. What has this study of the great religions of the world taught you about human nature and about yourself?
2. What importance does the subject of “antiquities” have on the discussion of the great religions of the world?
3. Concerning the ethics we see in the 12 religions we have studied, how do they compare with one another?
4. What is the value of knowing what other faith’s/belief systems believe?

5. What is the difference between knowing about a belief system and being convicted of the belief system?
6. What is the difference between discussing what we believe with another and proselytizing another?
7. How has this study helped you to be a listener instead of a talker or responder?
8. Explain what it is that is the ultimate end of all belief systems...what are all beliefs ultimately concerned about? (explain your answer)

Extra-credit Question (optional)

If a discussion about faith/belief escalates to anger and name-calling, for example, what can we most likely assume?

JCCEP: Great World Religions – PHL243

Philosophical and Theological Categories to Evaluate Religions/Beliefs/Belief Systems

Note 1:

Rational: understanding and acting in accordance to Reason.

Metaphysics: That which answers our questions concerning ultimate reality...answers the Why? of existence of anything and everything. That upon which we base our beliefs and ethics.

Epistemology: How we know what we know and believe, how we accept what we know and believe.

(Vital to understanding Epistemology is that the root word of Epistemology, is the Greek "piste" which means "faith". Epistemology, then, being the study of how we know what we know, infers implicitly and explicitly that any knowledge any human being has is accepted by/based on faith. This is the nature of human experience and every activity of mankind, including Science...and including Atheism.)

Axiology: That ethical code, moral code, law, rights and wrongs derived from its related metaphysical orientation/disposition/presuppositions.

Summary: An individual's axiology reflects his/her metaphysical convictions that are accepted epistemologically.

Note 2:

"Religion" is from the Latin – *religare* which means "to connect".

With this, then, what we do in life (our axiology) connects us to what we believe to be true (our metaphysical presuppositions).

This means, that statement "I'm not a religious person" cannot be true...because it is the human experience that we do (our axiology) reflects what we believe in (our metaphysical orientation). It is impossible for a human being not to be religious. Even the statement "I'm not a religious person" is a belief/faith statement.

Note 3:

Death: Every belief system/religion has something to say about death and the afterlife.

Redemption: Every belief system/religion has something to say about how one earns the "higher afterlife" or the lower afterlife. A belief that there is no afterlife is a belief and is a view of the afterlife.

Note 4:

Concerning Redemption:

1. Every religion has an ethical code whose standard must be met by the individual to attain the higher afterlife, heaven, for example.
2. Every religion has an ethical code whose standard, if not met in the individual's life, attains the lower afterlife, hell, for example.
3. In this discussion, it is interesting to notice that the Axiological Principles of belief systems/religions are very similar.
4. All religions, except one, requires the individual to obey the ethical code of the belief system/religion, to attain the higher afterlife.

Evaluation Practice: A Common Statement

“They did what they did because they believed (thought) it was the right thing to do.”

1. A rational process: “because” ...indicates that what is happening for a reason
2. Axiology: “they did what they did” - reference to law, ethics, morals, actions...
3. Epistemology: “because they believed/thought...” - reference to faith
4. Metaphysics: “it was the right thing...” - reference to ultimate truth, guiding person or principle

With this, then, we further understand that when a person says they have done what they have done for no reason, that is, in itself a reason.

Note 5: Examples of Self-stultifying Statements (that are contradictory, assert what they deny or deny what they assert, statements that cannot be true.)

Examples:

“There are no absolute truths.” This statement is itself an absolute truth statement therefore it is false. There are absolute truths.

“All truth is relative.” This is a universally applies statement. Therefore it is false.

“We really cannot know anything.” This statement is false because it requires that we know something to understand it.

“Luke, think, don’t think!” (paraphrase) (Far-eastern mysticism)

Obi-Wan Kenobi exhortation to Luke Skywalker attempting to destroy the Death Star.

-The reality is that we have to think to not think.

PHL 243 Great World Religions

Philosophy Terms Quiz

VOCABULARY

1. Sentience _____ Love of wisdom
2. Metaphysics _____ Ultimate right and wrong
3. Philosophy _____ What people “do” in light of what They believe
4. Epistemology _____ A people’s consensus of Truth
5. Self-stultifying statement _____ Ethical Code derived from Metaphysical convictions
6. Axiology _____ Clear thinking/effort of the human mind
7. Religion _____ Reference source of ultimate truth
8. Multi-culture _____ That which corresponds to reality
9. Compromise _____ Enforced product of cultural consensus of good/evil and right/wrong
10. Belief _____ Self-awareness
11. –ism _____ Study of how we know what we know
12. Existentialism _____ “There are no absolute truths.”
13. Truth _____ Indicates a belief system
14. Reason _____ Specific behavior in light of right/wrong

