Intro to Religions Syllabus, Kean University

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Purpose of the course and its Description:

The primary aim of this course is to introduce students to seven major Religions: Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. "Comparative Religions" has become a very important subject since the second half of the 19th century in the Western academic world. There is no doubt that Religions ought to be studied within the boundaries of their own particular cultures. However, we'll try to at least conceptually understand the essence of these religious disciplines to the best of our abilities. We should remember that Religions have come through various founders, whether they're known or unknown to us, in order to wake us up from our deep sleep to the mystery of life and being. They have been forgotten and used and abused throughout the history of mankind. Nevertheless, it seems that the Ultimate Reality- whatever that may be- keeps on shining like the sun regardless of the clouds of our forgetfulness which cover it temporarily. Religion and Philosophy have become separated in our Western world. In this course we'll see that in fact there is no gap between the traditional Philosophy in the sense of love of wisdom and Religion. Religion, Philosophy, and Science have always tried to save the phenomena, namely, to explain the world around us and give us the reason why we're here in this Universe. Although they went their separate ways, we're now coming to see that their understanding each other can help us to solve the mystery of creation. Let us use our given intelligence properly in order to finally see who we really are. There will also be an attempt to see if there are conflicts between modern science and Religions in general and Abrahamic Religions in particular. Whether or not Religions and science can co-exist will be the subject of our class discussion.

Text:

'The Illustrated World's Religions' by Huston Smith.

This course consists of four major parts:

1 - Attendance and Class participation (10%)

2 - Class Presentation (20%)

3 - Midterm (Three Page Paper) (30%)

4 - Final Exam (Take Home) (40%)

1. PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE:

A LETTER GRADE WILL BE DROPPED IF A STUDENT WHO IS IN A CLASS THAT MEETS
THREE TIMES A WEEK MISSES 3 CLASSES OR MORE OR A STUDENT WHO IS IN A CLASS THAT MEETS
ONCE A WEEK MISSES 2 CLASSES OR MORE. (ie. If you have an A you will get an A-). Those with legitimate
documented reasons may discuss their concern if a situation occurs.
ATTENDANCE POLICY (http://www.kean.edu/~vpsa/handbook/10_policies_4_ada.html)
Attendance is expected in all courses. Attendance will be a component of the grade of any course if so stated in the
syllabus. Students are responsible for informing the instructor in advance or in a timely manner of the reasons for their
absence. Instructors in consultation with their department chairs are expected to respect university practices and policies
regarding what counts as an excused absence. Typically excused absences include illness, bereavement or religious
observances. Serious tardiness may be dealt with at the discretion of the instructor.
Observance of a religious holiday is to be considered an excused absence from class for any student. If a student misses a
scheduled examination or other announced assignment because of observance of a religious holiday, the student and
instructor shall agree upon a mutually convenient time as an alternate date for completion of the assignment.

2. CLASS PRESENTATION:

Students get picked up at random for presentations and get graded in class. They can also be asked to give presentations
for the second time around for which they will get either a positive sign or a negative one based on their performance.
Students are expected to read and fully understand their assigned reading sections before coming to the class. They can
either write their notes or type them as they wish. However, they are not to read from them. Copying the text and reading
it in the class in not considered a presentation.
Having eye contact with everybody in the class is a 'must'. The presenter must consider the historical aspect of his or her
topic as well as the depth of the material in order to earn a good grade.
Each day there are assigned readings (noted in the reading list given). In each class the student must print the chapter and
the questions and be prepared to discuss the chapter and the questions in class.
Students will be picked randomly by the Professor. Remember attendance is mandatory, if you are not in class, I am not
able to pick you up for presentation. Also, if you are picked and unprepared, you will be a given another chance to
present, but points will be deducted.

3. MIDTERM:

The Midterm paper is based on only one Religion as your general topic. This paper must have a cover page with the
general topic in the middle upper section and the specific chapter you shall be using under it. On the bottom right,
information about the course, students, and teacher should be provided. None of these should be repeated on the other
pages. First page is called the research one where students explain and discuss their specific topics by paraphrasing, not
copying the text or else they may fall into the trap of plagiarism. They need to read and understand the text and then write
in their own words. They must give references to the book with page numbers either at the end of the passage used, within
parentheses like, (smith, p. 75). No bibliography is needed what so ever unless students decide to use an additional source
or sources to which the reference should be given accordingly. They must avoid using many quotations, for this is only
one page. No small letters are allowed here. Double space is the way to. The next two pages are about students' own
personal reflections and how they can relate their topics to their everyday life experiences. No reference is required here.
Three full pages is the rule, so please avoid taking short cuts. Students must also not exceed the limits set before them in
any page. NO INTERNET REFERENCES! Paper must be: Three pages (Not including the Cover Page), Times New
Roman, Font Size 12 and Double Spaced. This paper must be printed out, stapled and handed to Professor Dehghani, in
person and in class, on the due date noted above

4. Final Examination (Take Home Exam):

This is a take home exam with questions of my choosing that will be distributed in class. The Final Exam plays a major
role in the students' final grade. No late exams will be accepted after the DUE DATE. No e-mailing of final exams is
permitted.
Final Exam must include a Cover Page, be typed in Times New Roman Font Size 12 and Double Spaced. This paper must
be printed out, stapled and handed to Professor Dehghani, in person and in class, on the due date noted

Academic Integrity Policy

Students are required to read and understand the contents of the Academic Integrity Policy, a copy of the policy can be obtained at the center for Academic Success or at www.kean.edu/academicintegrity.html. The violations of this policy include Cheating, Plagiarism, Fabrication and Academic Misconduct.

Student Code of Conduct

Expectations of appropriate conduct in the classroom: http://www.kean.edu/KU/Code-of-Conduct

Campus Alert

This is the University's emergency notification system (www.mir3.com/kean), you are urged to register with the system in order to be informed of campus emergencies, weather notices, and other announcements.

Kean Email Account

All students must have a valid Kean e-mail account. For those who do not already have one, forms are available on-line at http://www.kean.edu/KU/Forms-OCIS; click on E-mail Account Request Form.

Remember your attitude is the key to success in this class.