

**HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
COURSE OUTLINE 2011-12**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES 2130 (551)**

**An Introduction to the Living Religions of the World**

**Instructor:** Dr. Bill Acres, TA: Sharon Lindenberger

**Office:** Room V134

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**Class Schedule:** 7-8:50 pm (551)

**Room:** W12

**Office Hours:** Wed: Noon-2pm,

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**Purpose of the Course:**

The purpose of the course is to develop students' understanding of the living religions of the world with a major emphasis on their origins, historical development, teachings and practices. The current practices of these religions, both within their region (country) of origin, and abroad, will be discussed.

Religions are not "linear" or logical. Much of the material will be presented in a linear fashion, but there are thematic areas of some complexity—of special note are the concepts of Brahman-Atman in Hindu Upanishads; Anatta in Buddhism; Sacraments and the Trinity in Christianity; but, otherwise, the materials are accessible. There are great similarities between religions but in this course there is no attempt to homogenize them. Canada is a thriving multicultural society and the study of religions is a part of Canadian culture and society.

**Course Content:**

The course provides a detailed analysis of the major beliefs and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Bahai.

**Course Delivery:**

Most materials will be covered in lectures and discussion sessions. It is a very good policy to attend all lectures—history shows that the highest grades follow nearly perfect attendance. The room is a wired amphitheatre, meaning that even whispering can be heard there. There will also be various guest lecturers throughout the duration of the course. Attendance is mandatory and any material presented is testable. These speakers have been brought in to enrich your learning experience by allowing students to encounter and dialogue with someone from within the faith.

**Required Text**

1. *A Concise Introduction to World Religions*, ed. W. G. Oxtoby & A. F. Segal. New York: Oxford University Press. 2007.

### **Course Evaluation:**

1<sup>st</sup> Term Test: 1 Hour: M/C with Essay (value 40%) Hindu, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikh

2<sup>nd</sup> Term Test: 1 Hour: M/C with Essay (value 20%) Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism

Final Examination: 2 hours: M/C with Essay (value 40%) Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Baha'I

**Term Test:** A short test of one hour will be given in each term covering lecture and text-book materials. These are scheduled for: First term: **Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 7-8 pm. 551**; Second Term: **Wednesday, February 1, 2012, 551 7-8. All written in the Kingsmill Room.**

**Final Exam:** A two-hour exam will be written during the Exam Period in April. Students will check the Registrar's examination timetable for the day, hour, and location of the examination. **It will include a short essay.**

### **Items to Note:**

1. The term test will comprise of multiple choice, true/false questions and an essay. The final examination will contain multiple choice, true/false questions and an essay question.

Students are **entirely responsible for the content of their Scantron, as reviews of the Scantrons are disallowed.**

2. Any student who fails to write an examination on the scheduled date and time will be given zero on that examination.

3. **Special Examination:** The policy of Huron University College is as follows:

**PLEASE NOTE VERY CAREFULLY: the Instructor cannot give special examinations without documentation.**

'A special examination is any examination other than the regularly scheduled examination. Special exams will be allowed only on receipt of medical documentation verifying a serious illness that kept the student from writing the exam as originally scheduled. Such documentation is strictly confidential and kept in the student's file. In the case of missing a final exam for documented medical reasons, a special exam will be set within thirty days.

'Special examinations will never be granted under the following circumstances: employment interviews, weddings, bar mitzvahs, family reunions, vacations, misreading the exam timetable, oversleeping. Neither will examinations be granted in order to facilitate transportation arrangements, such as booking flights home for Christmas or summer vacation. It is the policy of Huron University College to discourage informal arrangements by faculty which circumvent this regulation.' As the tests I and II are scheduled on Wednesdays in class time. Therefore, it is students' **ONLY** priority at that time to attend class. Midterm conflicts will not be considered reason for special examinations, and must be negotiated with any Instructor whose scheduling postdates this outline (September 8, 2011). All tests are held in the Kingsmill Common Room, Huron University College. They are proctored, and **no questions are allowed during the test.** If there is an error on the test, **not in perceived content but in form (numbering etc)**, please notify the proctor **AFTER** the test—the Proctor will tell the Instructor and the error will be noted on the Scantron master key.

#### **4. Prerequisite Information:**

It is the student's responsibility for ensuring that he/she has successfully met the course prerequisite or has obtained special permission from the Dean of their Faculty. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from the Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

#### **5. Plagiarism:**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is an academic offence and will be treated as such. If in any doubt as to the nature of this offence, consult your instructor or the Dartmouth Handbook on Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgement available in the Huron University College Library. Plagiarism software may be used in this course. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form.

**Counselling:** Religious Studies students requiring counselling about their program of study or related matters (eg. Appeals, letters of permission, special permission) should contact, **Dr Trish Fulton, Dean, FASS, Huron University College.**

### **Course Schedule**

#### **September 2011**

**14: Intro: Acres**  
**21: The Indian religions overview and Hindu I**  
**28: Hinduism II:**

#### **October 2011**

**5: Hinduism III and Buddhism Acres**  
**12: Buddhism II: Acres**  
**19: Jain Lecture, Kingsmill, Dr. Gogri**  
**26: Jain and Sikh, Dr. Sushil Jain**

#### **November 2011**

**2: Sikh religion II: Guest Lecturer TBA**  
**9: Field Trip to Mandar**  
**16: Term Test #1 - 40 %**  
**23: No class**  
**29-30: London Jewish Film Festival**  
**30: Introduction to Chinese Religion**  
**December 2011**  
**7: Confucianism: Acres**

#### **January 2012**

**11: Taoism: Acres**  
**18: Shinto: Shinto**  
**25: Zoroastrianism Acres**

#### **February 2012**

**1: Test No 2, 20%**  
**8: Judaism and Monotheism**  
**15: Judaism II**  
**22: Conference Week**  
**29: Christianity I**

#### **March 2012**

**7: Christianity II**  
**14: Islam I: Acres**  
**21: Islam II: Guest Speaker TBA**  
**28: Baha'I faith:**

#### **April 2012**

**4: The Review**  
**Final Exam: 40%**

**The above is the general pattern for the lectures: much of the material will overlap into the following week. Not all of the material on the following sheet will be covered in**

**class. Each student must, therefore, read the appropriate required text in addition to the lecture material.**

### **Religious Studies: Lecture materials covered.**

#### **Introduction:**

1. What is religion?
2. Importance of understanding the world religions.
3. Characteristics of religion

#### **Hinduism:**

1. Origins: Historical development
2. Scriptures: Vedas, Upanishad, Bhagwad Gita
3. Major beliefs and practices:
  - a) The Absolute (Brahman) and the soul (Atman)
  - b) Bondage and paths of liberation
  - c) The law of Karma
  - d) The four goals of life
  - e) The four stages of life
  - f) Hindu trinity, daily worship (puja)
4. Hinduism at present

#### **Buddhism:**

1. Life of Gautma Buddha
2. Scriptures of Buddhism
3. Four Noble Truths: Middle path, Nirvana
4. Rituals, Symbols (three refuges)
5. Concept of No-self
6. Sects of Buddhism
7. Buddhism outside India

#### **Jainism:**

1. Life of Mahavira
2. Jain writings
3. Basic concepts: living and non-living
4. The five great vows, non-violence
5. Types of Jain practices

#### **Sikhism:**

1. The life of the founder, Guru Nanak
2. Political history of Sikhism
3. Scripture of Sikhism
4. Basic teachings
5. Sikh symbols (5 k's)
6. Variations within Sikhism
7. Sikh ceremonies and observances

### **Introduction to Chinese and Japanese religions**

#### **Confucius: Qong Zi's teachings**

1. Historical background to his writings

2. Life of Confucius: teacher
3. Literature of Confucianism: Analects
4. Teachings of Confucius: a) Ethical principles b) religious teachings
5. Confucianism and the modern world.

**Taoism:**

1. Origin and life of Lao Tzu
2. Scriptures of Taoism
3. Taoism as philosophy
4. Taoism as religion
5. Taoism today

**Shinto:**

1. Origin and historical development
2. Basic teachings: Kami, Nature, Human Beings
3. Forms of Shinto: Primitive, State (Tennoism) and Domestic (popular)
4. Religious festivals and observances
5. Shinto in present time

**Zoroastrianism:**

1. Life of Zoroaster
2. Zoroastrian Scriptures
3. Basic Teachings and Practices: a) Nature of God; b) Zoroastrian Ethics and Humans; c) Worship and Rituals; d) Tower of Silence

**Judaism:**

1. Historical background
2. Scripture: The Hebrew Bible
3. Basic Teachings and beliefs: The Absolute, the World, Humans
4. Jewish Observances and Festivals
5. Major groups of Judaism

**Christianity:**

1. Life of Jesus Christ
2. Scripture: The Bible
3. Major Teachings of Jesus: a) The Kingdom of God; b) Religious teachings; c) Ethical teachings; d) Trinity
4. Worship and Sacraments
5. Major groups of Christians

**Islam:**

1. Life of the Prophet Muhammed
2. Scripture: The Quran
3. Major beliefs and the five Pillars of Wisdom
4. Islamic Observations and Festivals'
5. Sects of Islam

**Bahai:**

1. Origin and development of Bahai
2. Life of the Founder: Bahauallah
3. Major teachings and practices
4. Structure of Bahai faith
5. Bahai and the modern world.