

**HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

**COURSE OUTLINE 2018-19**

**Acres**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES 2130 (550)**

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

**Instructor:** Dr. Bill Acres

**Office:** Acres, Room V134, Watson TBA (second term)

**Telephone:** Acres: 438-7224 x 608; email: [wacres@uwo.ca](mailto:wacres@uwo.ca), [bacres@gtm.net](mailto:bacres@gtm.net),

**Class Schedule (all year):** Thursdays 7-8:50 pm (550)

**Room:** W12

**Office Hours:** First term Thursdays. 4-5:30; 2<sup>nd</sup> term Tuesdays 1-2:30 at V134 (Valley Wing, Huron)

---

**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:**

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.

The course materials are the textbook (as below) and all materials are available to students on Sakai: Lecture notes, background notes, interviews with experts, review questions and answers, and other materials as needed (directions to visits). Please note: site visits are mandatory.

## **Assessments:**

**Two term tests of Scantron questions (40 and 20% , respectively) held in the Kingsmill Common Room, HUC, November 10, 2015, and January 26, 2016. In addition, a final examination will be scheduled during the examination period. Please note: Scantrons will not be reviewed as part of the assessment process. Scantrons will be processed *as filled in*. Reviews for each test, review questions and answers will be provided on Sakai.**

## **Required Text**

1. *A Concise Introduction to World Religions*, ed. W. G. Oxtoby & A. F. Segal. New York: Oxford University Press. 2012.

## **Items to Note:**

### **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.

### **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, **Rev. Dr. Todd Townshend., Dean, The Faculty of Theology, Huron University College.**

## **Course Schedule:**

### **September 2018**

**6: Intro: Acres, The Indian religions overview and Hindu I**

**13: Hinduism II**

**20: Hinduism III and Buddhism**

**27: Buddhism**

### **October 2018**

**4: no class: There will be an optional visit during October to the Sikh Gurdwara and Hindu Mandar on a Sunday. All are encouraged to attend. Rides and times TBA.**

**11: Reading week 8-12**

**18: Jain and Buddhism conclusion**

**26: Jain Lecture, Kingsmill Room, HUC 7:30pm-9:30pm (note slightly later time and refreshments to be served after the lecture—this is a small dinner, btw.)**

### **November 2018**

**1: Sikh**

**8: Term Test no 1. Kingsmill Room 7pm, 1 hour**

**15: Chinese Religions I Introduction**

**22: Confucius I**

**30: Tao**

### **January 2019**

**10: Tao (finish) and Chinese; Shinto (Japan):**

**17: Zoroastrianism**

**25: Test No 2, 20%, China, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Kingsmill Room, 7pm, 1 hr.**

**February 2019**

**8: Judaism and Monotheism Introduction**

**15: Judaism**

**22: Conference Week**

**March 2017**

**6: Christianity I**

**13: Christianity II (Chapel Visit)**

**20: Islam I**

**27: Islam II**

**Islam (Mosque visit)**

**April 2019**

**4: Mosque and Synagogue visit: 7-9:30 pm.**

**11: Bahai and review**

**Final Exam: 40%: Date and time will be posted on the Western Registrar's site in draft and final form. Please check both.**

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.

**Lecture materials covered by topic**

**Introduction to religion:**

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 Islam

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.