

COR 302 - Religion, Society, and the Individual
American Jewish University Campus in Israel
Young Judaea Year Course

Course Description

The emergence of multiculturalism over the last century has brought many philosophical and religious ideas into the modern consciousness. Particularly, teachings from the religions of South East Asia such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism have introduced concepts that are considered part of modern world. For example Karma and the centrality of meditation as a way of healthy living (mindfulness), play a central role in the lives of many. However, to truly appreciate why Eastern philosophies have become impactful, it is important to explore its roots and experience some of its major teachings.

This course is an exploration of Eastern philosophical teachings and how they manifest in modern society. It will ask questions such as: What are the origins of Buddhist teachings? Has Karma changed the modern perception of kindness? How does Raja Yoga and Sati end suffering? How did Guru Nanak influence the modern feminist movement? How has the concept of Ahimsa influenced modern eating habits?

Course Goals

1. Disabused of their social prejudices regarding other cultures.
2. Knowledgeable about and receptive to other cultures.
3. Familiar with the subject of religion.
4. Familiar with some standard methodologies in the study of religion.
5. Understanding of the Jewish perception of the phenomenon of religion and can distinguish world religions from one another in terms of their relationship to Judaism.
6. Knowledgeable about the basic principles of the analysis of texts.
7. Aware of the relative merits of World cultures.
8. Able to distinguish between a subjective view of religion and a detached analysis of a different culture

Course Objectives

1. Provide students with a broad understanding Eastern philosophical teachings.
2. Offer students an overview of the origins of Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.
3. Develop students' ability to critically read Eastern texts and consider their relevance in the modern world.
4. Explore the effect of Eastern philosophy on modern society and social movements.
5. Appreciate multiculturalism and the role it plays in their lives
6. Read and analyze texts concerning Eastern philosophical and religious teachings.
7. Distinguish between different approaches toward central concepts such as karma, dharma, samsara and meditation.
8. Formulate hypothesis for the popularity of Eastern philosophy in the modern world.
9. Practice mindfulness and evaluate its benefits in the context modern society.
10. Appraise the modern interpretation of Eastern philosophical concepts in relation to their origins.

Grading

1. Attendance and participation in course lectures and readings (15%).

2. Midterm examination (30%)
3. Final paper evaluating Eastern philosophical teachings and their place in the modern world (55%)

Topic 1: The Origins of Eastern Philosophies – Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism

Classes 1-2

Readings:

Gombrich, pp. 31-38

Harvey (1990), pp. 8-29

Topic 2: The Four Noble Truths

Class 3

Readings:

Harvey (2000), pp. 30-43

Topic 3: Samsara, Karma and Social Justice

Classes 4-5

Readings:

Chapple, pp.81-86

Harvey (2000), pp. 14-30

Reichenbach, pp. 63-78

Topic 4: The Five Precepts and Modern Ethics

Classes 5-6

Readings:

Kalupahana, pp 38-52

McMahan, pp. 89-102

Topic 5: Sati and Mindfulness – The Path to Inner Peace

Class 7-8

Readings:

Boccio, Chapters 4-5

Bronkhorst, pp. 78 – 112

McMahan, pp. 183-241

Purser, Forbes & Burke, pp. 47-63

Topic 6: Teachings of the Vedas

Classes 9

Readings:

Flood, pp. 36-53

Klostermaier, pp. 30-45

Topic 7: Dharma and Caste – The Problem with Destiny

Class 10

Readings:

Gupta, pp. 1-15

Hiltebeitel, pp. 11-29, 215-228

Klostermaier, pp. 17-30

Topic 8: Yoga – How to End Suffering

Classes 11-12

Readings:

Klostermaier, pp. 74-80

Vivekananda, pp. 28-33

Topic 9: Guru Nanak and Modernity

Class 13

Readings:

Grewal, pp. 1-31

Nesbitt & Kaur, pp. 46-60

Topic 10: Sewa – A Blueprint for Kindness in the Modern World

Class 14

Readings:

Haar & Kalsi, pp. 48-49

Cole, Chapter 9

Topic 11: The Impact of Buddhism on Modern Israeli Culture

Classes 15-16

Tatz, pp. 237-249

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- Tatz, A (2005). Letters to a Buddhist Jew
- Vivekananda, S (1999). Karma Yoga: the Yoga of Action