

# COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS: WORLDVIEW

**RELS-120-01**

**Spring Semester 2007**

Department of Religious Studies, College of the Holy Cross.

**Instructor:** Mathew N. Schmalz. Office: Smith 404; Office Phone: 793-2557; Office Hours: Monday 4-5; Tuesday 10-11; Wednesday 1-2; Friday 2-3; (you may also simply stop by or make an appointment any day except Thursday). E-mail: [mschmalz@holycross.edu](mailto:mschmalz@holycross.edu). You may call me “Mat,” “Mr. Mat,” “Professor Mat,” or “Professor Schmalz”—whatever you understand to be most comfortable and appropriate (most choose Professor Mat).

**Description:** This course examines Hinduism, Islam and Christianity within the perspective of the comparative study of religion. The course will initially introduce students to basic themes within the worldview of each of these three traditions. As the course progresses, we will integrate themes from the comparative study of religion to provide “interpretative frames” for understanding diverse religious world views. This course is introductory in nature and requires no previous knowledge of Hinduism, Islam or Christianity.

**Goals:** This course has three overall objectives:

- 1) To present a general introduction to the Hindu, Islamic and Christian worldviews.
- 2) To introduce students to some of the central concepts in the comparative study of religion.
- 3) To allow students to apply central concepts in the academic study of religion to a comparative examination of these three religious world views.

**Format:** Lecture and Discussion.

**Evaluation:** There are six (6) graded exercises: Three essays of 5-7 pages, two regular examinations and a final.

**Grading:** All assignments will be given a letter grade. When your final grade is calculated, the individual letter grades you have received will be converted into a GPA figure: 4.3 (A+); 4.0 (A); 3.7 (A-); 3.3 (B+); 3.0 (B); 2.7 (B-); 2.3 (C+); 2.0 (C); 1.7 (C-); 1.3 (D +); 1 (D); 0 (F). Numerical examination grades will have these equivalents: 98-above (A+); 93-97 (A); 90-92 (A-); 88-89 (B+); 83-87 (B); 80-82 (B-); 78-79 (C+); 73-77 (C); 70-72 (C-); 69-68 (D+); 63-67 (D); 0-62 (F).

The papers and the midterm are weighted equally while the final has the equivalent of two graded assignments. The approximate percentages are as follows: Paper 1: 14%; Paper 2: 14%; Paper 3: 14%; Islam Examination: 14%; Hinduism Examination: 14%; Final Examination 28%. Accordingly, an example of the calculation of a final grade would be as follows: Paper 1: B+ (3.3); Paper 2: B (3); Paper 3 B (3); Islam Examination A- (3.7); Hinduism Examination B+ (3.3); Final B (3 x 2=6) Total: divided by 7 equals 3.18 (B). Grades will only be rounded up for class participation on the basis given below. **Please note you must fully reach a grade to earn it—hence a 3.6 is a “B+” even though it is closer to an “A-“ (3.7).**

**Class Participation:** Class participation will contribute positively to your final grade. For purposes of evaluating class participation, there are the following categories:

*Consistent and substantive:* Consistently intelligent contributions to class discussions over the course of the semester will automatically raise your final grade one-half letter regardless of how close your average is to a higher grade (i.e. From a 3.0 to a 3.3)

*Inconsistent and substantive:* Perceptive contributions to class discussions, limited to a particular section of the course or made sporadically throughout the semester, will raise your grade if you are at least half-way to a higher grade (i.e. if your final average is 3.15, which is a B, your grade will be raised to 3.3, a B+--a final average of 3.10 would not merit a raised grade given this level of class participation)

*Consistent:* Consistent participation in class discussion, whether in the form of questions or comments, will raise your final grade if you are within one-tenth of a point of a higher grade (i.e. if your final average is 3.2, which is ordinarily a "B" would become a 3.3, a "B+").

*Inconsistent and No Participation:* No extra consideration will be given—your final average is your final grade. Please note again that you must fully reach the "level" of a particular grade to earn it—thus a 3.6 is a "B+," not an "A-" (3.7).

**Submission of Papers:** Each paper must have a centered title with the student's name and class on the lines below. Thus:

FLUIDITY AND STRATIFICATION IN THE HINDU WORLD VIEW

Jane Doe  
Class of 2007

Papers must be submitted as an email attachment in a word processing program that can be read by Microsoft Word. You may also cut and paste your papers into the email. Papers normally will be due via email on the date given by 10 pm. Students will have a 1 hour "grace" period to turn in their papers (i.e. by 11 pm). After the grace period, papers will be marked late, unless an extension has been granted (see below). Late work will be penalized one full letter grade per day. **All papers will be archived to deter collusion.**

**Class Policies:** Students are required to complete the assigned readings before the class period in which they are discussed. Attendance is also required and I will have a sign in sheet available before each class. **Unexcused absences beyond the limit will adversely affect your final grade by one-half letter grade (i.e. from a B to a B-).** So, if you have four (4) unexcused absences or more, your grade will be reduced by one-half letter—I will not, however, reduce your grade beyond that amount. Since the syllabus is subject to modification and change, students are also responsible for these changes even if they were not able to attend the class in which the changes were announced.

**Excusing Absences:** If you wish to have an initial absence excused, you may simply contact me within one week of the absence. Beyond this initial absence, please contact your Class Dean within two weeks of the absence to provide a written excuse. Members of athletic teams should provide a note from the appropriate coach.

**Incivility:** Respecting the learning process is the foundation of the work we do in class. "Incivility" refers to behavior that does not show respect to the learning process. "Incivility"

includes: lateness, overt rudeness, disrupting class by talking over other students or the instructor, not coming prepared to class, sleeping in class, allowing cell phones to ring in class, and similar behavior. If you arrive late to class, please take your seat as quickly as possible and put your name on the sign-in sheet at the end of class. If you have to leave class early, be sure to inform me beforehand. Please be aware that I usually do not write recommendations for students who engage in uncivil behavior, regardless of how high their final grade may be.

***Intellectual Honesty:*** I advise all students to be aware of the College's policies pertaining to intellectual honesty. All students will be required to testify to the integrity of their work in a written statement. In order to complete the assignments for this class, students will not need to consult any other source beyond the required texts. If a student does rely upon an outside source for an assignment, he or she should simply cite that work in a parenthetical note (see "Citation Rules" below). **Not citing an outside source that you draw upon will constitute a violation of The College's Academic Honesty Policy. I reserve the right to submit all papers to an online source that will check for plagiarism.** Work that violates the College's Academic Honesty Policy will receive the grade of F (0). The student will also then be subject to administrative sanctions ranging from academic probation to expulsion.

**To be sure to avoid the possibility of collusion, I would strongly advise all students not to share written work before it is handed in.** If you do talk to your fellow students about a particular assignment, be sure to give appropriate acknowledgment to your peers in the final drafts of your written assignments if their help has been particularly useful to you in your writing. If such acknowledgements are not made, it could constitute a case of intellectual dishonesty. If such acknowledgements are not made, it could constitute a case of intellectual dishonesty. **Students are absolutely forbidden from sharing a graded paper with a student who has yet to complete the assignment (i.e. with a student who has an extension). Students who violate this standard will be charged with collusion.**

***Citation Rules:***

- 1) For interpretative points that come directly from one of the course textbooks, a parenthetical citation such as (Denny, 42) will be acceptable. You do not need to cite "facts" such as when Muhammad was born or how many *varnas* there are in Hinduism.
- 2) For interpretative points that are not your own and instead come from a lecture, a parenthetical citation such as (Schmalz 10/12/03) will be acceptable. Again you do not need to cite "facts."
- 3) For interpretative points that are not your own and instead come from another student, a parenthetical citation such as (Jane Doe 10/12/06)) will be acceptable.
- 4) For all internet sources you must use footnotes and, in the footnote, include the entire address and the date accessed. **You are strongly discouraged from using internet sources.**
- 5) For all other print sources (such as books or journal articles), you must use footnotes that include the author's full name, article or book title, journal title if applicable, publisher, date and page number. **You are strongly discouraged from using other print sources not identified in the syllabus.**

Examples:

Book: Darius Cooper, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 25.

Article: Mathew N. Schmalz, "Images of the Body in the Life and Death of a North Indian Catholic Catechist, *History of Religions* 39 (November): 177.

**ERes:** Documents for the course will be available on ERes accessed through the library's homepage. **The course password is "rapture."** Document names and passwords are included in the relevant section of the syllabus.

**Extensions:** All students are given the opportunity take advantage of a single extension of forty-eight hours (48) for any paper (this does not include the test or the final exam). **You must however e-mail or call me before the paper is due** in order to receive the extension (you do not need to provide reasons for the extension). This extension covers everything from personal emergencies to computer failure. **No other extension will be granted without the explicit written permission of the appropriate class Dean.**

**E-Mail:** Class announcements, outlines and assignments will usually be distributed by electronic mail. Please be sure to check your e-mail regularly.

**Required Texts:** Frederick Denny, *Islam*.  
Sandra Frankiel, *Christianity*.  
David Knipe, *Hinduism*.  
Martin Lings, *Muhammad*.  
R. K. Narayan, *Gods, Demons, and Others*.  
David Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*  
Edith Stein, *Essential Writings*.

## PLAN OF THE COURSE

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

January 17: *Introduction to the Course*

January 19: *Studying Islam after 9/11*

READING: Martin Lings, *Muhammad*, 1-5; Syed Hosain Nasr, "Islam and the Question of Violence."

(available via ERes: nasr)  
document password: islam

### II. ISLAM

#### WEEK 2: INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

January 22: *The Development of Islam*

READING: Martin Lings, *Muhammad*, 6-9, 15-26, 33-37; Frederick Denny, *Islam*, 1-39.

January 24: *The Five Pillars of Islam*

READING: Frederick Denny, *Islam*, 45-57; Martin Lings, *Muhammad*, 41-51.

January 26: *The Qoran*

READING: Frederick Denny, *Islam*, 40-45; 57-64; Selections from "The Cow," a Sura from the *Qoran*.

(available via ERes: cow)  
document password: islam

#### WEEK 3: THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW

January 29: *Umma, Sunna and Sharia*

READING: Frederick Denny, *Islam*, 57-76; Selections from the *Qoran*.

(available via ERes: cow)  
document password: islam

January 31: *Muslim Piety: The Rites of Muharram*

READING: Frederick Denny, *Islam*, 77-106; *Elegy to Husayn*.

(available via ERes: husayn)  
document password: islam

February 2: *Islamic Rites of Passage and Islam Today*

READING: Frederick Denny, *Islam*, 107-127.

#### WEEK 4: THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD

February 5: *The Life of Muhammad: Emigrations*

READING: Martin Lings, *Muhammad*, 64-66, 75-92, 96-131.

February 7: *The Life of Muhammad: War*

READING: Martin Lings, *Muhammad*, 135-152, 170-188, 215-246.

February 9: *The Life of Muhammad: Return to Mecca*

READING: Martin Lings, *Muhammad*, 247-256, 263-279, 291-312, 326-345.

### III. HINDUISM

#### WEEK 5: ANCIENT HINDUISM

February 12: *India in the Western Imagination*

READING: David Knipe, *Hinduism*, 1-11.

#### **February 14: Examination on Islam**

February 16: *The Vedic Worldview: The Primacy of Sacrifice.*

READING: David Knipe, *Hinduism*, 12-42; *The Purusha Sukta.*

(available via ERes: purusha)

document password: Hinduism

#### WEEK 6: THEMES IN THE HINDU WORLDVIEW

February 19: *The Upanishads: The Search for the True Self.*

READING: David Knipe, *Hinduism*, 42-46; Selections from the *Chandogya and Mundaka Upanishads*.

(available via ERes: upanishads)

document password: hinduism

February 21: *Medieval Bhakti: Losing the Self in Devotion*

READING: David Knipe, *Hinduism*, 47-74; Selections from the *Gitagovinda* by Jayadeva.

(available via ERes: krishna).

document password: Hinduism

#### **First Paper Due Via Email by 10pm**

February 23: *Listening to and Mythologizing the Universe*

READING: David Knipe, *Hinduism*, 75-90.

#### WEEK 7: HINDU MYTH AND RITUAL

February 26: *Dynamics of Hinduism: The Journey of a Lifebody*.  
READING: David Knipe, *Hinduism*,

February 28: *Lavana, Chudala, Yayati and Devi*  
READING: R. K. Narayan, *Gods, Demons and Others*, 15-63.

March 2: *Vishwamitra, Ravana, and Vamiki*  
READING: R. K. Narayan, *Gods, Demons and Others*, 64-84, 99-142.

#### WEEK 8: SPRING VACATION

#### WEEK 9: TRANSITION

March: 12: *Draupadi, Savitri, Shakuntala*  
READING: R. K. Narayan, *Gods, Demons and Others*, 143-164, 182-189, 202-216.  
119-144.

March: 14: *The History of Christianity*  
READING: Sandra Frankiel, *Christianity*, 1-56.

#### **March: 16: Examination on Hinduism**

### IV. CHRISTIANITY

#### WEEK 10: INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

March 19: *The History of Christianity*  
READING: Sandra Frankiel, *Christianity*, 1-56 (concludes).

March 21: *Structures of Christian Life: Salvation, Creed and Doctrine*  
READING: Sandra Frankiel, *Christianity*, 57-65; Selections from the *Luther's Commentary on the Apostle's Creed*, *The Statement of the Council of Trent*; *The Proclamation of Papal Infallibility*, *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the Dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary*.

(available via ERes: luther)  
document password: christianity

March 23: *The Structures of Christian Life: Ritual and Church*  
READING: Sandra Frankiel, *Christianity*, 65-83.

#### WEEK 11: CHRISTIANITY AND THE CROSS

March: 26: *Sanctity or Exploitation?*  
READING: Mathew N. Schmalz, "The Silent Body of Audrey Santo."

(available via ERes: Schmalz)  
document password: religion

#### **March 27: Second Paper Due via Email by 10 pm.**

March 28: *Divine Providence and Truth*  
READING: Edith Stein, *Essential Writings*, 35-93.

March 30: *Women and the Cross*  
READING: Edith Stein, *Essential Writings*, 94-158.

## V. THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION

### WEEK 12: INTRODUCTION TO THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION

April 2: *Introduction to the Academic Study of Religion*  
READING: Daniel J. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 3-16.

April 4: *Psychological Theories of Religion*  
READING: Daniel J. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 53-87.

April 6: No Class

### WEEK 13: PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

April 9: No Class

April 11: *Psychological Theories of Religion*.  
READING: Sigmund Freud, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices;" a selection from *Totem and Taboo*.

(available via ERes under freud1; freud2)  
document password: religion

April 13: *Sociological Theories of Religion*  
READING: Daniel J. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 85-117.

### WEEK 14: SOCIOLOGY AND CLASSIFYING RELIGIONS

April 16: *Sociological Theories of Religion*  
READING: Emile Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life."(selection)

(available via ERes: durkheim)  
document password: religion

#### **Third Paper Due Via Email by 10 pm**

April 18: *Marxist Theories of Religion*  
READING: Daniel J. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 118-148; a selection from Marx's "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right."

(available via ERes: marx)  
document password: religion.

April 20: *Max Weber*

READING: Daniel J. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 149-192.

#### WEEK 15: RELIGION AND CULTURE

April 23: *The Phenomenology of Religion*

Reading: Daniel J. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 193-228.

April 25: *The Phenomenology of Religion*

READING: Mircea Eliade, "Religion and the Modern Man's Anxiety."

(available via ERes: eliade)

document password: religion

April 27: *Religion as a Cultural System*

READING: Daniel J. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 260-conclusion; Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System."

(available via ERes; geertz)

document password: religion

#### WEEK 16: CONCLUSION

April: 30: *Review and/or Snow Day Make Up*

**May 7: Final Examination at 8:30 am**

**FIRST PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

Due: February 21, via email, by 10 pm.

(Please note the “grace period” and extension policy)

Please choose one (1) of the following assignments:

- 1) In an essay of between five to seven pages, characterize Muhammad as a leader. Your essay should be focused on qualities or themes in his leadership (like honesty, ability to take risks, perseverance, human insight, etc). Be careful not to simply summarize what Muhammad did during his life. You must organize your discussion of specific aspects of Muhammad’s life around overarching themes. In your conclusion, you should feel free to state your own opinion of Muhammad’s leadership qualities and reflect on whether you would have followed him.
- 2) In an essay of between five to seven pages, characterize Muhammad’s life in relation to his religious vision. How did embody or represent the values he preached?
- 3) The Reverend Jerry Falwell, in a controversial essay, argued that Muhammad was a “terrorist.” In response, many Muslims and Western scholars of Islam argued that such a view was offensive, irresponsible, and unsupported by the historical record. In an essay of between five to seven pages, reflect upon whether Muhammad could be characterized as a “terrorist.” In your essay, if you believe the term “terrorist” is a useful one, be sure to define it. However, if you believe the term is not useful be sure to explain your reasoning. Your essay will be evaluated on the basis of how well you engage the specifics of Muhammad’s life in relation to the question, and how well you engage the broader issue of religion and its connection to violence and the use of force.

Please note that I have used the assignments in the past but have archived all papers that I have received. Please do not “recycle” papers.

## SECOND PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Due: March 27, via email, by 10 pm.

(Please note the “grace period” and extension policy)

Please choose one (1) of the following assignments:

- 1) We have emphasized a variety of themes in our discussion of the Hindu world view. In any essay of between five to seven pages, apply at least two of these themes (i.e. classifying, recycling, swallowing, mythologizing, and listening) to any two stories from *Gods, Demons and Others*. In your essay, be sure to reflect upon the Hindu worldview as a whole and take care to move beyond simply summarizing the class discussion.
- 2) Compare and contrast Draupadi and Shakuntala and reflect upon what they reflect about traditional Hindu understandings of women.
- 3) Choose one (1) story from *Gods, Demons, and Others*, and “rewrite” it in a contemporary American setting. In addition to the rewrite of the story, you must include a one page “exegesis” of your rewrite that explains how it reworks central themes in the Hindu worldview. Your assignment will be evaluated on the basis of how creatively you rework the material to express themes we have identified in our discussion of the Hindu worldview.

Please note that I have used the assignments in the past but have archived all papers that I have received. Please do not “recycle” papers.

**THIRD PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

Due: April 16, via email, by 10 pm.

(Please note the “grace period” and extension policy)

Please choose one (1) of the following assignments:

- 1) In an essay of between five to seven pages, articulate and reflect upon Edith Stein’s understanding of what it means to be a “Christian.’
- 2) In an essay of between five to seven pages, reflect upon how Edith Stein would view the Audrey Santo phenomenon.
- 3) In an essay of between five to seven pages, reflect upon Edith Stein’s understanding and use of “the Cross” to articulate her understanding of suffering and its relationship to Christian belief and practice.
- 4) In an essay of between five to seven pages, articulate and reflect upon Edith Stein’s understanding of women. How would her views be received now?

Please note that I have used the assignments in the past but have archived all papers that I have received. Please do not “recycle” papers.

## ISLAM EXAMINATION

### I. VOCABULARY

You are responsible for knowing the definitions of the following terms. I will choose twenty from this list and ask you to give a definition in one sentence or less.

Shahada (write out entire phrase)

Salat

Zakat

Sawm

Hajj

Hijra (you must give the year)

Umma

Mecca

Ali

Khadija

Gabriel

Quran

Ka'ba/Ka'bah

Husayn

Yathrib

Karbala

Uhud

Badr

Bani Qurayzah

Aisha/Aishah

Buraq

Tawhid

Fitra

### II. SHORT ESSAYS

I will ask you four (4) of the following questions. Answers should be around two paragraphs long. Your answers will be evaluated in relation to the information identified as significance in the relevant lecture (s)

- 1) Briefly discuss the veneration of Husayn, son of Ali, and reflect upon its religious significance.
- 2) What is Muhammad's night journey and why is it significant?
- 3) To what extent can Islam be understood as an orthoprax religion? Justify your answer with specific examples from the Islamic tradition.
- 4) Describe the context, aftermath, and significance of the Battle of the Trench.
- 5) Describe the context, aftermath, and significance of the Battle of Uhud.
- 6) Describe the context, aftermath and significance of the Battle of Badr.
- 7) Identify three important aspects of Islam expressed in the Surah "The Cow."

## HINDUISM EXAMINATION

### I. VOCABULARY

You are responsible for knowing the definitions of the following terms. I will choose twenty from this list and ask you to give a definition in one sentence or less.

Samsara  
Karma  
Moksa  
Brahmacarya  
Grihastha  
Vanaprastha  
Samnyasa  
Kama  
Artha  
Dharma  
Veda  
Rig Veda  
Rita  
Agni  
Purusha  
Varna  
Brahmin  
Kshatriya  
Vaishya  
Shudra  
Tapas  
Atman  
Karma  
Brahma  
Shiva  
Kali  
Vishnu  
Avatar  
Krishna  
Gopis  
Radha  
Yuga  
Guna  
Sattva  
Rajas  
Tamas  
Puja  
Linga  
Samskara  
Nazar  
Upanayana  
Sraddha

## II. SHORT ESSAYS

I will ask you four (4) of the following questions. Answers should be around two paragraphs long. Your answers will be evaluated in relation to the information identified as significance in the relevant lecture (s)

- 1) What does David Knipe mean by lifebody and what are crucial stages in the “journey of a lifebody.”
- 2) Explain the Vedic understanding of sacrifice with reference to the themes we have discussed in class
- 3) What does Knipe mean by “listening to the universe.” In your answer please give at least three examples.
- 4) Explain the concept of bhakti with reference to the god Krishna and two religious rituals or activities.
- 5) In “classifying the universe,” David Knipe discusses Hindu classificatory schemes: describe three Hindu classificatory schemes and discuss, briefly, how they are interrelated (refer to the chart I distributed in class which is also in Knipe’s textbook).
- 6) Explain the crucial elements in Hindu temple worship.
- 7) Summarize one story (of your choice) *from Gods, Demons, and Others*.