

World Religions

Where is the knowledge that is lost in information?

Where is the wisdom that is lost in knowledge?

T. S. Eliot

This is a course about the value of the world's great wisdom traditions and about the eternal values of humanity as revealed through these traditions. It is not a course about the history of religion or about religious institutions. It is a course that delves deeply into the great faiths and explores their belief systems at the most essential levels. Like an art or music appreciation course, we will look at the best, rather than the worst, our subject has to offer. In the words of scholar Huston Smith, "Religion is not primarily a matter of facts; it is a matter of meanings," and we will attempt to comprehend those meanings as they have welled up in human beings since the beginning of time. We will honor all faith traditions and will approach our work with open minds and open hearts.

Essential Questions:

- What do the world's religions tell us about ultimate reality and the meaning of existence?
- How do the world's religions address the basic questions of the human race: Where are we? Why are we here? What does it all mean? What are we supposed to do?
- In what way are the world's religions similar and different?

Readings:

- *The World's Religions*, Huston Smith
- *The Enlightened Heart: An Anthology of Sacred Poetry*, Stephen Mitchell (selections)
- *Charlotte's Web*, E. B. White

Judaism

- *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, Harold Kushner
- *The World's Wisdom*, Philip Novak, editor, including:

Selections from the books of Genesis and Exodus; passages from the books of the Prophets; selected Psalms; selections from the book of Job; selected writings of contemporary authors (Albert Einstein, Herman Wouk, Elie Wiesel, and Martin Luther King, Jr.).

Christianity

- *Walking Across Egypt*, Clyde Edgerton
- *The Gospel of Thomas*, John Dart and Ray Riegert
- *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple*, James Carse (selections)
- *The World's Wisdom*, Philip Novak, editor, including:

Passages from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John on the life and teachings of Jesus; the Nicene Creed; selections by St. Francis of Assisi; selections by Meister Eckhart; selections by Thomas Merton.

Islam

- *The World's Wisdom*, Philip Novak, editor, including:
Passages from The *Qur'an*, including: The Suras of Mecca and Medina; the Five Elements of Islamic Faith; the Five Pillars of Islam; *Jihad*; selections on Islamic society; selections on kindness, speech, nonviolence, women, and learning; mystical verses; Selected poetry of Jelaluddin Rumi; "Letter From Mecca" by Malcolm X.

Hinduism

- *The World's Wisdom*, Philip Novak, editor, including:
Passages from the early *Vedas*; selections from the *Upanishads*; selections from the *Bhagavad-Gita*; selections from the works of Ramakrishna.

Buddhism

- *Siddhartha*, Hermann Hesse
- *The World's Wisdom*, Philip Novak, editor, including:
The Instructive Legend of the Buddha's Life; Core Doctrines of Buddhism; selections from the Tibetan Book of the Dead; passages from various Zen works, including "The Secret of the Flower," koans, and the "Wisdom of Zen Masters."

Confucianism

- *The World's Wisdom*, Philip Novak, editor, including:
Passages by Confucius, Li, and Mencius; letters of Cheng Panch'iao to His Brother Mo; various Chinese proverbs.

Taoism

- *The Tao of Pooh*, Benjamin Hoff
- *The World's Wisdom*, Philip Novak, editor, including:
Selected chapters of the *Tao Te Ching*; selected writings of Hua Hu Ching.

Primal Religious Traditions

- *The World's Wisdom*, Philip Novak, editor, including:
Sayings of Black Elk; The Story of Jumping Mouse.

Film Presentations:

- *The Wisdom of Faith* (Interviews with Huston Smith by Bill Moyers)
- *The Power of Myth* (Interviews with Joseph Campbell by Bill Moyers)
- *The Mission*
- *Kundun*