

 Mission College Logo

# Fall 2013

## Philosophy 33 -- Comparative Survey of World Religions (#804)

**Enrolled students log on for the ETUDES portal**

 Cao Dai Temple, Saigon

Cao Dai Temple outside Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)  
*click on the photo for why I chose it for this site*

 Doug  
McFerran  
photo

Doug McFerran

- email: [dmcf34@yahoo.com](mailto:dmcf34@yahoo.com)
- office hours are online through email (I try to respond within 24 hours but I attempt to be available for more immediate contact from 9 to 10:30 on Monday mornings)
- phone: 818-364-7710

***There is no text required. All materials are available online.***

*Additional resources:* [Mission College Library Resources](#), [Religion Facts Chart](#), [Pew Forum on Religion in American Culture](#)

*As students at the college you have access to a variety of electronic resources; for some you will need a user ID and password available through the library*

### ***Student Learning Outcomes (what you should be able to do by the end of the course):***

There are seven major traditions discussed: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Other traditions may be discussed as examples of general points being made about how traditions appear or change.

#### **1. Demonstrate knowledge of the history and beliefs of the seven major religious traditions.**

-- This includes both the actual history and the legends passed down as part of the tradition. For instance, in the study of Islam we have the historical facts about Muhammad and we have traditional beliefs that involve supernatural events, such as Muhammad's ascent into heaven at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

#### **2. Apply the historical/critical method to analysis of the seven major religious traditions.**

-- What we attempt to do is look at religious traditions as cultural products so that the expectations of a particular time and place play an important role in understanding both the beliefs and the practices of each tradition. This also involves being able to study each tradition as a significant factor in the events of the cultures in which these traditions appear or where they have been adopted. For instance, the history of Western Europe from the fourth century on was first shaped by the acceptance of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire and then reshaped with the Protestant Reformation. What we want to look at to some extent is the manner in which religions both change these cultures and are changed by them.

#### **3. Compare and contrast with the philosophies arising within each religion.**

-- Differing beliefs about the supernatural raise a number of questions about reality and values. For instance, the Indian concept of reincarnation brings up the issue of what we mean by personal identity (what makes individuals who they are, and what should be their place in a society).

In addition, other things that I would expect you to do by the end of the course are:

- explain the key differences between Asian and Western religious outlooks
- compare and contrast traditions in which one originates as an intended reform of the other
- discuss whether all religions can be defined in terms of common elements
- explain the role of monasticism in those traditions in which it appears

### ***Internet requirements:***

We will be using [Etudes as the CMS \(content management system\) for the course](#), and all activities will be through this portal. However, I recommend that you bookmark this

Internetlogic site as a back-up in case you have any problems in accessing the lecture material on the Etudes site.

Since email contact is an important feature in the course, I recommend that you set up a distinct account with Yahoo or Hotmail or some other provider (these are all free) if you otherwise use a spam filter that might keep messages from reaching you. Also, please be sure to check your junk mail in case your email provider does treat messages delivered through Moodle as spam (unfortunately, this does happen).

### **Grading:**

You are expected to read the material posted for each week for the course and to participate in the activities indicated. For each week apart from the last I will ask you to tell me something about what you have been doing through a weekly log as indicated on the [Etudes site](#), and at various times in the course I will also ask you to take part in discussion forums through the [Etudes site](#). These are basic activities with the logs worth 2 points each and the forums worth from 3 to 5 points each with a combined total of 50 points possible. In addition I ask you to submit a separate project for each part of the course. You will have a set of options, some of which include working collaboratively with other students. Full participation in each project is worth 10 points toward your total.

Your midterm and your final will each be worth 15 points toward your total. Both these exams, which will involve objective (true/false or multiple choice) questions as well as one or more short essays, will be done online through the Moodle portal.

The maximum number of points available through the course is 100. A=85-100, B=75-84, C=65-74, D=55-64.

### **Additional FAQ's for his course:**

*(OK, these may not be questions students do ask but the ones that they should ask)*

#### **1. What kind of computer access should I have?**

Ideally you would have a home computer with fast, reliable Internet access. While it is possible to make use of the computers at a public library or the computer stations available at Mission College, both have limitations or restrictions that could make it more difficult to complete the work required for this course. A computer at your place of work may be available, but you need to make sure that your employer will allow personal use in this way. For those with laptops WiFi is increasingly available, often at no cost at places such as Borders or Starbucks, but the setting may not always be conducive to quiet study.

#### **2. How much time should I expect to spend on the class each week?**

In designing a course the standard rule has been that for each hour of lecture there should be three hours of outside work (reading the textbook, preparing assignments, etc). Since this is a three-unit class in which the lecture material is online, we might say that ideally you should be spending from nine to twelve hours a week with your reading and other activities. I know that most likely this is no longer a realistic expectation, but at the same time just allowing two or three hours is definitely inadequate. You will need to read, and the lecture material includes links to additional online sources that I expect you to look at. You should be taking

notes as you read (there are review questions to guide you on what to look for), and for best results the time for the course should be spread out during the week so as to allow the material to be better absorbed.

**3. Let's say I am taking five classes and I also have a job. I am taking an online class because it should demand less time and I will be better able to fit the work into my busy schedule. Am I wrong in my expectations?**

Quite possibly. The only difference really is that you are not commuting to a classroom and sitting in it for a few hours a week. Because you do not have to be in a fixed place at a fixed time, the danger is that you will put off what you need to do for your online class(es), which may in fact be as demanding as anything in a face-to-face classroom. As often as not, an online course may actually be more difficult because as a student you have to take the initiative in determining how best to manage the process of mastering the material.

**4. What should be my level of proficiency in reading and writing in order to do well in this class?**

While there are no prerequisites for this course, It would definitely be best to have completed English 101 with at least a "C" because of the amount of reading and writing. Also the collaborative project requires knowledge of what is expected in any college paper (especially how to indicate sources) , and this should be something covered in your English 101.

**5. I am not especially religious. Will that be a problem in this class?**

Not at all. This is a course that presents the beliefs and practices of a number of major traditions, but you are not expected to make any judgments about which may be "right" or "wrong," much less change any outlook you now have. What is important is that in the class there is a respect for those who are believers as well as those who are not.

**6. I do think of myself as being very sincere in my own religious beliefs, yet in this class I realize I am going to be exposed to views that I find definitely incompatible with my own. Will that be a problem?**

See my answer to the last question. OK, that may be too flip a reply, since it is the individual holding definite beliefs who may be most disturbed by what we do in the class. For example, someone accepting Jesus as a personal savior might well be offended by a presentation in which Christian teachings are not given some kind of precedence. After all, should it not be my duty as a philosophy instructor to present the truth, not just different points of view?

I am not going to try to answer that here. Instead, I am going to use it as the basis for the first of the required forum discussions during the semester.

*YOUR SCHEDULE FOR WHAT TO READ  
(other required assignments are on the Etudes site)*

<i>Weeks beginning</i>	Topic (with links to the study guide)	
August 26	<a href="#">What is this course about?</a>	

for those with broadband access I recommend subscribing to the following podcasts through (helpful): <a href="#">Revealing World Religions</a>		
September 9	<a href="#">The Hindu tradition(s)</a>	<a href="#">The</a>
September 23	<a href="#">Buddhism</a>	<a href="#">The</a>
October 7	<a href="#">Confucianism and Daoism</a>	<a href="#">Ch</a> <a href="#">E</a> <a href="#">reviewir</a>
<p><i>The midterm exam will be online to be submitted from 9 PM Monday, October 21 to 9 PM Tuesday</i></p> <p><a href="#">Example questions from past midterms</a> <a href="#">Additional review items</a></p>		
October 21	<a href="#">Judaism</a>	
November 4	<a href="#">Christianity</a>	<a href="#">The</a> <a href="#">Defi</a>
November 18	<a href="#">Islam</a>	
December 2	<a href="#">New religious movements</a>	
<p><i>The final exam will be online to be submitted from 9 PM Monday, December 9 to 9 PM Tuesday</i></p> <p><a href="#">Example questions from past finals</a> <a href="#">Additional review items</a></p>		

***SOCIAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT POLICIES:***

**Cheating**- unauthorized material used during an examination (including electronic devices), changing answers after work has been graded, taking an exam for another student, forging or altering attendance sheets or other documents in the course, looking at another student's paper/scantron/essay/computer or exam with or without their approval is considered cheating. Any student caught cheating will receive a zero for the assignment/exam and referred to the Department chair and/or Student Services for further disciplinary action.

**Plagiarism**- Plagiarism is defined as the act of using ideas, words, or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own, without giving proper credit to the original sources. This includes definitions found online on Wikipedia, materials from blogs, twitter, or other similar electronic resources. The following examples are intended to be representative, but not all inclusive:

- failing to give credit by proper citations for others ideas and concepts, data and information, statements and phrases, and/or interpretations and conclusions.

- failing to use quotation marks when quoting directly from another, **whether it be a paragraph, a sentence, or a part thereof**

- Paraphrasing the expressions or thought by others without appropriate quotation marks or attribution

- Representing another's artistic/scholarly works such as essays, computer programs, photographs, paintings, drawings, sculptures or similar works as one's own.

**First offense, you will receive a zero for the assignment in question. Any further offenses may result in expulsion from the class, as determined by the disciplinary action from the Office of Student Services.**

**Recording devices** in the classroom- Section 78907 of the California Education Code prohibits the use of any electronic audio or video recording devices, without prior consent of the instructor. (including cell phones, laptops, MP3 players, and more)

**Reasonable Accommodation**: If you are a student with a disability and require accommodations, please send me a private email. The sooner I am aware of your eligibility for accommodations, the quicker I will be able to assist the DSP&S Office in providing them. For students requiring accommodations, the DSP&S Office at Mission College provides special assistance in areas like: registering for courses, specialized tutoring, note-taking, mobility assistance, special instruction, testing assistance, special equipment, special materials, instructor liaisons, community referrals and job placement. If you have not done so already, you may also wish to contact the DSP&S Office in Instructional Building 1018 (phone 818/364-7732 TTD 818/364-7861) and emailing or scanning me a letter stating the accommodations that are needed.