

MEADVILLE LOMBARD THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE RELIGION
A "CURRICULUM IN A BOX" FINAL PROJECT

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE:
MASTER OF ARTS (RELIGION)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/DEDICATION

To my beloved community of seminarians at Meadville Lombard:

You have all made and continue to make me a better person.

Being in community with you makes me more mindful, more healed, more aware, more conscientious, more loving and so much more.

Having a graduate school experience with you has made me less of a religious educator and more of teacher working with my students' and my own faith formation.

By being part of your lives, by hearing your stories, I'll never be able to think about things like inclusiveness, access, privilege, oppression, recovery, gender, justice, etc. in the same way.

By getting regular doses of all of you, I have become a better person, a better teacher, and a healthier soul.

To Dr. Mike Hogue:

You gave me ideas, and you helped me have my own.

You gave me encouragement, and helped me find my own confidence.

You gave me support, and helped me find my own strength.

Thank you, for everything.

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INTRODUCTION & COMMENTARY

PHIL 1304 – Introduction to Comparative Religion

FIRE – a poem by Judy Brown

*What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
a breathing space.
Too much of a good thing,
too many logs
packed in too tight
can douse the flames
almost as surely
as a pail of water would.*

*So building fires
requires attention
to the spaces in between,
as much as to the wood.*

*When we are able to build
open spaces
in the same way
we have learned
to pile on the logs,
then we can come to see how
it is fuel, and absence of the fuel
together, that make fire possible.*

*We only need to lay a log
lightly from time to time.*

*A fire
grows
simply because the space is there,
with openings
in which the flame
that knows just how it wants to burn
can find its way.*

Introduction

The poem above is a guiding document for this entire project. My goal for this proposed class is not merely to get my students to absorb and regurgitate miscellaneous facts about various world religions. Rather, I hope to first teach them multiple ways of approaching religious studies, and then introduce them to a multitude of world faith traditions, all the while encouraging them to engage with both the facts of the materials and their own ways of interpreting those facts. My goal is not to open their heads and pour in information, but to create the space for the fire to burn, both in the classroom and in the individual student. My plan is to create that space by developing an atmosphere of intentional co-learning, giving students multiple pathways to engage the material, and eschewing desired outcomes in favor of communal growth.

Syllabus

Any student considering taking my hypothetical course will have their first introduction to it through seeing the syllabus when they register for the semester. With that in mind, I made the syllabus as advertisement as much as possible. The school system (Austin Community College – ACC) in which I placed my course has a standard format syllabus, with required elements that I felt must be included, for the sake of authenticity, if nothing else.

One of the areas that I strayed from a standard was in allowing my students the freedom to use older editions of the books, or library copies, or copies from my own personal stock. As a graduate of a community college, I thoroughly understand how prohibitive textbook costs can be to some students. My goal with giving them this leeway

was to make my course more inclusive, welcoming to all regardless of socioeconomic status.

Another area where I strayed from the standard was in peppering the entire syllabus with casual language and small jokes. My goal for that approach was threefold. The first has to do with the marketing aspect. Some students might be drawn to the course simply because it looks like this teacher might have a slightly different approach than what they are used to. The second purpose has to do with the fact that many students do not read the entire syllabus for a course. My hope is that once they stumble across a small joke, they will feel more compelled to read the whole thing more thoroughly, looking for the next one. Those who fall for my little trap will have a much more complete understanding of the course. The third reason I took this particular approach is to lay the groundwork for a different type of class. By using more casual language in the syllabus, I am giving them a preview of a class built around small and large group discussion, rather than lectures.

One final area of the syllabus that will stand out to almost any student looking at it is the section titled 'Instructional Methods, Evaluation and Grading'. Almost all students look for this section of a syllabus before enrolling in the course. This is the one section that gives them, in one place, all that they will be expected to do during the semester, and how much each of those activities will affect their grade in the course. I will go into more detail later in this commentary about the grading rubric I am using, but it is worth mentioning here because it will stand out to most students. They will immediately see that there are only two tests, which are only worth twenty percent of their total grade. They will also notice that, while there are multiple papers to write, they are each individually worth a small percentage of the total grade. The bulk of their grade will

come from class participation. Again, this is setting the stage for a different kind of class, one based on active and engaged participation in discussion.

Textbook Selection

When selecting the textbooks that I would require my students to use, I needed at least two separate books; one to cover approaches to religious studies and another one to cover actual world religions. Upon researching what was available, however, I could not find one that dealt with religious studies in the manner I wished, so I was forced to use two different books for that requirement, bringing the total of required textbooks to three.

The first of the required textbooks is *Studying Religion: Introduction Through Cases*, by Gary Kessler. I selected this book because it does a thorough job of introducing students to the academic study of religion, including some of the historical issues that have arisen when that discipline has been practiced with a multiculturally insensitive touch. Moreover, the format he uses to demonstrate the various facets of religious study is based on actual examples from the world's religions. Because of this, it gives the students a glimpse in the first part of the semester of some of the actual faith traditions that they will be studying in the second half of the semester.

The second required textbook fills in what I feel is an important gap left by Kessler's textbook. That missing piece is the actual writings of some of the great classic theorists of religious studies. I feel that the students must be exposed to the thoughts and writings of those in who have built the discipline. This includes pioneers like Tylor and Frazer, as well as those who came later to counter some of those initial theories. It also includes some of the more dismissive scholars of religion, such as Marx and Freud, so that the students can learn how those dismissals were handled by other great minds. The textbook

that I selected to meet this need is *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*, by Daniel L. Pals.

The third and final required textbook is *Living Religions*, by Mary Pat Fisher. This won out over some of the others available in the field for a couple of different reasons. One is that she includes both indigenous religious practices and new religious movements, two sectors of the world's faith traditions that are often skipped over. The other reason Fisher's book was selected over others is the level of detail. It gives each of the religions it covers a thorough treatment, but not exhaustive. Bearing in mind that this hypothetical course is an introductory class, at the community college level, I did not want to overload the students with too much information about a few religious traditions at the expense of not having time to discuss others. Instead, this course is meant to serve as an introduction to multiple faith traditions, to whet the students' appetites so that they may pursue their own spiritual journeys after the course ends, armed with the basics that I will provide.

Class Sessions

The chapter titled "Class Outlines" is the heart of this entire project. That document breaks down each class session, explaining what will be happening each day as I interact with my students. Please refer to that document as you read this section.

There are a few important things to note that are not actually listed in the 'class outlines' document. The first is that, as each class session begins, while students are coming into the room and taking their seats, I will be playing music softly. The music will be pieces of religious music from the world's faith traditions. One day it will be Hindu *bhajans*, the next it will be Muslim *qiwwalis*, followed by medieval Gregorian

chanting. This brief exposure to music from the various world religions will not only introduce the students to religious music foreign to them and set a contemplative tone for the upcoming class session. It will also aid the students' neuroplasticity, making their brains literally more flexible and better capable of encountering and interacting with 'otherness'.¹

Another element of each class that is not mentioned in the 'class outlines' document is that somewhere in the room, during each class, will be an assortment of silent fidget toys, such as can be found at www.therapysshoppe.com. In the first class session, I will explain to the students that some of them may work better or be better able to pay attention if they are doing something with their hands. I will point out wherever I am keeping them, explain that they can use them if needed, returning them to their spot at the end of each class. This will help me to keep the focus on the actual conversations, assisting those with attention deficits or those who are more physical learners.²

Much important groundwork will be laid in our first two class sessions. The first exercise we will be doing will be a self-identifying exercise. The primary purpose of this is for me to have a better understanding of each of the students. The information gathered in this exercise will be for me alone, not shared with other students. By having a good understanding, from the beginning, of where my students are coming from, I will better be able to reach them, to speak to them in a language they can hear and understand.³

Realistically, I will not be able to tailor each semester to meet each individual student's

¹ Bruce Wexler. *Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology and Social Change* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 67.

² Dr. Mark Hicks. "The Method is the Message." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 14, 2013.

³ Dr. Mark Hicks. "Religious Education in a Changing World." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 29, 2014.

personal needs. But this information will help guide me as I participate in the small and large group discussions with them.

A secondary benefit of this exercise is that I will have information concerning the students' religious backgrounds, both the religion they were raised in and how they identify now, if different. This will give me the opportunity to speak to some of them beforehand and get permission from them to ask them to share their personal stories about the religions as we discuss them in class. Obviously, this can be tricky and I will have to follow a few important guidelines. First, I will never share a student's religious background with the class without their permission. Secondly, if that background is painful (a religious refugee with bitter memories of the faith they were raised in, for example), I will not ask that student to share in class. I will learn this in the one-on-one meetings that each student is required to schedule with me during the first few weeks of the semester.

The second exercise that we will be doing will continue allowing the students and myself to get to know each other. However, the second exercise will take it to a slightly more intimate level. By bumping up the level of sharing that they do with each other (while allowing them the opportunity to pass if they are uncomfortable), we will be setting the tone for the course's focus on small group discussion. They will learn a little bit of personal information about each other, creating small group bonds that will enable them to speak more freely in the classroom.⁴

This will lead nicely into the final exercise of our first day, establishing guidelines for class conduct. I will start the discussion with the handout titled 'suggested guidelines for

⁴ Dr. Mark Hicks. "The Method is the Message." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 15, 2013.

class interactions'. We will come to consensus on the guidelines that we are willing and able to hold ourselves and each other to, as we explore potentially fraught topics such as faith and spiritual practice. The agreed upon guidelines that we settle upon will be posted on Blackboard, as well as in the classroom, and we will revisit them regularly throughout the semester, adding as needed, and holding each other accountable for our actions and words towards each other. This should establish a space where the students know that they are free to ask questions, and have open and honest discussions.⁵

The final important element of the first day rests in a brief lecture from me, along with the handout titled 'know thyself'. In this lecture, I will point out to the students that they are each responsible for their own learning, and for their own ways of interacting with their fellow students. The handout gives them links to online resources to help them determine a) their own learning styles, b) their own personality types and c) potential religious biases they might carry. By being more aware of their own social locations, as well as what styles of learning suit them best, they will be better equipped to engage both with the material and with myself and their fellow classmates in discussion.⁶

The second day of class will continue laying important groundwork; including setting the standard pattern that each of our class sessions will follow. We will start with a brief check-in, to make sure everyone understands what we covered, to give them space to ask questions, and to remind everyone of the guidelines for interacting with each other that we have agreed upon.

⁵ Dr. Mark Hicks. "The Method is the Message." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 15, 2013.

⁶ Dr. Mark Hicks. "Walking the Talk." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 9, 2013.

That will be followed by small group discussion. Each of these small group discussion exercises will be made up of dyads and triads of students. Those clusters will not be self-selected. Rather, I will count off the students each time, into groups of two or three. It is important to note that I will be doing this counting differently each class session, to ensure that every student sits in small group discussion with every other student, forcing them to work and talk with those from other backgrounds, instead of friends they might have selected if left to their own devices. Another benefit of this forced mixing will be that it takes advantage of the wide diversity in community college. I expect my students will come from a decent variety of different backgrounds, ethnic/racial, socioeconomic, age, physical ability, etc. By ensuring that they are all constantly speaking to others, I am taking advantage of that diversity to create opportunities to engage with 'the other'. While the students sit and discuss in their small groups, guided in their conversations by the questions listed in the class outlines, I will move from group to group. I will be listening for points of confusion, or good examples of comprehension. I can then take that information with me into the large group discussion, or handle it in the small group if needed. I will also be looking for stalled or straying discussions, to help keep them on-track and to raise new possibilities for them to consider.

After the small group discussion, we will reconvene as a full class to discuss the thoughts that came up in the small groups. These full class discussions will be slightly more formal, with me in my role as instructor guiding the conversations to ensure we cover as much of the material as possible, while also allowing for the discussions to travel in new and potentially more profitable directions. The large group discussions will

cover the guiding questions from the first section of the class, and the students' responses to them, as well as the key terms that I feel the students should take away from their readings. These may be arguably the most important and most difficult part of the course for me, as instructor. I will need to be able to keep the students from straying too far afield, while allowing them space to interact with each other and engage the material in such a way that they all come away with a better understanding of it all.⁷

There will be one additional exercise on the second day, as another means of helping the students understand their own social locations. That exercise will consist of each of them filling out the handout titled 'Identity Map Worksheet'. This information will not be turned in or shared in class. It is simply another exercise for them to have a better grasp on who they are and where they are coming from. With that information, they are better prepared to interact with what may seem completely 'other' to them.⁸

Now note that we have laid the important groundwork for the course in the first two days. We have established guidelines for our interactions with each other. We have each learned more about each other and ourselves, including which learning style works best for each of us, as well as our personality types, guiding us in our interactions with each other. We have set the pattern for our class sessions (check-in, small group discussion, large group discussion). It should be noted here that the times listed in the class outlines document are guides, not strict limits. Part of the challenge for me as instructor will be to keep track of both the conversations and the clock, trying to keep both working well

⁷ Dr. Mark Hicks. "The Method is the Message." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 18, 2013.

⁸ Dr. Mark Hicks. "The Method is the Message." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 15, 2013.

together, while allowing everyone the space and time to work through whatever questions they might have.

Now that we have set the pattern, it is not necessary to examine each individual class session in this commentary. See the class outlines document for the actual content of each session, including guiding questions for small group discussion and key terms to be covered in large group discussion. Both of these items (guiding questions and key terms) will be projected or written on the board for the entirety of each class session. Instead of mentioning each class in this commentary, I will only mention those that stray from the set pattern.

The first class that does not fit the standard pattern we established in the first week is when the first paper (religious service visit number one) is due. In that class session, we will immediately start with dyad small group discussion. This will be the first time the students will practice active listening, where first one, then the other will talk about their experience. The second one will not be responding to the first one, they will simply share their own experience. By having the students tell their own stories to each other, in this manner (focused active listening), they will gain from the experience threefold. First, they will have their own experience of the religious service visit, which will be further impressed upon them by writing their papers and then sharing the experience story style. Secondly, they will get to hear about a different religious service experience from one of the classmates that they have started to bond with, getting exposed to yet another different faith tradition. Third, this sharing of story with each other will both bring the students even more together and deepen the experiences for all of them.⁹ After the active

⁹ Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 174.

listening sharing of their religious service visits, I will take up their papers and we will move into our customary routine. Everything about this class session will be done the same when the second religious service visit paper comes due.

The next class session that strays from the norm will be just before the midterm exam. We will have one entire class session set aside as review. This will be the opportunity for the students to ask clarifying questions and to further discuss some of the issues that they may not have fully grappled with. At the same time, it will be an opportunity for me to revisit the key terms and critical issues, ensuring that I have gotten across the concepts that I wanted to, and that the students understand them. Everything about this class session will be done the same for the class period just before the final exam.

The very next class period will be the actual midterm exam. This class period the students will have the entire eighty minutes to take their tests. I will be patrolling the room, looking for nervous test takers, offering insight and clarification where needed. I will keep the room quiet, so as to avoid distraction. If necessary, I can pull students out of the room to discuss something in more detail, or we can make an appointment for office hours to clarify any issues they had with the test. Everything about this class session will be done the same on the last day of class, when the students will be taking their final exams.

One recurring difference in the class session structure that will start in the second half of the semester will be leaving extra time for the students to share their own experiences. As we move into the actual study of world religions, I will be creating opportunities toward the end of each class session for the students to share. When we discuss Buddhism, for example, there will be an opportunity for any students who visited a

Buddhist religious service to share their experience with the class as a whole. There will also be time for any students who were either raised Buddhist or identify as Buddhist now (as identified in the self-identification exercise and one-on-one meetings from the beginning of the semester) to briefly share their experiences. Again, this sharing of stories will help the students to recognize wholly foreign religions and religious practices in a new, more personal way.¹⁰

The only other variation from the standard class sessions will come during the last two weeks of the course. That is when the third ‘paper’/final project will be due. Details on this project are below, in the section titled “Paper 3, Selective Textbook Analysis”. For now, all that needs to be said is that there will be two full class periods set aside for the students to do their presentations. They will each have five to ten minutes (depending on total enrollment) for their presentations, including questions afterwards from me and their fellow students. Those presentations should come in a wide variety of actual formats, some taking more or less time, and some needing more or less explanation. These two class sessions will need to be very flexible. If necessary, one or two students could have their presentations pushed back into the final exam review class session.

There is one final comment on all of the class sessions. As noted in the beginning of this section, the times listed are approximations. I will need to be fluid during these classes; allowing the discussions to unfold in such a way that the students are feeding off of each other’s experiences and thoughts, while guiding the discussions so that we cover the material needed. This avoidance of planned outcomes will require that I be willing and able to shuffle material from one class session to another, as need arises. Some days

¹⁰ Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 105.

we will not get to cover everything intended, while others we may get through before the time allotted (though I am sure it will be more of the former than the latter). I will be committed to having the necessary flexibility.

Papers 1 & 2, Religious Service Visits

One of the existing requirements for the version of this course that already exists at ACC is that the grading includes two visits to religious services covered in the course. However, even if that requirement were not present, I would still include this vital element. One of the most important things that I will be providing for my students is the opportunity to experience firsthand a faith tradition that they are wholly unfamiliar with. My approach to creating this experience is multi-layered.

The one bit of the existing requirements that I felt needed to be maintained was that the first paper could not be due until thirty percent of the course material was covered and the second paper had to wait until after fifty percent coverage. The reason I maintained these guidelines is because of the section of the paper in which they analyze the experience through the lens of one of the theorists they will have read about. It would be a disservice to have them do either of the visits too early to have a broad pallet of theorists to draw from.

The first layer of my approach that the students will deal with is the fact that for one of the visits they are allowed to attend a religious center in a faith tradition that they are familiar with (either raised in that tradition or identifying with it now). This allowance on my part is to help ease some of the more students into the experience. There are those that are timid, or introverted. There might be some religious refugees in my classroom that are

fearful and distrustful of all religious services. Giving them the option to participate in something they are familiar with may help them get over their initial fears.

However, since the two papers must come from completely different faith traditions, the second paper will ensure that each student is exposed to at least one religious service foreign to their experience. This will give them the opportunity to not just attend the service, but to meet and mingle with adherents from a different faith tradition that they might never have had the opportunity to interact with before.

The second layer of the experience that the students will address will be in their awareness. Because the papers require them to report on the facts of the service, they will need to be intentionally present during the service. They will need to be paying attention to whom is saying what and when, etc. Even in those services that they are familiar with, they may never have approached it with this level of awareness, keeping track of everything that is happening and how it fits into the larger picture of the faith.

The next, somewhat radically different, layer of the experience lies in the instructions to pay close attention to all of their senses. The instructions require them to report on all of their sensory input during the service; not just the facts, but what they smell, what they hear, what they feel. By forcing them to be aware of the ‘smells and bells’ of the service, I hope to move it from simply being an experience to being an aesthetic experience.¹¹ By engaging all of their senses, it will move away from just being a course requirement and towards being the kind of experience they will remember for the rest of their lives.

The final layer to the experience will force the students to engage with the coursework, specifically the viewpoints of the classic theorists that they will have read.

¹¹ Dr. Mark Hicks. "Religious Education in a Changing World." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 31, 2014.

The instructions tell the students to include in their paper an analysis of the service through the lens of any one of the theorists that we have covered by that point in the course. This section of their papers will help me to see how well each student comprehends the viewpoints that we have covered.

Paper 3, Selective Textbook Analysis

At this educational level, students should be expecting to read three hours per week for each hour of class time. In the case of my hypothetical course, with eighty minutes per class twice a week (which is the existing time frame for an ACC course), that means that they should be reading over seven hours per week. With that in mind, I did not feel bad assigning them one other book, in addition to the three required textbooks, to be read during the course of the semester. I give them a large selection to choose from (eight different books), allowing them the opportunity to approach the project through existing interests. Again, I give them the option to check out the books from a library or borrow from my own collection, keeping the course accessible for all socioeconomic backgrounds. The primary reason for this fourth textbook requirement is to expose the students to a more in-depth analysis of religion, from a particular viewpoint, from a modern theorist. This will allow them to take what they have learned from the classical theorists and apply it to current thinking.

The texts I selected for this final project, and why I selected them, are as follows:

- *God is Not One*, by Stephen Prothero
I selected this book because it is a relatively new (2010) study on multiple religions from a respected scholar in the field. It is an interesting counterpoint to the common trend of approaching comparative religious studies as ‘multiple pathways up the same mountain’.

- *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (Revised Edition), by Raimon Panikkar
I selected this book because it is a good exploration of useful dialogue across religious lines, focusing on understanding one's own religious traditions before attempting to discuss others.
- *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, by Kimberley Patton & Benjamin Ray
I selected this book because it is a defense of comparative religious studies in the post-modern age, with multiple selections from contemporary theorists discussing both approaches and difficulties.
- *Journey of the Universe*, by Brian Thomas Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker
I selected this book because it is an interesting telling of the story of the universe, from both macro and micro perspectives, leading one to examine how beliefs fit into the larger picture.
- *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, by Michael J. Murray and Michael C. Rea
I selected this book because it provides a contemporary examination of multiple religions from a specifically philosophical approach.
- *Supernatural Selection: How Religion Evolved*, by Matt Rossano
I selected this book because it presents a contemporary history of religion from a specifically evolutionary approach.
- *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, by Peter L. Berger
I selected this book because it is a good analysis of the interactions between society and religion from a specifically sociological viewpoint.
- *The Essential Mystics: The Soul's Journey into Truth*, edited by Andrew Harvey
I selected this book because it is a decent collection of writings from some of the mystics of multiple faith traditions.

Arguably, the most important element of this final project is that it is not required to be simply a paper. Instead, the instructions give the students the option of creating anything. This will give them the opportunity again to engage with the material in a way that feels most comfortable for them. It will also create a moment where they can allow their creativity to flow, to be artistic. Much like the sensory requirements of the first two

papers, this freedom to be creative will hopefully move the experience away from just being another piece of required homework and towards being a transformative aesthetic experience, something that they will carry with them for years to come.¹²

That said, there are still requirements to fulfill. They can be completely creative, and they can work in almost any medium, but they still must demonstrate to me (and their classmates) that they understood what they read and at least partially why I selected it (i.e. how it fits in with the rest of the coursework). They will also be required to demonstrate that they engaged with the optional text with an awareness of all the other material we will have covered by that point. This is the final project, not due until the last week of class, so they will have to tie it in one of the classic theorists we will have read, or some of the approaches to religious studies that we will have discussed, or one (or more) of the faith traditions that we will have explored. If evidence of that level of engagement is not readily visible in the piece itself, they will have the opportunity to demonstrate it in their explanation and question & answer session following the presentation.

Exams, Midterm & Final

Both the midterm and final exam only count for ten percent of the total grade. My decision to weight the coursework in this manner stems from my belief that rote memorization is less useful in changing lives than actually digging into the material. However, again following the existing standards of ACC, I am required to give the students both a midterm and a final exam. The existing testing system at ACC gives me the option of administering the test outside of standard class periods, during a week of

¹² Dr. Mark Hicks. "Religious Education in a Changing World." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 31, 2014.

school-wide testing. I struggled with that option, thinking that I could cover more material or the same material more deeply, by freeing up two whole class periods. But in the end, I felt that I had to respect my students' time, knowing that they have other demands on them. I decided to conduct the tests during regular class periods, giving them the entire eighty minutes to complete each test.

The midterm consists of twenty-eight short answer or multiple choice questions (with one freebie bonus question), accounting for sixty percent of the total test grade. This test focuses on the two texts that we will have covered by the midway point, Kessler and Pals. Primarily, those first questions will draw heavily from our in-class discussions. With that in mind, I remain open to changing some of the questions if we did not get to cover those terms in the depth that I currently plan, due to time constraints as our discussions branch off into different directions.

The more important and in-depth section of the test is the two essay questions at the end, accounting for forty percent of the total test grade. Part of the reason there are so few other questions on the test is because I want the students to be able to give the two essays a fair amount of time. These are where the students will be better able to engage with both the material they have read and with our class discussions, putting it all into a cohesive whole. This is the section of the test in which the students will be able to demonstrate to me that they have a firm grasp on the material we have discussed so far.

The final exam is very similar to the midterm, except that there are even fewer multiple choice and short answer questions (eighteen, with one freebie bonus question) and the essays count for even more of the total test grade (sixty percent). The first section of the test only covers material that we have discussed in the second half of the semester.

Again, I am willing to change some of the questions if our discussions do not end up covering the same material that I currently plan for. The second section of the test, however, the essays, is more of a comprehensive final exam, touching on everything that we have covered throughout the semester. This is why the scores are even more weighted towards the essays. Again, this is the part of the test where the students will be able to demonstrate to me that they have understood all of the material that we have covered, and are able to apply the concepts to a wide range of religious practices.

One final thing to mention about both tests is the freebie bonus questions that I have included. I know that some excellent students are also nervous test-takers. My hope is that just a bit of humor will help them get past their jitters and focus on the task at hand, especially the essay questions, without being distracted by worry.¹³

Grading Rubric

As mentioned above, the course is weighted so that in-class discussions (both small group and whole class) carry the bulk of the student's final grade. Class participation will count for forty percent of the final grade. This grade will come entirely from my observations of each student in each class session. I will be keeping track of their conversations, their questions, and their engagement with the materials (both the written homework and the discussions as they evolve). This will be the primary opportunity for me to make sure that they are reading the materials, engaging with their classmates and myself, and understanding how it all fits together.

Of the three papers, the first two (religious service visits) will each count for ten percent of the total grade. The reason why this number is relatively low is because I am

¹³ Dr. Mark Hicks. "The Method is the Message." Class Lecture. Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL. January 17, 2013.

more interested in them having the experience than I am in grading them on that experience. The paper itself is not what matters here, it is the student experiencing a religious service in a faith tradition that is new and unfamiliar to them.

The third paper (selective text final project) will count for twenty percent of the total grade. This one will be worth more for two reasons. First, it is a final project, done at the end of the semester. So they should be able to demonstrate understanding of the bulk of the material that we will have covered. The second reason for the extra weight to this project is because this is one of the places where I am allowing the students to approach the materials with their own styles, their own creativity. As this will be their opportunity to engage in whatever language they are most comfortable, it should give them a real chance to shine.

Both the midterm and final exam will count for a mere ten percent each of the final grade. This low number is because the tests are required, but testing is only truly useful for rote memorization of vocabulary terms, which both tests will cover. More important than memorization is the student's ability to apply what they have learned. This is why the bulk of each test lies in two different essay questions, asking the students to take what they have learned, both in class and from their readings, and apply it to a particular religious tradition or practice. The critical thinking elements of the essays are the most valuable parts of the tests.

Conclusion

My goal throughout this project has been to create a different type of learning experience. I want to get away from the old model of lectures, PowerPoint presentations, assigned textbook readings and testing on retention of content. Instead, I am creating a

space within my classroom in which my students feel safe in exploring and discussing different faith traditions and spiritual practices, both those completely foreign to them and their own religious viewpoints. The individual class sessions are built around small and large group sharing of personal stories and discussion of what each of us, including myself, have taken away from the readings and experiences. The assignments offer multiple ways for students of varying skill sets and interest areas to engage with the material. At the beginning of the semester, I get as much personalized information from the students as possible; so that I may better speak to them in a language they can hear and understand. At the same time, I provide multiple ways for the students to better understand their own learning styles and personalities, enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning and the tools to know what works best for each of them. Each of the assignments is designed in such a way as to create not just an experience, but an aesthetic experience; not just another piece of homework, but an opportunity to change their lives and how they interact with the world.

By the end of the semester, the students will have been exposed to multiple ways of approaching religious studies as well as many different world faiths. They will have learned how to interact with 'the other' from a point of curiosity and respect, rather than fear or distrust. They will have spent time in an inclusive space, getting to know, on a personal level, those from a wide variety of different backgrounds. They will have learned not just about a multitude of religions and religious practices, they will have learned new ways of looking at that multitude. They will not just know more facts; they will have the tools to continue growing in their own faith formations once our short time together is over. They will be more aware citizens of a global community, aware of their

own and others' faith traditions, as well as how those beliefs shape their interactions with others and how those spiritual practices help them each grow and develop.

SYLLABUS

PHIL 1304 – Introduction to Comparative Religion

Fall Semester, 2014-2015

Section# 4853, Northridge Campus room 304, Mon & Wed, 10:30am-11:50am

Instructor: Victor Cornell, 512-218-9764, vcornell@austincc.edu,
www.austincc.edu/vcornell.

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1pm-4pm, other times available by request (email or call). Office location is NRG4005.

Course Rationale: Religion has been and continues to be one of the principal forces that shape human societies and history. For this reason, a basic understanding of the major religions of the world affords both a deeper appreciation of other cultures' traditions and a richer understanding of ourselves, as well as making us more culturally literate and better citizens of a global community.

Course Description: In this class you will be introduced to the comparative study of religion and to major world religions. You can expect to learn fundamentals of several religious traditions and to think critically about the issues that religion presents to the world today. You will also gain an understanding of the approaches scholars use to understand religion.

Prerequisites: Reading and writing proficiency as proven by a passing score on appropriate assessment tests or by exemption through transcribed hours from another college or other approved means.

Course Materials:

Note: you are already paying an enormous sum of money for your education. If you can find any of these books used, or an older edition at a cheaper price, feel free to take that route. You can also do textbook rentals or books on tape or library copies. Just be aware that different editions will have slightly different content, and page numbers will not match, which might be troublesome during class discussions.

Required Texts –

- *Studying Religion: Introduction Through Cases*, by Gary Kessler
 - 3rd Edition (2008), ISBN: 9780073386591
- *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*, by Daniel L. Pals
 - 2009 Edition, ISBN: 9780195181494
- *Living Religions*, by Mary Pat Fisher
 - 9th Edition (2013), ISBN: 9780205956408

Selective Texts (you must select **ONE** book from this list, to read and report to the class on) –

Note: the professor has one copy of each of these books, available to you on loan on a first-come first-served basis. There are also a limited number of most of these books in the campus library. You don't need to own it (though you certainly may), you just need to read it.

- *God is Not One*, by Stephen Prothero
- *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (Revised Edition), by Raimon Panikkar
- *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, by Kimberley Patton & Benjamin Ray
- *Journey of the Universe*, by Brian Thomas Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker
- *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, by Michael J. Murray and Michael C. Rea
- *Supernatural Selection: How Religion Evolved*, by Matt Rossano
- *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, by Peter L. Berger
- *The Essential Mystics: The Soul's Journey into Truth*, edited by Andrew Harvey

Recommended Texts (none are required, but all are useful) –

- *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, by John Bowker
- *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook* (Volume 1, 5th Edition), by Stuart M. Matlins and Arthur J. Magida
- *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: A Guide to Etiquette in Other People's Religious Ceremonies* (Volume 2, 2nd Edition), by Stuart M. Matlins and Arthur J. Magida

There will be additional small readings throughout the course, either distributed as handouts or available via the instructor's website and/or Blackboard.

Program Level Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of the central beliefs and concepts of major living religious traditions of the world, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and others.
2. Students will demonstrate familiarity with the structure and ritual life of religious communities, including significant holidays and rituals.
3. Students will demonstrate a basic grasp of the methodology and history of the study of religion.

Course Level Objectives:

1. Students will develop skills in critically analyzing religion and comparing particular aspects of religious traditions.
2. Students will develop skills in reading source texts as documents of religious life.

3. Students will develop skills in observing and critically analyzing religion in the contemporary world.

General Education Competencies:

1. *Civic and Cultural Awareness* - Analyzing and critiquing competing perspectives in a democratic society; comparing, contrasting, and interpreting differences and commonalities among peoples, ideas, aesthetic traditions, and cultural practices.
2. *Critical Thinking* - Gathering, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating and applying information.
3. *Personal Responsibility* - Identifying and applying ethical principles and practices; demonstrating effective learning, creative thinking, and personal responsibility.
4. *Written, Oral and Visual Communication* - Communicating effectively, adapting to purpose, structure, audience, and medium.

Instructional Methods, Evaluation and Grading:

Attendance, Class Participation and In-Class Work (40%): You are paying good money for this course; therefore you should get your money's worth. A big part of how you will be evaluated is your participation in class. This means being here, on time. Attend class and engage with the materials.

Part of the participation grade will be affected by your reading of the assignments before class. You are expected to have fully read all assignments before class. By doing so, you will get much more from both the lectures and the class discussions, as well as being able to sound like you know what you're talking about during small group work. Remember, for every one hour in-class time, you should expect to spend three hours reading on your own at the college level. In the case of this course, with roughly three hours of class per week, you should be reading for nine hours during the rest of the week!

Another big part of the participation grade will come from small group discussions and reporting back to the class as a whole. Throughout the semester, you will participate in a number of small group exercises and discussions. You will be required to listen to and share experiences with strangers. If you don't work and play well with others, this may be problematic for you. It also may be exactly what you need. During all of these small group discussions, the professor will be monitoring your involvement and engagement, both with the material and your classmates. The quality of participation in these discussions will be reflected in your final grade. You will receive prompts for the discussions in class.

Formal Essays (40%): You have three formal essays due throughout the semester. The first and second will be based on your visits to religious services of your choosing (worth

10% each). The third will be a report on one of the selective texts (worth 20%). Guidelines for these assignments will be distributed in blackboard and in class.

Exams (20%): The course has a mid-term and a final, administered in class (both worth 10% of your total grade). These will test both your knowledge of concepts from class and your critical thinking. You will not need to acquire examination booklets for these exams.

Course Policies: Please carefully review each of the following policies.

Problem Resolution: If you are having a problem related to this course or related to your professor, your first step generally should be to speak with your instructor. If he cannot resolve the problem or satisfy your concern, or, if for some reason you would prefer not to address the issue with your professor, you can appeal to the department chair for help [Matthew Daude Laurents, Philosophy Department Chair, mdaude@austincc.edu, 512-223-3352].

Attendance policy: Attendance will not be a part of your final grade, per se. However, carefully read the note above on attendance and class participation and how they will affect your grade.

Missed or Late Work: Missed or late work will not be accepted, unless discussed with the instructor prior to the due date. If extenuating circumstances are found to exist during that discussion, late work may be accepted for a lower grade.

Cell Phones (and other electronic devices): As a courtesy to the instructor and other students, please turn off cell phones and silence all laptops, tablets, etc. It's also embarrassing when your backpack starts playing Lady Gaga in the middle of a lecture. Everyone will stare at you. If you are using your laptop during class to take notes or do online research or you're using your cell phone to record a lecture, that is all fine – if you are using them to check your girlfriend's Facebook status, that is a waste of everyone's time, especially your own.

Withdrawals: Withdrawing from a course may affect financial aid, veterans' benefits, international student status, or academic standing. Students are urged to consult with their professor or an advisor before making schedule changes. It is the responsibility of each student to ensure that his or her name is removed from the roll should he or she decide to withdraw from the class. The instructor does, however, reserve the right to drop a student should he feel it is necessary. If a student decides to withdraw, he or she should also verify that the withdrawal is submitted before the Final Withdrawal Date. The student is also strongly encouraged to retain their copy of the withdrawal form for their records. Good guideline for your college experience – throw nothing away until you have a diploma in hand.

Students who enroll for the third or subsequent time in a course taken since Fall, 2002, may be charged a higher tuition rate, for that course.

State law permits students to withdraw from no more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career at Texas public colleges or universities. With certain exceptions, all course withdrawals automatically count towards this limit. Details regarding this policy can be found in the ACC college catalog.

Incompletes: An instructor may award a grade of “I” (Incomplete) if a student is unable to complete all of the objectives for the passing grade in a course. Incompletes must be requested in writing with documentation of the circumstances justifying it. An incomplete grade cannot be carried beyond the established date in the following semester. The completion date is determined by the instructor but may not be later than the final deadline for withdrawal in the subsequent semester.

Scholastic Dishonesty: A student attending ACC assumes responsibility for conduct compatible with the mission of the college as an educational institution. Students have the responsibility to submit coursework that is the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. Students must follow all instructions given by faculty or designated college representatives when taking examinations, placement assessments, tests, quizzes, and evaluations. Actions constituting scholastic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, collusion, and falsifying documents. Penalties for scholastic dishonesty will depend upon the nature of the violation and may range from lowering a grade on one assignment to an “F” in the course and/or expulsion from the college. See the Student Standards of Conduct and Disciplinary Process and other policies at <http://www.austincc.edu/current/needtoknow>.

Cases of scholastic dishonesty will be pursued according to the procedure set forth in the Student Handbook, “Student Rights and Responsibilities,” Section J, “Academic Dishonesty.”

And think about it; how are you going to explain to your grandma that you got kicked out of school because you cheated in a *religion* course?

Academic Freedom: Students have the right to believe whatever they happen to believe and, within the appropriate constraints that follow from the organization of a course and its class meetings, to express those beliefs. Grades will never be based on the beliefs that a student maintains, but only on the quality of the work performed by a student in conjunction with the course. It is important to remember that this class, in particular, will touch on deeply held beliefs of some of the students. Disrespect of those beliefs will not be tolerated.

Student Rights and Responsibilities: Students at the college have the rights accorded by the U.S. Constitution to freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, petition, and association. These rights carry with them the responsibility to accord the same rights to others in the college community and not to interfere with or disrupt the educational process. Opportunity for students to examine and question pertinent data and assumptions of a given discipline, guided by the evidence of scholarly research, is appropriate in a learning environment. This concept is accompanied by an equally demanding concept of responsibility on the part of the student. As willing partners in learning, students must comply with college rules and procedures.

Office of Students with Disabilities: This class is open and available for students of all levels of physical and mental ability. Each ACC campus offers support services for students with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities who need classroom, academic or other accommodations must request them through the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Students are encouraged to request accommodations when they register for courses or at least three weeks before the start of the semester, otherwise the provision of accommodations may be delayed.

Students who have received approval for accommodations from OSD for this course must provide the instructor with the 'Notice of Approved Accommodations' from OSD before accommodations will be provided. Arrangements for academic accommodations can only be made after the instructor receives the 'Notice of Approved Accommodations' from the student.

Students with approved accommodations are encouraged to submit the 'Notice of Approved Accommodations' to the instructor at the beginning of the semester because a reasonable amount of time may be needed to prepare and arrange for the accommodations.

Additional information about the Office for Students with Disabilities is available at <http://www.austincc.edu/support/osd/>.

Safety Statement: Austin Community College is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. You are expected to learn and comply with ACC environmental, health and safety procedures and agree to follow ACC safety policies. Additional information on these can be found at <http://www.austincc.edu/ehs>. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the Emergency Procedures poster and Campus Safety Plan map in each classroom. Additional information about emergency procedures and how to sign up for ACC Emergency Alerts to be notified in the event of a serious emergency can be found at <http://www.austincc.edu/emergency/>.

Please note, you are expected to conduct yourself professionally with respect and courtesy to all. Anyone who thoughtlessly or intentionally jeopardizes the health or safety of another individual will be dismissed from the day's activity, may be withdrawn from the class, and/or barred from attending future activities.

Use of ACC email: All College e-mail communication to students will be sent solely to the student's ACCmail account, with the expectation that such communications will be read in a timely fashion. ACC will send important information and will notify you of any college related emergencies using this account. Students should only expect to receive email communication from their instructor using this account. Likewise, students should use their ACCmail account when communicating with instructors and staff. Instructions for activating an ACCmail account can be found at <http://www.austincc.edu/accmail/index.php>.

Student and Instructional Services: ACC strives to provide exemplary support to its students and offers a broad variety of opportunities and services. Information on these services and support systems is available at <http://www.austincc.edu/s4/>.

Links to many student services and other information can be found at <http://www.austincc.edu/current/>.

ACC Learning Labs provide free tutoring services to all ACC students currently enrolled in the course to be tutored. The tutor schedule for each Learning Lab may be found at <http://www.austincc.edu/tutor/students/tutoring.php>.

For help setting up your ACCeID, ACCmail, or ACC Blackboard, see a Learning Lab Technician at any ACC Learning Lab.

Course Schedule:

The class will meet every Monday and Wednesday, from 10:30am – 11:50am, from August 25th until December 14th.

August 25 – first day of class

September 1 – no class; Labor Day

September 22 – paper #1 due (must have visited first religious service)

October 15 – midterm exam

October 27 – paper #2 due (must have visited second religious service)

November 2 – end daylight savings time

November 27-30 – campuses closed for Thanksgiving holiday

December 1 – paper #3 due (must have finished reading selected text)

December 10 – final exam, last day of class

CLASS OUTLINES

PHIL 1304 – Introduction to Comparative Religion

Fall Semester, 2014-2015

Mon & Wed, 10:30am-11:50am

- **Session #1**
 - Monday, August 25th
 - Introductions
 - Self & course introduction (20 min)
 - I will introduce myself and my educational background (including my own experiences with community college). I will introduce the course, going over key points in the syllabus. I will discuss the required textbooks and the selective textbooks. I will explain the grading scheme and requirements, as well as brief descriptions of the major projects. I will discuss the Blackboard system and how we will be using it. (20 min)
 - **Exercise** – Note-card self identification (10 min)
 - This exercise consists of passing out 3x5 note-cards to everyone in the class. They will be instructed to write on their card the following information (written on the board or projected); their name, what they prefer to be called, an email address & phone number, the religion (or none) that they were raised with, the religion (or none) that they currently identify with, one (or none) spiritual practice that they currently use (i.e. prayer, meditation, yoga, etc) and three one-word descriptors of themselves (i.e. father, gay, student, loser, skinny, etc). It will be explained that this information will not be shared with the other students, but will remain private information for the instructor's information only. The cards will be collected and I will review them all later, paying attention for potential areas of intersection between students as well as areas of discussion in school (such as having a Mormon student speak to the group when we get to that section in class, with her prior permission). I will also be looking for potential areas of conflict or opportunities for growth. One example of this could be someone who writes in their descriptors that they're shy, lonely, scared – he might need some more

personal attention on a one-on-one basis before participating in some of the group discussions.

- I will explain that each student needs to set up a one-on-one meeting with me during office hours, sometime in the first three weeks of the semester. These meetings will not take more than fifteen minutes each. This will be my opportunity to speak to each student individually, getting more information about how they self-identified on the note-cards. This will help me a) better understand each student's individual learning needs and communication styles and b) help me identify which students would be good candidates for sharing their personal stories of religious backgrounds and faith formation, and getting their permission to do so.
- **Exercise – Getting to know each other (25 min)**
 - The following statements will be written on the board (or projected); my name is..., my favorite comfort food is..., the person who makes it best is..., I am (list 2-3 personal characteristics)..., something tough I have experienced is..., something good I have experienced is...
 - We will go around the room as a full group, giving each person the opportunity to answer. It will be made clear that people can answer as much or as little as they feel comfortable sharing.
- Establishing a space for learning
 - **Exercise – creating class conduct guidelines (20 min)**
 - I will lead the group as a whole in a discussion about the rules we will follow in this room in our interactions with each other. I will briefly explain that because we are touching on what is very personal for some people that we must agree to certain standards, which will be enforced. I will distribute a handout with some suggestions.
 - After discussion we will settle on a final list, which I will save and post both on Blackboard and in the room for the duration of the semester.
 - **Brief Lecture – knowing your learning style(s), personality type and biases (5 min)**
 - I will hand out (and post on Blackboard) the handout titled “Know Thyself”. I will explain that they are each responsible for their own learning and that doing some or

all of these free online quizzes might help them gain insight on how they approach and interact with the world. It will also help them learn what learning styles work best for them, so that they can get more from our time together.

- Reading assignments for next class:
 - The Dialogue Decalogue (handout and on Blackboard)
 - Kessler: chapters 1 – 3
- Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Type & post guidelines for class conduct
 - Read all student self-identification cards
- **Session #2**
 - Wednesday, August 27th
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Guidelines for comparative religious studies
 - The Dialogue Decalogue & Kessler Chapters 1-3
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (20 min). Guiding questions:
 - Wilfred Cantwell Smith, a historian of religion and Islamic scholar, once said that no statement made by a scholar of religion is valid unless a religious believer could accept it as correct. Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - Do you think there is something unique about religion that historians, social scientists (anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists), and philosophers cannot understand or grasp? If so, what?
 - Do we have a right to use our definition of religion to classify beliefs and activities in cultures other than our own? Is it possible to escape starting with an understanding of religion that reflects our cultural heritage? If not, does this pose a problem for the scholarly study of religion?
 - **Whole group discussion** (40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Discussion of issues around defining 'religion'
 - Discussion of potential pitfalls in religious studies
 - Normative thinking
 - Reductionism
 - Supersessionism

- Key terms:
 - Descriptive (prototypes, typologies)
 - Interpretive (hermeneutics, comparative)
 - Explanatory (causal, functional, structural)
 - Evaluative (first-order, second-order)
 - Substantive definitions of religion
 - Functional definitions of religion
 - Cluster definitions of religion
- Make point of discussing spiritual vs. religious debate
 - Social (community, imposed restrictions, etc.) vs. individual (individualistic, solitary, etc.)
- **Exercise** – Knowing your own social location to be aware of your biases (15 min)
 - I will hand out or project (also posting on Blackboard) the Cummings' Identity Map Worksheet. I will give brief explanation of the activity and purpose, and then allow them to write down their answers. There will be no discussion of the answers, unless one of them has a specific question, nor will the answers be turned in to me. This is for their edification only.
- Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: Introduction, chapter 1 – E.B. Tylor
 - Kessler: chapter 4 – Sacred Power
- Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Skim *Primitive Culture* by Tylor
- **Session #3**
 - Wednesday, September 3rd
 - Starting discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - E.B. Tylor ≠ Sacred Power
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Tylor's views on religion? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel about Tylor's theory of 'survivals'? Explain.
 - How would you classify the worship of Ganesha (from the Kessler reading)? Is it polytheistic, henotheistic,

monotheistic, deistic, or pantheistic? Why do you classify it as you do?

- **Whole group discussion (35-40 min)**
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - animism
 - 'the comparative method' (inc. warnings)
 - 'survivals'
 - 'cultural evolutionism'
 - Poly-, heno-, mono-, deist-, pan-, panen- theisms
 - Sacred power
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: chapter 2 – James Frazer
 - Kessler: chapter 5 – Sacred Story
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Skim *The Golden Bough* by Frazer
- **Session #4**
 - Monday, September 8th
 - Continuing discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - James Frazer ≠ Sacred Story
 - **Small group discussion; dyads & triads (25-30 min).** Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Frazer's views on religion? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel about Frazer's theory of 'magic'? Explain.
 - Discuss some possible functions of the primal man story (from the Kessler reading)? Be specific and cite evidence.
 - **Whole group discussion (35-40 min)**
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Magic (sympathetic, homoeopathic, contagious)
 - 'Myths' (inc. warning about use of word myth vs. story) (cosmogonic, cosmological, etiological, eschatological)
 - Theories of 'myth' (rationalist, functionalist, symbolic, phenomenological, structural)
 - Reading assignments for next class:

- Pals: chapter 3 – Sigmund Freud
 - Kessler: chapter 6 – Sacred Action
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Skim *The Future of an Illusion* by Freud
- **Session #5**
 - Wednesday, September 10th
 - Continuing discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Sigmund Freud ≠ Sacred Action
 - **Small group discussion;** dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Freud’s views on religion? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel about Freud’s theory of religions as “universal obsessional neurosis of humanity”? Explain.
 - Do you think the revised feminist version of the seder promotes solidarity among women and is empowering (from the Kessler reading)? Do you think that it does so at a cost to the original story?
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Totem
 - Taboo
 - Rituals (technological, therapeutic, ideological, salvation, revitalization, others [?])
 - Myth and ritual theory
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: chapter 4 – Emile Durkheim
 - Kessler: chapter 7 – Sacred Space & Time
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Skim *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* by Durkheim
- **Session #6**
 - Monday, September 15th
 - Continuing discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)

- Emile Durkheim ≠ Sacred Space & Time
 - **Small group discussion; dyads & triads (25-30 min).** Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Durkheim's views on religion? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel about Durkheim's belief that religion is inherently a social act, tying the individual believer into the larger community? Explain.
 - What connections do you see from the case of the Cathedral of St. Andrew, the case of Mount Kilimanjaro and the case of the Dreamtime (from the Kessler reading)? Be specific.
 - **Whole group discussion (35-40 min)**
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Sacred and profane
 - Rituals (positive, negative, piacular)
 - Sacramental principle vs. prophetic principle
- Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: chapter 5 – Karl Marx
 - Kessler: chapter 8 – Religious Experience
- Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
- **Session #7**
 - Wednesday, September 17th
 - Continuing discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Mention paper due next class (worth 10% of total grade) - I will have already handed out and posted on Blackboard the instructions for the religious service visits. I will point out to them that if they have not already done so, this will be their last chance to visit a service before the paper is due.
 - Karl Marx ≠ Religious Experience
 - **Small group discussion; dyads & triads (25-30 min).** Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Marx's views on religion? Why or why not?

- How do you feel about Marx’s view of religion as “the opium of the people”, an agent of economic oppression? Explain.
 - Do you think St. Teresa of Avila has had some sort of universal mystical experience that transcends religions, cultures, and historical contexts (from the Kessler reading)? Why or why not?
- **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Materialism vs. religion vs. socialism
 - Religious experience (revelational, ecstatic)
 - Religious experience (finitude, numinous, mystical, confirmative, responsive)
 - Mysticism (debate between Stace’s & Zaehner’s typologies)
- Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: chapter 6 – William James
 - Kessler: chapter 9 – Evil
- Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Skim *Varieties of Religious Experience* by James
- **Session #8**
 - Monday, September 22nd
 - Paper #1 (Religious Service Visit) Due
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads only (20 min). Explain ‘active listening’ – one person will speak, the other will simply sit and listen. Then it will switch, with the second person not responding to the first, but simply speaking while the first person listens. Guiding questions:
 - You each have 10 minutes to share your experience. Don’t just read your paper to your partner, tell them about the experience.
 - After discussion, I will take up the papers.
 - Continuing discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - William James ≠ Evil
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (20 min). Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with James’ views on religion? Why or why not?

- How do you feel about James' belief that there is "a positive content of religious experience which...is literally and objectively true as far as it goes"? Explain.
 - Do you find the Manichaeian theodicy plausible (from the Kessler reading)? Why or why not? How would you modify it, if you could, to make it more plausible?
- **Whole group discussion (40 min)**
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Theodicies (karma, eschatological, participation, dualistic)
 - Monotheistic theodicies
 - Antitheodicies
 - Mysticism (ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, passivity)
- Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: chapter 7 – Rudolf Otto
 - Kessler: chapter 10 – Human Existence and Destiny
- Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade papers
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Skim *The Idea of the Holy* by Otto
- **Session #9**
 - Wednesday, September 24th
 - [1st day of Rosh Hashanah]
 - Continuing discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Rudolf Otto ≠ Human Existence and Destiny
 - **Small group discussion; dyads & triads (25-30 min).** Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Otto's views on religion? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel about Otto's theory religious experience is completely *sui generis* (entirely of its own kind)? Explain.
 - Would you classify Zen as a salvation religion (from the Kessler reading)? Why or why not?
 - **Whole group discussion (35-40 min)**
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:

- Numen & Numinous
 - mysterium tremendum et fascinans
 - Sui generis
 - Sin, salvation, atonement
- Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: chapter 8 – Max Weber
 - Kessler: chapter 11 – Religion and Morality
- Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade papers
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Skim *The Protestant Ethic* by Weber
- **Session #10**
 - Monday, September 29th
 - Continuing discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Max Weber ≠ Religion and Morality
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Weber's views on religion? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel about Weber's theory that today's complex socioeconomic systems were indirectly created by Protestantism (specifically the writings of Luther and Calvin) [theorem of multi-layered causation]? Explain.
 - Compare the case of Jain nonviolence with the case of Confucian virtue (from the Kessler reading). Are there more differences or more similarities? Explain, with specific examples.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Summum bonum
 - The elect
 - Sola fide vs. bona opera
 - Morality, moral reasoning
 - Profanity/purity
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: chapter 9 – Mircea Eliade
 - Kessler: chapter 12 – Institutionalized Religion

- Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade papers
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Skim *The Sacred and the Profane* by Eliade
- **Session #11**
 - Wednesday, October 1st
 - Continuing discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Mircea Eliade ≠ Institutionalized Religion
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Eliade's views on religion? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel about Eliade's fears that purely secular ideologies might not be able to provide a framework of values which humanity could find fulfilling or meaningful? Explain.
 - Is Shinto a civil religion in Bellah's sense of the term (from the Kessler reading)? If you cannot decide, what further information would you need to settle the issue?
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Phenomenology
 - Sacred & profane (vs. how Durkheim defined the terms)
 - Theophany, hierophany
 - Civil religion
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: chapter 10 – E.E. Evans-Pritchard
 - Kessler: chapter 13 – Religious Diversity and Truth
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Skim *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* by Evans-Pritchard
- **Session #12**
 - Monday, October 6th
 - Continuing discussions of history of comparative religious studies

- Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
- E.E. Evans-Pritchard ≠ Religious Diversity and Truth
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Evans-Pritchard's views on religion? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel about Evans-Pritchard's views on 'primitive' religion (as opposed to Frazer's, Tylor's, Freud's, Marx's, Durkheim's, etc.)? Explain.
 - Compare and contrast the Baha'i split from Islam with the Christian split from Judaism (from the Kessler reading). Is Baha'i a new world religion? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism
 - Pluralistic inclusivism
 - Naturalism
- Reading assignments for next class:
 - Pals: chapter 11 – Clifford Geertz
- Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
- **Session #13**
 - Wednesday, October 8th
 - Final discussions of history of comparative religious studies
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Warn them about midterm exam coming next week
 - Explain that next class will be entirely review in preparation for exam
 - Clifford Geertz
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Do you agree with Geertz's views on religion? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel about Evans-Pritchard's views on 'primitive' religion (as opposed to Frazer's, Tylor's, Freud's, Marx's, Durkheim's, etc.)? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)

- Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Interpretive anthropology
 - Cultural systems
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - None – just review
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Peruse library for modern standpoints on religious theory
 - Check mid-term test for connections to class discussions and existing holes
- **Session #14**
 - Monday, October 13th
 - **Whole group discussion** (20 min): modern standpoints
 - Focus on how modern standpoints might interact with classic theories
 - Feminist
 - Womanist
 - Queer
 - Liberation
 - Review from session #2:
 - Discussion of issues around defining ‘religion’
 - Discussion of potential pitfalls in religious studies
 - Normative thinking
 - Reductionism
 - Supersessionism
 - Test review (50 min)
 - Entire Pals text
 - Entire Kessler text
 - All key terms, from lectures and textbooks
 - Note – the review is for the students; allowing them time and space to further discuss, with instructor and each other, to seek clarification on items they don’t understand, etc.
 - Explain the test (10 min)
 - Counts for 10% of final grade
 - Will be in class, with entire period to finish
 - Will be multiple choice or short answer questions and two essays
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - None – just review
 - Teacher prep for next class:

- Check mid-term test for connections to class discussions and existing holes
- **Session #15**
 - Wednesday, October 15th
 - **Exam** – Midterm (in class)
 - Be aware of nervous test takers
 - Keep room quiet
 - Give entire class period
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapters 1 – Religious Responses and 2 – Indigenous Sacred Ways
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade midterms
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for indigenous religious references
 - Review student self-identifications for any following indigenous religions

*******Midterm Split*******

- **Session #16**
 - Monday, October 20th
 - Starting discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Religious Responses and Indigenous Sacred Ways
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Are there any differences between what Fisher views as religious responses from what we've already discussed with some of the classic religious theorists?
 - Does Fisher's analysis of indigenous sacred ways line up with Evans-Pritchard's views on 'primitive' religion? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Gnosis
 - Shaman
 - Reading assignments for next class:

- Fisher: chapter 3 – Hinduism
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade midterms
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for Hindu references
 - Review student self-identifications for any with connections to Hinduism
 - Review student papers for any that visited Hindu services
- **Session #17**
 - Wednesday, October 22nd
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Mention paper due next class (worth 10% of their final grade) - I will have already handed out and posted on Blackboard the instructions for the religious service visits. I will point out to them that if they have not already done so, this will be their last chance to visit a service before the paper is due.
 - Hinduism
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Explore with your partner(s) some major Sanatana Dharma philosophical themes, rituals or spiritual practices. Which, if any, appeal to you? Why or why not?
 - Examine with your partner(s) Sanatana Dharma through one of the lenses of the classical theorists. What would [blank] have to say about it? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Spiritual practice ≠ spiritual experience
 - Frequency, mindfulness, discipline, intention
 - Key terms:
 - Sanatana Dharma
 - Vedas, Upanishads
 - Brahman/atman
 - Karma
 - Samsara, moksha
 - Yoga (raja, jnana, karma, bhakti)
 - Saktas, Vaishnavites, Saivites

- Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that visited a Hindu religious service to talk about the experience (5 min each)
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that identifies as Hindu to talk about their own faith (5 min each)
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapter 4 – Jainism
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade midterms
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for Jain references
 - Review student self-identifications for any with connections to Jainism
- **Session #18**
 - Monday, October 27th
 - Paper #2 (Religious Service Visit) Due
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads only (20 min). Explain again ‘active listening’ – one person will speak, the other will simply sit and listen. Then it will switch, with the second person not responding to the first, but simply speaking while the first person listens. Guiding questions:
 - You each have 10 minutes to share your experience. Don’t just read your paper to your partner, tell them about the experience.
 - After discussion, I will take up the papers.
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Jainism
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (20 min). Guiding questions:
 - Explore with your partner(s) some major Jain philosophical themes, rituals or spiritual practices. Which, if any, appeal to you? Why or why not?
 - Examine with your partner(s) Jainism through one of the lenses of the classical theorists. What would [blank] have to say about it? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Ahimsa
 - Aparigraha

- Anekantwad
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapter 5 – Buddhism
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade papers
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for Buddhist references
 - Review student self-identifications for any with connections to Buddhism
 - Review student papers for any that visited Buddhist services
- **Session #19**
 - Wednesday, October 29th
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Buddhism
 - **Small group discussion; dyads & triads (25-30 min).** Guiding questions:
 - Explore with your partner(s) some major Buddhist philosophical themes, rituals or spiritual practices. Which, if any, appeal to you? Why or why not?
 - Examine with your partner(s) Buddhism through one of the lenses of the classical theorists. What would [blank] have to say about it? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion (35-40 min)**
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana, Zen
 - The four noble truths
 - The eightfold path
 - Karma, samsara, nirvana
 - Koan
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that visited a Buddhist religious service to talk about the experience (5 min each)
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that identifies as Buddhist to talk about their own faith (5 min each)
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapter 6 – Daoism and Confucianism
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade papers

- Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for Daoist and Confucian references
 - Review student self-identifications for any with connections to Daoism or Confucianism
 - Review student papers for any that visited Daoist or Confucian services
- **Session #20**
 - Monday, November 3rd
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Daoism and Confucianism
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Explore with your partner(s) some major Daoist or Confucian philosophical themes, rituals or spiritual practices. Which, if any, appeal to you? Why or why not?
 - Examine with your partner(s) Daoism or Confucianism through one of the lenses of the classical theorists. What would [blank] have to say about it? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Dao; yin, yang
 - Wu-wei
 - Qi, te
 - Li, jen, yi
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that visited a Daoist religious service to talk about the experience (5 min each)
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that identifies as Daoist or Confucian to talk about their own faith (5 min each)
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapter 7 – Shinto
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade papers
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for Shinto references
 - Review student self-identifications for any with connections to Shinto

- **Session #21**
 - Wednesday, November 5th
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Shinto
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Explore with your partner(s) some major Shinto philosophical themes, rituals or spiritual practices. Which, if any, appeal to you? Why or why not?
 - Examine with your partner(s) Shinto through one of the lenses of the classical theorists. What would [blank] have to say about it? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Kami
 - Oharai, tsumi
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that identifies as Shinto to talk about their own faith (5 min each)
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapter 7 – Zoroastrianism and chapter 8 – Judaism
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for Jewish references
 - Review student self-identifications for any with connections to Judaism
 - Review student papers for any that visited Jewish services
- **Session #22**
 - Monday, November 10th
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Zoroastrianism and Judaism
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Explore with your partner(s) some major Jewish philosophical themes, rituals or spiritual practices. Which, if any, appeal to you? Why or why not?

- Examine with your partner(s) Judaism through one of the lenses of the classical theorists. What would [blank] have to say about it? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Tanakh: Torah (Pentateuch), Nev'im, Kethuvim
 - Covenant
 - Messiah
 - Rabbi
 - Midrash; halakhah, haggadah
 - Talmud
 - Kabbalah, Hasidism
 - Zionism
 - Orthodox, reform, conservative, reconstructionist
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that visited a Jewish religious service to talk about the experience (5 min each)
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that identifies as Jewish to talk about their own faith (5 min each)
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapter 9 – Christianity
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for Christian references
 - Review student self-identifications for any with connections to Christianity
 - Review student papers for any that visited Christian services
- **Session #23**
 - Wednesday, November 12th
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Christianity
 - **Small group discussion;** dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Explore with your partner(s) some major Christian philosophical themes, rituals or spiritual practices. Which, if any, appeal to you? Why or why not?

- Examine with your partner(s) Christianity through one of the lenses of the classical theorists. What would [blank] have to say about it? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Gospels (synoptic)
 - Parables
 - Trinity
 - Sacrament
 - Communion/Eucharist
 - Epiphany, Pentecost, Assumption
 - Liberation/feminist theology
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that visited a Christian, Catholic or Orthodox religious service to talk about the experience (5 min each)
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that identifies as Christian to talk about their own faith (5 min each)
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapter 10 – Islam
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for Islamic references
 - Review student self-identifications for any with connections to Islam
 - Review student papers for any that visited Muslim services
- **Session #24**
 - Monday, November 17th
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Islam
 - **Small group discussion; dyads & triads** (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Explore with your partner(s) some major Muslim philosophical themes, rituals or spiritual practices. Which, if any, appeal to you? Why or why not?
 - Examine with your partner(s) Islam through one of the lenses of the classical theorists. What would [blank] have to say about it? Explain.

- Be sure to leave time for anyone that visited a Sikh religious service to talk about the experience (5 min each)
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that identifies as Sikh to talk about their own faith (5 min each)
 - Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapter 12 – New Religious Movements
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for ‘new religious movement’ references
 - Review student self-identifications for any with connections to any ‘new religious movements’
- **Session #26**
 - Monday, November 24th
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - New Religious Movements
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Does Fisher’s explanation and classification of ‘new religious movements’ sit well with you? Why or why not?
 - Examine with your partner(s) any one of what Fisher lists as new religious movements through one of the lenses of the classical theorists. What would [blank] have to say about it? Explain.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Cult, sect
 - Apostasy
 - Syncretism
 - Wiccan, pagan
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that visited what Fisher classifies as a new religious movement (Baha’i, Scientology, Mormon, Jehovah’s Witness, neo-Pagan) religious service to talk about the experience (5 min each)
 - Be sure to leave time for anyone that identifies as an adherent of one of Fisher’s new religious movements (Baha’i, Scientology, Mormon, Jehovah’s Witness, neo-Pagan) to talk about their own faith (5 min each)

- Reading assignments for next class:
 - Fisher: chapter 13 – Religion in the Twenty-First Century
- Teacher prep for next class:
 - Review reading assignments for students, above
 - Peruse library for interesting modern religious references
- **Session #27**
 - Wednesday, November 26th
 - Continuing discussions of world religions
 - Start with check-in, make sure everyone is keeping up, revisit class conduct guidelines (5-10 min)
 - Mention papers due next class (worth 20% of total grade) - I will have already handed out and posted on Blackboard the instructions for the book report papers (final projects). I will point out to them that if they have not already done so, this will be their last weekend to get the project finished.
 - Religion in the Twenty-First Century
 - **Small group discussion**; dyads & triads (25-30 min). Guiding questions:
 - Examine with your partner(s) what Fisher describes as ‘the conflict between the expansion of religious pluralism and the efforts to harden religious boundaries’. Have you seen examples of this? Be specific; explain why your example is a conflict.
 - Discuss with your partner(s) what any of the classical theorists would see as the future of religion.
 - **Whole group discussion** (35-40 min)
 - Discussion of what came up in small groups
 - Key terms:
 - Exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism
 - Ecumenical
 - Interfaith dialogue
 - US Constitution, 1st Amendment: establishment, free exercise and free speech clauses
 - No more textbook reading assignments!
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Skim all books from Selective Texts list
- **Session #28**
 - Monday, December 1st
 - Paper #3 (Book Reports) Due

- Each student will have 5-10 minutes (depending on total enrollment) to present whatever they have created for their book report/final project.
 - If time permits, we will try to have discussion and Q&A after each presentation.
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade book report presentations
 - Skim all books from Selective Texts list
- **Session #29**
 - Wednesday, December 3rd
 - More book reports
 - Each student will have 5-10 minutes (depending on total enrollment) to present whatever they have created for their book report/final project.
 - If time permits, we will try to have discussion and Q&A after each presentation.
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Grade book report presentations
 - Skim all books from Selective Texts list
- **Session #30**
 - Monday, December 8th
 - Wrapping it all up!
 - Full day review (70 min)
 - Entire Fisher text
 - All key terms, from lectures and textbook
 - Note – the review is for the students; allowing them time and space to further discuss, with instructor and each other, to seek clarification on items they don't understand, etc.
 - Explain the test (10 min)
 - Counts for 10% of final grade
 - Will be in class, with entire period to finish
 - Will be multiple choice or short answer questions and two essays, with the essays weighted more than in the midterm
 - Teacher prep for next class:
 - Check final exam for connections to class discussions and existing holes
- **Session #31**
 - Wednesday, December 10th
 - **Exam** – Final (in class)
 - Be aware of nervous test takers

- Keep room quiet
 - Give entire class period
- **After Final Class Session**
 - Grade all exams
 - Finish all other outstanding grading
 - Turn in grades
 - Make notes about all students for future reference letter requests, including current contact information
 - Review entire semester for potential improvements or needed changes

INSTRUCTIONS, PAPERS 1 & 2

PHIL 1304 – Introduction to Comparative Religion

Fall Semester, 2014-2015

Paper #1 – due Monday, September 22nd (1st Religious Service Visit)

Paper #2 – due Monday, October 27th (2nd Religious Service Visit)

For your first two papers, you will be required to visit two different religious services of your choosing. One of those can definitely be from the faith tradition that you were raised in or identify with now (though I urge you to use this opportunity to experience something new). But the second paper must come from a completely different faith tradition, so you will have to step outside of your comfort zone at least once. To select which service to attend, refer to the handout listing Austin area religious centers. Each center on that list has been contacted and is willing to have visitors come to their services. Call or look online to find out when their services are held. You may attend alone, with friends/family, or with classmate(s).

You **MUST** be respectful in these religious centers and with those adherents you meet there. If possible (say, during coffee hour after service), speak to some of the adherents of this faith tradition; tell them you are a student and they will most likely gladly start speaking to you. However, do not be obtrusive. If the center has a rule about taking pictures, or taking off shoes, or gender separation, or whatever, you **MUST** abide by it. Look online or call the center to determine what rules must be obeyed. Dress appropriately. There are plenty of options to choose from, so do not be intentionally confrontational. If word gets back to me that one of my students disrupted a worship service or was asked to leave (and it will), your grade will be zero for the paper.

The visit itself is simple; just attend the service, with an open mind and an eagerness to learn. While there, pay attention to what is happening, who is speaking when, etc. Do not take notes during the service itself; rather, right down all of your impressions as soon as you leave, while they are fresh in your mind. While attending, **pay special attention to all of your senses** – not just what you're seeing and hearing. Make note of what you're seeing (stained glass affecting the lighting in the room, pictures on the walls, vestments), what you're hearing (choral music, chanting, instruments), what you're smelling (incense, cooking, outdoors), what you're feeling physically (sitting on the floor, feeling crowded, in motion) what you're tasting (communion, prasad, conviviality afterwards). I am far more interested in reading about the experience you have than just some service you attend.

The papers will be no longer than three pages [double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins]. Correct grammar and punctuation matter!

Each paper will be graded for three different things:

1. Just the facts – Where did you go? When did you go? What happened? Did you spell everything correctly?
2. The experience – What did you smell? How did that affect your experience? What pulled you in or pushed you away?

3. The scholar's lens – Apply any of the theories and concepts that we have discussed so far in the course to analyze the experience. Did this service feel like Marx's 'opium of the masses'? Did this religious center seem like a good example of 'sacred architecture'? Be specific; give examples, back up what you write.

Obviously, the more you give me to work with, the better I can grade you. If you have any questions, ask in class. Late papers will not be accepted unless you arrange something with me beforehand, and then it will be for a reduced grade.

INSTRUCTIONS, PAPER 3

PHIL 1304 – Introduction to Comparative Religion

Fall Semester, 2014-2015

Paper #3 – due Monday, December 1st

Alternative Textbook Analysis

Selective Texts (you must select **ONE** book from this list, to read and report to the class on) –

Note: the professor has one copy of each of these books, available to you on loan on a first-come first-served basis. There are also a limited number of most of these books in the campus library. You don't need to own it (though you certainly may), you just need to read it.

- *God is Not One*, by Stephen Prothero
- *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (Revised Edition), by Raimon Panikkar
- *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, by Kimberley Patton & Benjamin Ray
- *Journey of the Universe*, by Brian Thomas Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker
- *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, by Michael J. Murray and Michael C. Rea
- *Supernatural Selection: How Religion Evolved*, by Matt Rossano
- *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, by Peter L. Berger
- *The Essential Mystics: The Soul's Journey into Truth*, edited by Andrew Harvey

Instructions:

Here's the tricky bit: this is not **necessarily** a paper! Think of it as a final project, which might or might not be a paper. What I am looking for is:

- evidence that you read and understood the book you selected
- evidence that you understand why the book you selected made it onto this list
- evidence that you have approached the book with the awareness of the classical theorists of comparative religious studies that we discussed
- evidence that you have engaged with the material, both in the single book selected and all the rest of the coursework (both readings and lectures)

At the end of the semester you will have five to ten minutes to present your analysis of this book to your classmates and instructor. The only requirements for this presentation are a) that it be no longer than 10 minutes and b) that it provide all the evidence listed above. Other than those simple requirements, you are **free to be creative!** If you are an RTF student, make a video. If you're an artist, paint a picture. If you're a theater major, write a short play. If you plan on going into seminary, write a sermon. If you're a musician, compose a song. If you're a traditionalist, write a paper and read it aloud. Make a collage, make a PowerPoint presentation, do an interpretive dance, draw a comic book!

This is your chance to engage with the material in the way that best suits your personality. Be creative, but don't go so far afield that no one understands your message.

I will need to see the evidence requested, either in the piece itself or your explanation of it. If I don't, it will be reflected in the grade (which will count for 10% of your final grade).

MIDTERM EXAM, WITH ANSWER KEY

Midterm Exam

Name _____

Date October 15, 2014

Carefully read each question. For multiple choice questions, circle the correct answer. For short answer questions, fill in the blank. For the final essay questions, answer as completely as possible, writing on the back of the page if necessary. You will have the entire class period to finish. If you don't understand one of the questions, or need clarifying information, raise your hand for assistance.

1. According to Frazer, which of the following is NOT a type of magic: (1 point)
 - a. homoeopathic
 - b. heterogeneous
 - c. sympathetic
 - d. contagious
2. Which of the following is NOT a type of theism: (1 point)
 - a. pantheism
 - b. polytheism
 - c. heliotheism
 - d. panentheism
3. Karl Marx described religion as: (2 points)

The opium of the people –and/or- an agent of economic oppression
4. List three functional prerequisites of groups (i.e. institutionalized religion): (3 points)
 - a. Recruitment and reproduction –and/or-
 - b. Socialization –and/or-
 - c. Production of satisfactory levels of goods and services –and/or-
 - d. Preservation of order –and/or-

e. Preservation of a sense of purpose

5. Identify any potential relation between religion and morality: (3 points)

Religion identifies and legitimates moral norms -and/or- religion motivates people to follow moral norms -and/or- religion motivates people to renew their moral commitments -and/or- religion criticizes moral norms in the name of a higher morality

6. The provocative argument posited in The Protestant Work Ethic known as 'the Weber thesis' essentially states that: (3 points)

Protestantism (especially Luther and Calvin) indirectly created today's complex socioeconomic systems

7. Which of these is NOT a primary function of myth: (1 point)

a. religious

b. social

c. hero worship

d. psychological

8. Sigmund Freud described religion as: (2 points)

The universal obsessional neurosis of humanity

9. One example of a typology of rituals could include the following types: (3 points)

a. Ideological

b. Salvation

c. Technological

d. Therapeutic and antitherapeutic

e. Revitalization

10. The expression 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' can be translated as: (2 points)

a mystery before which a person both trembles and is fascinated

11. List two potential female responses to patriarchal religion: (2 points)

a. Abandonment -and/or-

b. Radical transformation -and/or-

c. Reshaping -and/or-

- d. Reframing
12. Describe one function of sacred time and space: (1 point)
- Provide spatial & temporal openings to superhuman power –or- establish spatial & temporal boundaries –or- orient people in time & space
13. Typical religious patterns for dealing with profanity do NOT include: (1 point)
- Elimination of profanity
 - Avoidance of profanity
 - Transcending the oppositions of profanity/purity
 - Purification of profanity
14. List four understandings of sin: (4 points)
- Idolatry –and/or-
 - Rebellion –and/or-
 - Disobedience –and/or-
 - Transgression –and/or-
 - Alienation –and/or-
 - Fall from divine grace –and/or-
 - Bondage –and/or-
 - Selfishness –and/or-
 - Ignorance –and/or-
15. Durkheim's 'totemic principle' can be defined as: (2 points)
- An impersonal force within and behind the totem –and/or- a personification and representation of the clan itself
16. An eschatological story is one dealing with: (1 point)
- The end of the world
17. List three types of theodicy: (3 points)
- Karma –and/or-
 - Eschatological –and/or-
 - Participatory –and/or-
 - Dualistic –and/or-
 - Monotheistic (theological) –and/or-
 - Antitheodicy

18. William James wrote that mystical experiences must contain two qualities and usually contain two others. These four qualities are: (4 points)
- Ineffability
 - Noetic quality
 - Transiency
 - Passivity
19. Examples of sacred architecture would NOT include: (1 point)
- A stupa housing a relic
 - A synagogue with a bimah in the center
 - A chapel with a cruciform ground plan
 - A kismet with an altar on the east wall
20. A cosmogony deals with the origin of the universe, while a cosmology deals with the order of the universe. (2 points)
21. Mircea Eliade's two modes of being in the world, two modalities of experience, are: (2 points)
- The sacred and the profane
22. A theodicy deals with: (1 point)
- The existence/problem of evil in the world
23. Rudolf Otto maintained that religious experience was *sui generis*, which means: (2 points)
- A thing entirely of its own kind
24. Define the following possible truth-relations among different religions: (5 points)
- Exclusivism – one and only one of the many religions is true
 - Inclusivism – truth is most clearly and fully expressed in one religion, but other religions also contain truth, although in a partial or hidden way
 - Pluralism – in spite of differences, all religions contain valid experiences of ultimate reality
 - Pluralistic Inclusivism – many religions can be true
 - Naturalism – no religions are true
25. A typology of revelational religious experiences could include the following types: (2 points)
- Individual or communal

- b. General or **specific**
 - c. Exemplary or **emissary** prophets
26. The branch of religious study involving the interpretation of written texts is often called: (2 points)
- Hermeneutics –or- hermeneutical**
27. Your instructor is not a huge fan of tests, either writing them or using them as determinants of your understanding. So, since you've made it this far, select B to get the right answer on this one: (1 point)
- a. Not this one
 - b. **Yep**
 - c. You've gone too far
 - d. Just nope
28. List three types of religious experience: (3 points)
- a. **Feelings of absolute dependence (finitude) –and/or-**
 - b. **Feelings of awe or wonder (numinous) –and/or-**
 - c. **Feelings of unity (mystical) –and/or-**
 - d. **Feelings of confirmation –and/or-**
 - e. **Feelings of divine presence (responsive)**

Final Essay #1 (20 points)

Write a definition of religion, explain what type(s) of definition it is, and explain how it would be more or less useful than other definitions. Be specific.

(PROVIDE SPACE ON TEST TO WRITE ANSWER)

Final Essay #2 (20 points)

Weigh in on the 'spiritual, not religious' debate. Are the two words referencing intrinsically different and separate things? How are you defining the words? What would some of the classical theorists say about a) the debate itself and b) the rising population of American 'nones'? Be specific. Finally, where do you yourself stand on the issue? Explain your stance.

(PROVIDE SPACE ON TEST TO WRITE ANSWER)

FINAL EXAM, WITH ANSWER KEY

Final Exam

Name _____

Date December 10, 2014

Carefully read each question. For multiple choice questions, circle the correct answer. For short answer questions, fill in the blank. For the final essay questions, answer as completely as possible, writing on the back of the page if necessary. You will have the entire class period to finish. If you don't understand one of the questions, or need clarifying information, raise your hand for assistance.

1. List four types of yoga: (4 points)
 - a. Raja
 - b. Jnana
 - c. Karma
 - d. Bhakti
2. The three clauses of the 1st Amendment to the US Constitution which protect religious freedom are: (3 points)
 - a. Establishment clause
 - b. Free exercise clause
 - c. Free speech clause
3. Syncretism is defined as: (2 points)

A form of religion in which otherwise differing traditions are blended
4. Any repeated, patterned religious act is referred to as: (1 point)

A ritual
5. The words cult and sect have long been used imprecisely and pejoratively, leading religious scholars to adopt the more neutral (though still imprecise) term: (1 point)

New religious movement

6. Fisher contends that one religion still practiced today may have been, in the distant past, an important bridge between 'Eastern' and 'Western' faiths; that religion is: (1 point).

Zoroastrianism

7. The Synoptic Gospels do NOT include: (1 point)
- The Gospel of John
 - The Gospel of Mark
 - The Gospel of Matthew
 - The Gospel of Luke
8. Guru Nanak was the founder of which faith tradition: (1 point)
- Baha'i
 - Sanatana Dharma
 - Daoism
 - Sikhism
9. Define the Shinto term 'kami': (2 points)
- The invisible sacred quality that evokes wonder and awe in us –and/or- the invisible spirits throughout nature that are born of this essence
10. List three major branches of Judaism today: (3 points)
- Orthodox –and/or-
 - Hasidic –and/or-
 - Reform –and/or-
 - Conservative –and/or-
11. Examples of groups still following indigenous sacred ways do NOT include: (1 point)
- Scottish Folds
 - Navaho
 - Australian Aboriginals
 - Saami
12. In the Buddhist tradition, the cycle of birth/death/rebirth is called samsara. The ultimate egoless state of bliss which is the escape from that cycle is called nirvana. (2 points)
13. List the Five Pillars of Islam: (5 points)
- Shahadah -and/or- belief & witness
 - Five prayers daily
 - Zakat –and/or- tithing
 - Fasting during Ramadan
 - Hajj –and/or- pilgrimage

14. Define the following terms: (5 points)
 - a. Wu-wei – effortless effort -and/or- not doing
 - b. Qi – vital energy in the universe and our bodies
 - c. Li – ceremonies, rituals, and rules of proper conduct
 - d. Jen – humanity –and/or- benevolence
 - e. Yi – righteous conduct
15. The Jain principle of non-violence is ahimsa. (1 point)
16. Your instructor still isn't a huge fan of the tests, so here's another freebie. What's the third letter in the alphabet?: (1 point)
 - a. Nope
 - b. Keep going
 - c. Bingo!
 - d. Aw, c'mon!
17. List the Four Noble Truths: (4 points)
 - a. Life inevitably involves suffering, is imperfect and unsatisfactory
 - b. Suffering originates in our desires/attachments
 - c. Suffering will cease if our desires/attachments cease
 - d. The way to realize this state is by following the Noble Eightfold Path
18. The term 'te' is viewed differently in Confucianism and Daoism. In Daoism, it is seen as the power through which the Tao is made manifest or is actualized, whereas in Confucianism, it is seen as the virtuous moral strength embodied in wise people. (2 points)

Final Essay #1 (30 points)

Identify any spiritual practice or ritual that we examined in the course that you might take with you on your own spiritual journey. Demonstrate that you understand what the ritual or practice involves and means, in its original context, as well as how some of the classical theorists would approach the ritual. Explain why that practice appeals to you and how it could be integrated into your own journey.

(PROVIDE SPACE ON TEST TO WRITE ANSWER)

Final Essay #2 (30 points)

Describe, in detail, any major philosophical theme, ritual or spiritual practice that we have covered in the class. Give some background on the history, meaning, practice, etc. Examine it through the lens of any one of the classical theorists we studied. Explain what that theorist would say about the practice and why.

(PROVIDE SPACE ON TEST TO WRITE ANSWER)

HANDOUT – AUSTIN AREA RELIGIOUS CENTERS

- *Anglican - Saint Francis Anglican Church
10435 Burnet Road, Suite 125
512-472-7514
<http://www.stfrancisaustin.com/>
- *Baha'i Faith - Baha'i Temple
2215 E.M. Franklin
512-926-8880
<http://www.austinbahai.org/>
- *Southern Baptist - Great Hills Baptist Church
10500 Jollyville Road
512-343-7763
<http://www.ghbc.org/>
- *Tibetan Buddhist - Austin Shambhala Center
1702 South Fifth Street
512-443-3263
<http://austin.shambhala.org/>
- *Zen Buddhist - Austin Zen Center
3014 Washington Square
512-452-5777
<http://www.austinzencenter.org/>
- *Vajrayana Buddhist - Diamond Way Buddhist Center
605 West St. Johns Avenue
512-284-9081
<http://www.diamondway.org/austin/>
- *Theravada Buddhist - Austin Buddhist Vihara
1501 Mangrum Street (Pflugerville)
512- 990-5501
<http://www.austintemple.org/>

- *Mahayana Buddhist - Chittamani Kadampa Buddhist Center
1918 Bissel Lane
512-916-4444
<http://www.meditationinaustin.org/>
- *Catholic - Our Lady of Guadalupe Church
1206 East Ninth Street
512-478-7955
<http://www.olgaustin.org/>
- *Eastern Orthodox Church - Saint Augustine's Orthodox Catholic
100 East Wilbarger St. (Pflugerville)
512-251-9036
<http://www.staugustineswro.com/>
- *Charismatic - Victory Christian Center
7625 IH-35 North
512-458-9100
<http://www.victoryaustin.com/>
- *Christian - Riverbend Church
4214 Capital of Texas Highway (Loop 360)
512-327-3540
<http://www.riverbend.com/>
- *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon) - Austin Institute
2020 San Antonio Street
512-478-8575
<https://studentview.lds.org/Home.aspx/Home/60505>
- *Daoist - Taiji and Qigong Meditation Center
On Shoal Creek Trail, between W. 32nd &
W. 34th Streets
512-452-5757
<http://www.taichiimmortal.com/>

- *Episcopal - Saint David's Episcopal Church
301 East 8th Street
512-610-3500
<http://www.stdave.org/>
- *Society of Friends (Quaker) - Friends Meeting House of Austin
3701 East Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
512-452-1841
<http://www.austinquakers.org/public/index.php>
- *Greek Orthodox - Saint Elias Orthodox Church
408 East 11th Street
512-476-2316
<http://www.sainteliaschurch.org/>
- *Hindu - Radha Madhav Dham
400 Barsana Road
512-288-7180
<http://radhamadhavdham.org/>
- *Jehovah's Witness - Capitol Plaza Congregation
1806 Patton Lane
512-928-0275
<http://www.jw.org/en/>
- *Orthodox Judaism - Congregation Beth El
8902 Mesa Drive
512-346-1776
<http://www.bethelaustin.org/>
- *Reform Judaism - Congregation Beth Israel
3901 Shoal Creek Blvd
512-454-6806
<http://www.bethisrael.org/>

- *Lutheran - Redeemer Lutheran Church
1500 West Anderson Lane
512-459-1500
<http://www.redeemer.net/>
- *Methodist - Trinity United Methodist Church
4001 Speedway
512-459-5835
<http://www.tumc.org/>
- *Muslim - Islamic Center of Greater Austin
5110 Manor Road
512-926-9221
<http://austinmosque.org/>
- *Pagan - Yew Grove Pagan Interfaith
4700 Grover Ave.
512-291-3106
https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Yew_Grove/info
- *Pentecostal - New Life Austin
3200 Century Park Blvd.
512-832-5433
<http://www.newlifeupc.org/>
- *Presbyterian - First Presbyterian Church of Austin
8001 Mesa Drive
512-345-8866
<http://www.fpcaustin.org/>
- *Scientology - Scientology Church of Texas
2200 Guadalupe Street
512-474-6631
<http://www.scientology-austin.org/>

- *Seventh Day Adventist - Round Rock Seventh Day Adventist Church
4 Applegate Circle (Round Rock)
512-388-7870
<http://roundrock22.adventistchurchconnect.org/>
- *Sikh - Gurdwara Sahib Austin
5104 Avispa Way
512-263-9551
<http://www.austingurdwarasahib.com/>
- *Unitarian Universalist - First UU Church of Austin
4700 Grover Ave.
512-452-6168
<http://austinuu.org>

HANDOUT – SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR CLASS INTERACTIONS

Adapted from ideas collected by Rev. Leslie Takahashi Morris, Dr. Mike Hogue & Dr. Mark A. Hicks

“What do we need to do and how do we need to be in order for us, as a community of learning, meet our collective learning goals?”

- As a listener, assume positive intent on the part of fellow speakers; as a speaker, be open to examining your intentions (i.e. are you trying to convince someone of something or change their mind?). Listen deeply, to all points of view.
- Set your own boundaries for personal sharing – be aware of how much of your life you are willing and able to share.
- Be willing to examine and grapple with how personal assumptions shape your ‘truths’. Confront your own assumptions.
- Practice both/and thinking, as opposed to either/or thinking. In our dominant culture, we often believe that ideas, situations, plans and so on can only be ‘this way’ or ‘that way’. What happens if *both* ideas can be meaningful, valuable, or true? Don’t get trapped in false dichotomies – unleash the collaborative creativity of both/and thinking.
- Speak personal viewpoints in constructive and civil ways. It is OK to disagree, but never to shame, blame or attack another. Disagreement is natural and should be expected. But we will sit with that disagreement, even if it feels uncomfortable. We may come to better ideas or deeper understandings through our areas of disagreement. Withhold unsolicited personal judgments.
- Allow space for emotions to be expressed; and notice when you get emotional – what are your emotions teaching you?
- Use “I” statements; only speak from personal experience. Avoid generalizing your view as being a universal truth or attempting to speak for an entire group, whether that group is our own or another’s.
- Take responsibility for your own learning – actively listen, take notes, read the material, ask questions when you need to. If there’s something you don’t understand, ask for clarification. Come to conversations with an ‘intent to learn’ rather than an ‘intent to control’.
- Respect confidentiality. Talking about class sessions with those outside of the class is okay, but don’t share personal content (stories & names) without permission.
- It is OK to be messy. Real dialogue can be messy – welcome that as a sign of authenticity. Practice bringing to the conversation a spirit of compassion and flexibility.

- Step up/step back – share the floor. If you are a person who often remains silent in group conversations, push yourself to share your experiences and perspectives. If you are someone who often speaks up in such conversations, leave space for others, allow others to speak if you've already spoken. Be intentional about both contributing to the conversation and sharing the 'air space'.
- As a speaker, be aware of and consider how your individual communication style affects others.
- As a listener, be willing to sit with discomfort with other people's personal truths.
- Speak personal concerns directly with that person, and not about them. Resolve conflicts proactively.
- Consider this a brave space, as opposed to a safe space – be open to taking risks, prepare to have your assumptions challenged, expect to be exposed to new thoughts. If someone expresses an idea, opinion, or point of view new to you or different from your own, *try it on*; see it from another's perspective.
- Be willing to revisit and renegotiate these ideas should it be necessary. Consider this a living document, able to change to fit new needs as we all grow together.
- What else...?

HANDOUT – KNOW THYSELF

Our guidelines for class conduct include the notion that we will each be responsible for our own learning. To that end, it would behoove you to have a good understanding of what type of learning style suits you best. Try one or more of these free online quizzes at home, to get a better understanding of what will and won't work for you:

- <http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles.shtml>
- <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire>
- <http://www.personal.psu.edu/bxb11/LSI/LSI.htm>

Along the same lines, much of our coursework will be done through discussion, in both small and large groups. For that reason, it would be a good idea for you to have a firm grasp on what kind of personality you have; how you interact with others and engage in the world. Try one or more of these free online quizzes at home, to get a better understanding of how you approach others:

- <http://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>
- <http://www.eclecticenergies.com/enneagram/test-2.php>
- https://www.colorcode.com/free_personality_test/

Finally, you should know and understand your own biases. Any unconscious biases you might have will affect your work as you interact and study different faiths and cultures. Being aware of those biases will help you better counteract that effect. Take this free online quiz at home, to get a better understanding of what implicit biases you might have:

- <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>
 - Select 'religion IAT'
 - Do any others that you are curious about

HANDOUT – CUMMINGS' IDENTITY MAP AND WORKSHEET

The Identity Map was created by Rev. Dr. Monica L. Cummings, influenced by the work of Pamela A. Hays.

Some of our values, beliefs, and behaviors are conscious. We hold others without awareness. The Identity Map is a tool for developing self-awareness related to the cultural influences that have shaped and informed the values, beliefs, and behaviors we use to engage the world.

The Identity Map consists of:

- Year Born / Age – significant cultural influences
 - For example, the things happening in the world (and the effects those events have on ones' perspective) are radically different for baby boomers, generation X, and millenials.
- Geographic Areas Lived – childhood / adult
 - Consider rural vs. urban, city vs. suburb, South vs. North, East Coast vs. West Coast.
- National Identity
 - For example, the perspective of an American is very different from that of a South Korean. Do you proudly claim a national identity, or not think about it, or something else?
- Ethnicity / Race – first language, language spoken at home
 - Answer the question 'what do I prefer to be called?' Native American or American Indian, Hispanic or Latino/a, Black or African American, etc.
- Religious / Spiritual Affiliation – childhood / adult
 - Has it changed as you've aged? Think about why or why not.
- Socioeconomic Status – childhood / adult
 - Do you identify as working class, upper class, middle class? Has it changed?
- Disabilities
 - Disabilities include mental, physical, and acquired disabilities.
- Sexual Orientation
 - Sexual orientation includes heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and others. Does this identity affect the way you engage the world?
- Gender
 - Gender includes female, male, and transgendered people. Are you able to see the inherent biases you might have due to your gender?

HANDOUT – THE DIALOGUE DECALOGUE

Ground Rules for Interreligious, Intercultural Dialogue

By Leonard Swidler

The "Dialogue Decalogue" was first published in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* in 1983 and has been translated into more than a dozen languages. It is presented here in a slightly revised version. While the "Dialogue Decalogue" was originally written primarily to further interreligious dialogue it has recently been adapted to a variety of other circumstances to help people of diverse ideologies and value systems build bridges and find common ground.

The Dialogue Decalogue

Dialogue is a conversation on a common subject between two or more persons with differing views, the primary purpose of which is for each participant to learn from the other so that s/he can change and grow. This very definition of dialogue embodies the first commandment of dialogue.

In the religious-ideological sphere in the past, we came together to discuss with those differing with us, for example, Catholics with Protestants, either to defeat an opponent, or to learn about an opponent so as to deal more effectively with her or him, or at best to negotiate with him or her. If we faced each other at all, it was in confrontation--sometimes more openly polemically, sometimes more subtly so, but always with the ultimate goal of defeating the other, because we were convinced that we alone had the absolute truth.

But dialogue is not debate. In dialogue each partner must listen to the other as openly and sympathetically as s/he can in an attempt to understand the other's position as precisely and, as it were, as much from within, as possible. Such an attitude automatically includes the assumption that at any point we might find the partner's position so persuasive that, if we would act with integrity, we would have to change, and change can be disturbing.

We are here, of course, speaking of a specific kind of dialogue, an interreligious, interideological dialogue. To have such, it is not sufficient that the dialogue partners discuss a religious-ideological subject, that is, the meaning of life and how to live accordingly. Rather, they must come to the dialogue as persons somehow significantly identified with a religious or ideological community. If I were neither a Christian nor a Marxist, for example, I could not participate as a "partner" in Christian-Marxist dialogue, though I might listen in, ask some questions for information, and make some helpful comments.

It is obvious that interreligious, interideological dialogue is something new under the sun. We could not conceive of it, let alone do it in the past. How, then, can we effectively engage in this new thing? The following are some basic ground rules, or "commandments," of interreligious, interideological dialogue that must be observed if dialogue is actually to take place. These are not

theoretical rules, or commandments given from "on high," but ones that have been learned from hard experience.

FIRST COMMANDMENT: The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly. Minimally, the very fact that I learn that my dialogue partner believes "this" rather than "that" proportionally changes my attitude toward her; and a change in my attitude is a significant change in me. We enter into dialogue so that we can learn, change, and grow, not so we can force change on the other, as one hopes to do in debate--a hope realized in inverse proportion to the frequency and ferocity with which debate is entered into. On the other hand, because in dialogue each partner comes with the intention of learning and changing herself, one's partner in fact will also change. Thus the goal of debate, and much more, is accomplished far more effectively by dialogue.

SECOND COMMANDMENT: Interreligious, interideological dialogue must be a two-sided project--within each religious or ideological community and between religious or ideological communities. Because of the "corporate" nature of interreligious dialogue, and since the primary goal of dialogue is that each partner learn and change himself, it is also necessary that each participant enter into dialogue not only with his partner across the faith line--the Lutheran with the Anglican, for example--but also with his coreligionists, with his fellow Lutherans, to share with them the fruits of the interreligious dialogue. Only thus can the whole community eventually learn and change, moving toward an ever more perceptive insight into reality.

THIRD COMMANDMENT: Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity. It should be made clear in what direction the major and minor thrusts of the tradition move, what the future shifts might be, and, if necessary, where the participant has difficulties with her own tradition. No false fronts have any place in dialogue.

Conversely--each participant must assume a similar complete honesty and sincerity in the other partners. Not only will the absence of sincerity prevent dialogue from happening, but the absence of the assumption of the partner's sincerity will do so as well. In brief: no trust, no dialogue.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT: In interreligious, interideological dialogue we must not compare our ideals with our partner's practice, but rather our ideals with our partner's ideals, our practice with our partner's practice.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT: Each participant must define himself. Only the Jew, for example, can define what it means to be a Jew. The rest can only

describe what it looks like from the outside. Moreover, because dialogue is a dynamic medium, as each participant learns, he will change and hence continually deepen, expand, and modify his self-definition as a Jew--being careful to remain in constant dialogue with fellow Jews. Thus it is mandatory that each dialogue partner define what it means to be an authentic member of his own tradition.

Conversely--the one interpreted must be able to recognize herself in the interpretation. This is the golden rule of interreligious hermeneutics, as has been often reiterated by the "apostle of interreligious dialogue," Raimundo Panikkar. For the sake of understanding, each dialogue participant will naturally attempt to express for herself what she thinks is the meaning of the partner's statement; the partner must be able to recognize herself in that expression. The advocate of "a world theology," Wilfred Cantwell Smith, would add that the expression must also be verifiable by critical observers who are not involved.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT: Each participant must come to the dialogue with no hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement are. Rather, each partner should not only listen to the other partner with openness and sympathy but also attempt to agree with the dialogue partner as far as is possible while still maintaining integrity with his own tradition; where he absolutely can agree no further without violating his own integrity, precisely there is the real point of disagreement--which most often turns out to be different from the point of disagreement that was falsely assumed ahead of time.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: Dialogue can take place only between equals, or *par cum pari* as the Second Vatican Council[1] put it. Both must come to learn from each other. Therefore, if, for example, the Muslim views Hinduism as inferior, or if the Hindu views Islam as inferior, there will be no dialogue. If authentic interreligious, interideological dialogue between Muslims and Hindus is to occur, then both the Muslim and the Hindu must come mainly to learn from each other; only then will it be "equal with equal," *par cum pari*. This rule also indicates that there can be no such thing as a one-way dialogue. For example, Jewish-Christian discussions begun in the 1960s were mainly only prolegomena to inter-religious dialogue. Understandably and properly, the Jews came to these exchanges only to teach Christians, although the Christians came mainly to learn. But, if authentic interreligious dialogue between Christians and Jews is to occur, then the Jews must also come mainly to learn; only then will it too be *par cum pari*.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: Dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust. Although interreligious, interideological dialogue must occur with some kind of "corporate" dimension, that is, the participants must be involved

as members of a religious or ideological community--for instance, as Marxists or Taoists--it is also fundamentally true that it is only persons who can enter into dialogue. But a dialogue among persons can be built only on personal trust. Hence it is wise not to tackle the most difficult problems in the beginning, but rather to approach first those issues most likely to provide some common ground, thereby establishing the basis of human trust. Then, gradually, as this personal trust deepens and expands, the more thorny matters can be undertaken. Thus, as in learning we move from the known to the unknown, so in dialogue we proceed from commonly held matters--which, given our mutual ignorance resulting from centuries of hostility, will take us quite some time to discover fully--to discuss matters of disagreement.

NINTH COMMANDMENT: Persons entering into interreligious, interideological dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and their own religious or ideological traditions. A lack of such self-criticism implies that one's own tradition already has all the correct answers. Such an attitude makes dialogue not only unnecessary, but even impossible, since we enter into dialogue primarily so we can learn--which obviously is impossible if our tradition has never made a misstep, if it has all the right answers. To be sure, in interreligious, interideological dialogue one must stand within a religious or ideological tradition with integrity and conviction, but such integrity and conviction must include, not exclude, a healthy self-criticism. Without it there can be no dialogue--and, indeed, no integrity.

TENTH COMMANDMENT: Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the partner's religion or ideology "from within"; for a religion or ideology is not merely something of the head, but also of the spirit, heart, and "whole being," individual and communal. John Dunne here speaks of "passing over" into another's religious or ideological experience and then coming back enlightened, broadened, and deepened. As Raimundo Panikkar notes, "To know what a religion says, we must understand what it says, but for this we must somehow believe in what it says": for example, "A Christian will never fully understand Hinduism if he is not, in one way or another, converted to Hinduism. Nor will a Hindu ever fully understand Christianity unless he, in one way or another, becomes Christian."

Interreligious, interideological dialogue operates in three areas: the practical, where we collaborate to help humanity; the depth or "spiritual" dimension where we attempt to experience the partner's religion or ideology "from within"; the cognitive, where we seek understanding and truth. Interreligious, interideological dialogue also has three phases. In the first phase we unlearn misinformation about each other and begin to know each other as we truly are. In phase two we begin to discern values in the partner's tradition and wish to appropriate them into our own tradition. For example, in the Buddhist-Christian dialogue Christians might learn a greater appreciation of the meditative

tradition, and Buddhists might learn a greater appreciation of the prophetic, social justice tradition--both values traditionally strongly, though not exclusively, associated with the other's community. If we are serious, persistent, and sensitive enough in the dialogue, we may at times enter into phase three. Here we together begin to explore new areas of reality, of meaning, and of truth, of which neither of us had even been aware before. We are brought face to face with this new, as-yet-unknown-to-us dimension of reality only because of questions, insights, probings produced in the dialogue. We may thus dare to say that patiently pursued dialogue can become an instrument of new "re-velation," a further "un-veiling" of reality--on which we must then act.

There is something radically different about phase one on the one hand and phases two and three on the other. In the latter we do not simply add on quantitatively another "truth" or value from the partner's tradition. Instead, as we assimilate it within our own religious self-understanding, it will proportionately transform our self-understanding. Since our dialogue partner will be in a similar position, we will then be able to witness authentically to those elements of deep value in our own tradition that our partner's tradition may well be able to assimilate with self-transforming profit. All this of course will have to be done with complete integrity on each side, each partner remaining authentically true to the vital core of his/her own religious tradition. However, in significant ways that vital core will be perceived and experienced differently under the influence of the dialogue, but, if the dialogue is carried on with both integrity and openness, the result will be that, for example, the Jew will be authentically Jewish and the Christian will be authentically Christian, not despite the fact that Judaism and/or Christianity have been profoundly "Buddhized," but because of it. And the same is true of a Judaized and/or Christianized Buddhism. There can be no talk of a syncretism here, for syncretism means amalgamating various elements of different religions into some kind of a (con)fused whole without concern for the integrity of the religions involved--which is not the case with authentic dialogue.

Note

1. The Second Vatican Council (also known as Vatican II), the largest council in the history of the Church, with some 3000 participants drawn from all over the world, was called by Pope John XXIII to promote "peace and unity of all humankind," and was in session from 1962-1965. It opened up the Catholic Church to the modern world and radically changed the traditional official attitudes toward non-Catholic Christianity, non-Christian religions, and Catholics who called for freedom of thought and conscience. Self-segregation, condemnation, and proselytizing gave way to constructive dialogue with the secular world and other denominations or religions. (Note by Ingrid Shafer)

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