

Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee

Approval Form

15

Proposal Title: RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

Sponsor(s): James H. Grace and the Philosophy and Religion faculty Dept.: Philosophy and Religion

Check one: Course Specialization Concentration Achievement Certificate
 Certification Program Major Program Minor Change (please name: deletion or credit/title/catalog change)

Undergraduate Graduate 3 Credit Hours

Step 1 (Department)
 Approved 1/1/84
 Not Approved
James H. Grace
Dept. CC Chairperson
 Reviewed 1/1/84
James H. Grace
Chairperson, Dept.

Step 2 (Receipt)
SCC# 84-85-2
Proposal Received 1/1/84
James H. Grace
Chairperson, SCC

Step 3 (School CC)
Reviewed 1/1/84
 Approved
 Not Approved
Comments: Consolidation of 2 approved courses as a course. Has been approved by committee.
James H. Grace
Chairperson, School Curr. Comm.

Step 4 (Academic Dean) Comments:
Reviewed 1/13/85
James H. Grace
Signature, Dean of School

Step 5 (SCC)
Open Hearing 1/13/85 Approved by Senate Curriculum Committee 1/13/85
 Returned to sponsor(s) for the following reasons:

Step 6 (Faculty Senate)
Presented to Faculty Senate: 1/13/85 Approved Not Approved
Notification to Vice-President Academic Affairs 1/13/85
James H. Grace
Signature, SCC Chairperson

Step 7 (Vice-President for Academic Affairs)

Received 3/4/25
Date

Approved Yes No

If no. reasons are as follows:

*NOTE THIS COURSE REPLACES
2 COURSES
REL. OF WESTERN WORLD
REL. OF EASTERN WORLD*

Student credit hours 3

Faculty load hours 3

Equalized credit hours 3

Official copy and approval sheet filed _____
Date

Signature *[Signature]*
Vice-President for Academic Affairs

Registrar

Approved course description received _____
Date

Hegis Taxonomy and Course Number assigned _____

Signature _____
Registrar Date

Notification forwarded: Senate Curriculum Committee Chairperson, Department Chairperson(s), Academic Dean(s), Registrar, Sponsor(s).

Course Proposal

I. Details

- A. Title: Religions of the World
- B. Sponsors: Dr. James H. Grace and the faculty of the
Philosophy and Religion Department
- C. Level: 100
- D. Curricular Effect: General Education
- E. Prerequisites: None
- F. Time/Scale: We plan to offer one or two sections of this course
in the Fall of 1985
- G. A survey of our present staff and library holdings suggests that we have
the resources to offer this Course.

II. Rationale

Our decision to offer this Course is perhaps best understood by reference to the history of comparative religion courses at Glassboro State College. In 1963 Professor Whitcraft developed and taught the first course in religion ever to be offered at our institution. This initial "Religions of the World" course was so successful in attracting students that eventually other courses (Introduction to Religion; Religion in Urbane Society; Religion and Psychology; Philosophy of Religion; etc.) were introduced to respond to strong student interest. Also, additional faculty were hired to teach in this area. In 1975, we decided to replace the one semester Religions of the World with two courses, one dealing with Oriental Religions, the other with Occidental faiths. We made this change because our students at that time were ready for a more in-depth experience in that many of them had already taken a basic comparative religion course in high school.

At the present time, the situation as to student preparedness has reverted to 1963. We find that most of our students are not ready to undertake the more intensive two semester experience in comparative religions. Thus, we are prepared to delete "Religions of the Western World" and "Religions of the Eastern World" and to once again offer the more basic one semester Religions of the World.

With this brief history in mind, we will now proceed to a more detailed rationale for an introductory course in comparative religions, one which also is, we believe, appropriate for General Education.

We would argue that a course in world religions is important in the College curriculum because of the important role which religion has played in the history of the human race. It is virtually impossible to understand Western history without taking into account the significant impact which Judaism and Christianity have had in shaping the ideology and social milieu of Europe and America. The same is true of the influence of Islam in the Arab world, of Hinduism in India, and of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism in the Far East.

In addition to its historical meaning, religion continues to play a vital part not only in personal lives but also in the major social and political events of our own day as is evidenced in the Islamic-Jewish confrontation in the Middle East, the Protestant-Catholic controversy in Northern Ireland, and

the Hindu-Sikh conflict in modern India. One could also point to evangelical Protestantism's role in the emergence of political conservatism in the United States, the revival of Buddhism in India and its participation in undermining the caste system there, and the resurrection of Shinto among right-wing political movements in Japan. Eighteenth Century Enlightenment thinkers and Nineteenth Century Social Darwinists predicted the early demise of religion at the hands of reason and science, but there is good reason to think that religion will both endure into the future and continue to exert a profound impact upon the human community.

Finally, comparative religion is an important area of academic concern because it focuses upon how people in various lands and cultures have sought to come to terms with what might be called the ultimate questions of human existence. Does life have any comprehensive and ultimate meaning? Why is it that people, especially good people, suffer? Are all values culturally relative or is there an absolute point of view from which they may be judged? Is it possible to transcend in a radical and liberating manner the ambiguities and vicissitudes of human existence? Even though such questions are perennial in nature, they are rarely addressed in academic disciplines other than religion studies and students who master the basics of world religions will have the opportunity to examine and evaluate a variety of ways in which religion has sought to "answer" them.

III. Essence of the Course

A. Outcomes: Students who complete this course will be able to

1. Understand and utilize the major concepts and methods employed in the academic study of religion,
2. Comprehend and compare the beliefs, rituals, and practices of the major world faiths,
3. Trace the historical origins and development of religion in China, India, the Middle East, and Western Civilization,
4. Examine and evaluate the major world faiths within the context of the modern world.

B. Topical Outline

1. The Nature of Religion

- a. Definitions
- b. Traditional Approaches: Apologetics and Reductionism.
- c. Religion Studies

2. Judaism

- a. The Covenant
- b. The Creator and Redeemer of Israel
- c. The Meanings of Human Life

- d. Torah: Tanach and Talmud.
- e. Life Cycle: birth, circumcism; bar/bat mitzvah; Marriage and Family Life; Education; Death.
- f. Cycle of the Year: Sabbath and Holy Days.
- g. Three Ways in Judaism: Orthodox, Reform; Conservative.
- h. Jewish Identity in 20th Century: Holocaust; Modern Israel; Jewish-Christian Dialogue.

3. Christianity

- a. Roots in Judaism
- b. Establishment of the Christian Church.
- c. Historical Survey: the Apostolic to the Protestant Reformation
- d. Theological Formulation: Creeds and Councils.
- e. Common Beliefs: Reality of God; human nature; Christ as divine and human; Christ as Savior and Lord.
- f. Christian Praxis: Rituals and Virtues.
- g. Points of Controversy: authority; Scripture; Means of Grace; church policy; morality.
- h. Three Ways: Orthodox Church; Roman Catholicism; Protestant Denominations.
- i. The Modern World: Science and Technology.

4. Islam

- a. Origin and Development: Life of Mohammed; Meccan Ministry; the Hijrah; Medina; growth of Islam.
- b. The Quran
- c. Pillars of Faith: the Creed; Prayer; Zakah; Ramadan; Hajj.
- d. Articles of Faith: Allah; Angels; Books of Allah; Prophets; Last Days; Kismet.
- e. Three Ways of Being Muslim: Sunnis; Shi'ites; Sufis.
- f. Secularism and the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in the 20th Century.

5. Religions of India

- a. Pre-Vedic Religion: Mother goddess and proto-Siva.
- b. Aryan Invasion: the Veda; Shruti and Smiriti Scriptures.
- c. Vedic gods and sacrifices.
- d. Vedanta: Upanishads; Maya; Atman and Brahman.
- e. The Bhakti Movement: Bhagavad-Gita; Krishna and Siva; Avatara of Vishnu.
- f. Dvaita Literature: Yoga of Purusha and Prakriti.
- g. Jainism and Sikhism.
- h. The Conflict of Vedic and Secular Cultures.

6. Buddhism

- a. Gautama Buddha and Four Noble Truths.
- b. Dukkha and the Eightfold Path: Anatman and Sunyata.

- c. Nirvana and Vimutti.
- d. Hinayana and Mahayana: Buddha; Dharma; Sangha.
- e. Bodhisattva and Trikaya in Mahayana.

7. Religions of China

- a. Pre-Chou religious beliefs and practices: Shanti cult and divination.
- b. Confucius and Confucianism as a civil religion.
- c. Central Confucian Teachings: Li; Jen; Cheng.
- d. Filial Piety and Confucian Practice.
- e. Lao-Tze and the Rise of Taoism.
- f. The Teaching of the Tao Te Ching.
- g. Corporeal Immortality and Taoist Method of Salvation.
- h. Neo-Confucianism.
- i. Chinese Buddhism: Pure Land and Chang (Zen)

8. Religions of Japan

- a. Ancient Japanese Ways.
- b. Shintoism.
- c. Buddhism's Journey from China to Japan.
- d. Zen Buddhism.

IV. Results of Consultation

" Religions of the World will be a valuable addition to the general education offerings. Frequently, I make reference to various aspects of religion in many of my classes, especially in the lower division courses. Religion is a seminal element of human culture and has great significance in understanding the development of the modern world. It is my impression that my students lack sufficient depth and breadth of knowledge concerning religion, especially religious orientations beyond the mainstream of American experience. I endorse this proposal without reservation."

--Dr. Jay Chaskes
Department of Sociology

See also Dr. Porterfield's letter on the next page.

V. Catalogue Description

Primary attention will be given to the religious, historical and cultural meanings as seen in the beliefs, traditions, and practices of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Other faiths will be examined as time allows. Each religion will be studied in its own terms and within its own context.



State of New Jersey

GLASSBORO STATE COLLEGE
GLASSBORO, NEW JERSEY 08028

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

November 12, 1984

Dr. James Grace
Philosophy and Religion Department
Glassboro State College

Dear Dr. Grace:

The proposed basic comparative religion course comes at a most appropriate time. With the current news about religion in politics on a world basis a background of historical and theological comparison is necessary for a clear understanding of events. The situation Ireland, the recent assassination in India, and the recent spate of articles on Armageddon politics point to the relevance of the proposed course. It is very clear that religion will continue to play a powerful constructive and destructive role in human affairs. Certainly the proposed course will enhance the significance of humanities side of the General Education Model.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R M Porterfield".

Dr. Richard M. Porterfield
Chairman

RMP/ds