

Middlesex Community College  
PHL 151 (LD) -World Religions ONLINE  
Fall 2014 – CRN 3648

Instructor: Mensimah Shabazz, Ph.D. CDT  
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Telephone: 860.343.5784  
Office Hours: By Appointment  
Credits: 3 Credit Hours

## SYLLABUS

### Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the beliefs and practices of major world religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shamanism, etc. Students will also gain an appreciation for the similarities and differences between various religions. The course will touch on some philosophical religious questions such as the value of religion, spirituality, God, soul, and mystical experience. Course activities will include readings from course texts, reading write-ups, a term paper, class discussions, some lecturing, and field trip report.

### Recommended Prerequisite: English 101

As this course requires a considerable amount of writing, it is recommended that you have already completed English 101 or have equivalent college-level writing ability.

### Graduation Requirements / Transfer:

This course fulfills the following MxCC graduation requirements: Philosophy Elective, Humanities Elective, Liberal Arts Elective, Open Elective, Library Research (L) and Diversity (D) requirements. The course also fulfills, Philosophy, Humanities, and Liberal Arts General Education Requirements at most 4year institutions (UCONN is currently an exception). It may also fulfill Diversity or World Culture requirements at some institutions. Check your transfer institution for more information.

### Course Texts & Resources:

Texts are available for purchase at the MxCC book store in Founders Hall, or for in-library study use from the reserve desk in the MxCC library under my name (Shabazz). Other valuable resources are available on-line via the Internet through the course web site on Blackboard Vista available at [mycommnet.edu](http://mycommnet.edu).

**THE ILLUSTRATED WORLD'S RELIGIONS**, by Huston Smith. HarperOne, 1995, \$25

This is a classic text that presents the essential core ideas of the major world religions in an easy-to understand presentation by one of the leading authorities on world religions. **Required**

**THE WORLD'S WISDOM** by Philip Novak. HarperCollins Publishers, 1994. \$17

This is a supplemental book that presents important sample excerpts from the sacred texts of the major world religions. **Required**

**HANDBOOK OF THE WORLD'S LIVING RELIGIONS**, by John R. Hinnells. Penguin, 2010, \$22

This text presents detailed facts and background information on the major world religions. It can serve as a primary source for doing the fact sheets. See calendar for reading assignments. **Required**

**Grade Breakdown & Course Requirements:**

- Journals – 8 @ 5% each – 40%
- Discussion Board/Class Conference – 8 @ 5% each - 40%
- Sacred Site Visit and Paper - 10%
- Final Paper – 10%

I will use the following grading system:

95-100%	A	90-94%	A-	87-89%	B+
84-86%	B	80-83%	B-	77-79	C+
74-76	C	70-73	C-	67-69	D+
64-66	D	60-63	D-	Below 59	F

Your grade in this course will be based on a 100% scale. A perfect score of 100 will get an A in this class.

**Writing Rubric (This rubric will be used to score your writing assignments.)**

	5 (Excellent)	4 (Good)	3 (Fair)	2 (Poor)
Thoroughness	Answered all questions in the exercise completely and in the appropriate order.	Answered all questions in the exercise but not completely and/or not in the appropriate order.	Answered most questions in the exercise but not completely and/or not in the appropriate order.	Did not answer an adequate number of the questions in the exercise.
Supporting Details	Answered all questions in the exercise and provided a substantial amount of relevant detail.	Answered all questions in the exercise and provided an adequate amount of relevant detail.	Answered most of the questions in the exercise and provided an adequate amount of relevant detail.	Answered some of the questions in the exercise and provided an inadequate amount of detail.
Demonstrated Understanding of the Assignment	Response demonstrates a thorough understanding of the exercise and is substantiated by several examples from the text and/or companion website.	Response demonstrates understanding of the exercise and is substantiated by at least one example from the text and/or companion website.	Response demonstrates some understanding of the exercise but is not substantiated by examples from the text and/or companion website.	Response demonstrates very little understanding of the exercise.
Grammar, Mechanics, Spelling and Sentence Structure	Response is highly polished; no grammar or spelling errors.	Response is polished; maximum of one grammar or spelling error.	Response is adequate; maximum of two grammar or spelling errors.	Inadequate response; more than two spelling/grammar errors.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Journals (8) – 40%** - Please see schedule for due dates.

Journal Assignments consist of comprehensive writing assignments selected to reflect the learning objectives identified in each module. These assignments are designed to help you learn about key ideas and important background information on the four major groups we will be studying: (1) Indigenous Religions, (2) Eastern Religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism; and (3) Western Religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (4) New Religious Movements. The required course texts are good sources of information. Additional sources are available on the Internet. See the course site for recommended web sites. You must indicate what source(s) you use on your Assignments.

## **Discussion Board/Class Conference: (40%)**

The course places a strong emphasis on active learning experiences designed to supplement regular “book” learning and lectures. The professor will post weekly questions and topic discussion on the Board. It is important that you post your initial response (a paragraph length is required for the initial response) and then post your response (second response should also be a paragraph in length) to other students by the due dates. Please remember that this is a major part of your final grade.

## **Sacred Site Visit and Report – 10%**

Attend a religious service from a tradition other than the one with which you are affiliated and write a 3 page reflection on the experience. Please contact the institution that you wish to visit in advance and set up a meeting with a member of the congregation. You should prepare several questions in advance; think carefully about what questions you want to ask, since asking the right questions will help you develop a clear thesis for your paper. Please include a ‘Selfie’ of your visit.

## **Final Paper: 10%**

There are two approaches you may take, all of which are designed to be comparative in nature:

1. One is to write a personal reflection paper that highlights your spiritual journey. Please include themes that resonated from studying World Religions, and visits to Sacred Sites.
2. Or choose a religious theme, such as, God, meditation or prayer, moral beliefs, authorities, etc., and discuss how it is similar or different in at least two or three different religions.

The paper should follow proper term paper protocol, i.e., be typed and double-spaced with proper grammar and spelling, and clearly structured with a major theme or thesis. Papers should be about 4 to 6 pages. Remember to keep your discussion focused and not try to discuss all aspects of the religions you are writing about.

## **OMISSIONS:**

Due to time restrictions, we of course cannot cover every major religious tradition of the world or every dimension of religiosity. Some major omissions in the course include ancient Egyptian, Persian and Mesopotamian religions, Australian, Abrahamic religions in “non-Western” societies (e.g., Christianity in Africa and Korea), Baha’i, Japanese New Religions, Paganism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, as well as contemporary American and “non-American” religions. Students with the interest and motivation may write their final papers on one of these topics.

## **Final Grades:**

Grades are posted on the course web site on Blackboard Vista. Please check your graded work carefully and review your grades on the web site. If you have any questions about the grade you received on an assignment or your final grade for the course, please talk to me about it. If a mistake is discovered, I will change your grade appropriately. For this reason it is important that you always save all graded papers and assignments returned to you.

## **Withdrawals and Incomplete Grades:**

If for some reason you are unable to complete the course and do not wish to receive a grade, I can assign a grade of “W” indicating you have withdrawn from the course, provided you speak to me about it before the end of the semester. Otherwise, I may assign a grade based on the work you have completed, if any. If you have completed a substantial amount of work but are unable to finish before the end of the semester due to unavoidable circumstances, and you would like the opportunity to finish, I am willing to give an incomplete grade, which will give you an additional semester to complete the work. The request should be made before the end of the semester.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Calendar	Week Topic	Chapter Readings	DEADLINES	
			Discussions	Journals
Week 1	Course Overview / Point of Departure	WR 1	09/05	09/07
Week 2-3	Indigenous Religions - Native American	WR 9; WW 8; HWLR 11; HWLR 13, 20	09/19	09/21
Week 3-4	Hinduism, Yoga	WR 2; WW 1; HWLR 5;	10/03	10/05
Week 5-6	Buddhism, Zen & Meditation	WR 2; WW 2; HWLR 8;	10/17	10/19
Week 7	Taoism & Confucianism; I Ching	WR 4, 5; WW 3, 4; HWLR 9;	10/24	10/26
Week 8-9	Judaism	WR 7; WW 5; HWLR 1	10/31	11/03
Week 10-11	Christianity	WR 8; HWLR 2; WW 6	11/14	11/16
Week 12-13	Islam / Sufism	WR 6; HWLR 3; WW 7	11/21	11/23
<b>Thanksgiving BREAK</b>				
<b>REPORTS - Sacred Site Visit due 12/1</b>				
Week 14	New Religious Movements	HWLR 14	12/5	12/07
Week 15	<b>Final Paper Due 12/9</b>			
WRAP UP –	The Relation between Religions			

\*WR = **World's Religions** by Huston Smith

\*WW = **The World's Wisdom** by Philip Novak

\*HLR = Handbook of The World's Living Religions by Hinnells

## IMPORTANT COLLEGE POLICIES!! PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

For information about the college's policies and procedures regarding academic honesty, accessibility/disability services, attendance, audio-recording in the classroom, grade appeals, plagiarism, religious accommodations, weather and emergency closings, and more, please go to the following



website: [www.mxcc.edu/catalog/syllabus-policies/](http://www.mxcc.edu/catalog/syllabus-policies/) or scan the QR code with your smart phone. Also, please become familiar with the policies regarding nondiscrimination, sexual misconduct, and general student conduct at the following website: [www.mxcc.edu/nondiscrimination/](http://www.mxcc.edu/nondiscrimination/).

### NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Middlesex Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious creed, age, sex, national origin, marital status, ancestry, present or past history of mental disorder, learning disability or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or genetic information in its programs and activities. In addition, the College does not discriminate in employment on the additional basis of veteran status or criminal record.

The following people have been designated to handle inquiries or complaints regarding non-discrimination policies and practices:

- Primary Title IX Coordinator  
Dr. Adrienne Maslin  
Dean of Students/Title IX and Section 504/ADA Coordinator  
[amaslin@mxcc.edu](mailto:amaslin@mxcc.edu); 860-343-5759; Founders Hall Room 123 |
- Secondary Title IX Coordinator  
Ms. Mary Lou Phillips  
Director of Human Resources, Middlesex Community College  
[mphillips@mxcc.edu](mailto:mphillips@mxcc.edu); 860-343-5751; Founders Hall Room 115
- Secondary Title IX Coordinator  
Ms. Queen Fordham  
Coordinator of the Meriden Center Welcome Desk  
[qfordham@mxcc.edu](mailto:qfordham@mxcc.edu); 203-608-3011