



MERCER
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COURSE OUTLINE

| Course Number | Course Title | Credits |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| REL-101 | Introduction to Religious Studies | 3.0 |
| Hours: Lecture/Lab/Other 3/0/0 | Co- or Pre-requisite --- | Implementation Semester & Year FA 2022 |

Catalog description:

An introduction to the study of religions, focusing on that nature of religious beliefs and practices, such as sacred power, myths, texts, art and rituals, the problem of evil, and the relationship between diverse cultures, ethics and religions. 3 lecture hours.

General Education Category:

[Goal 6: Humanities](#)

Course coordinator: Ken Howarth, 6095703809
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Required texts & Other materials:

Religion A Study in Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, Kent Richter, Oxford, 2016, ISBN: 9780190291198

Handouts & Websites as directed; for updated editions/similar text-check bookstore

Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Identify and define the key religious terms, traditions, practices, materials, issues and theories (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
2. Employ critical thinking and academic religious studies methods and criteria to determine and analyze the different ways Western and non-Western religions influence the lives of their followers and others, individually and collectively, within and across different cultures (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
3. Distinguish and analyze how religious considerations relate to philosophical and scientific considerations with regard to fundamental questions (origins, meaning, etc.) and contemporary ethical, political, economic and other issues and events (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
4. Describe, explain, interpret, and compare the differing religiosities of individuals and groups as

expressed traditionally, formally, textually and in actual practice, including factoring the issues of respect and rights (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)

5. Frame and present your own views on religious issues, both orally and in writing, with logical and critical precision, clarity, coherence and rigor. (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)

Each goal or outcome relates to “religious studies literacy” with respect to content knowledge and to the “discipline-specific methodologies” of the study of religion with respect to relevant content material. Other learning goals may be specified in particular sections by the instructor with the course coordinator’s approval in addition to but not as a replacement for the above listed goals.

Course-specific Institutional Learning Goals (ILG):

Institutional Learning Goal 1. Written and Oral Communication in English. Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

Institutional Learning Goal 5. Social Science. Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions and to act as responsible citizens.

Institutional Learning Goal 6. Humanities. Students will analyze works in the fields of art, music, or theater; literature; philosophy and/or religious studies; and/or will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.

Institutional Learning Goal 7. History. Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.

Institutional Learning Goal 8. Diversity and Global Perspective: Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples

Institutional Learning Goal 9. Ethical Reasoning and Action. Students will understand ethical frameworks, issues, and situations.

Institutional Learning Goal 10. Information Literacy: Students will recognize when information is needed and have the knowledge and skills to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for college level work.

Institutional Learning Goal 11. Critical Thinking: Students will use critical thinking skills understand, analyze, or apply information or solve problems.

Program Learning Outcomes for Liberal Arts (PLO)

1. Concept Knowledge Understand the vocabulary, methods, and major concepts present in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences
2. Communication Articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing
3. Critical Thinking Perform a series of thinking tasks including speculation, analysis, and synthesis (i.e., abstract reasoning)
4. Research Methods Utilize research materials and methodologies

Units of study in detail – Unit Student Learning Outcomes:

The general plan for this course is broadly in two parts; the first unit serves as a primer of religious studies; while subsequent units address various contemporary issues and focus on subject particulars and applications of more general religious influences.

Units in Summary

Unit 1 – Defining Religion

Unit 2 – Religious Knowing and Believing

Unit 3 – Religious Life and Action

Unit 4 – Religious Experience

Detailed Units:

Unit I Defining Religion (SLO #1, 2, 3, 4)

Learning Objectives *The student will able to:*

1. Identify reasons for studying religion and distinguish between the major areas of religious concerns
2. Explain key religious concepts and features of major religions
3. Critically relate different approaches to the study of and practices of religions
4. Identify and use of principles and practices of religions

Unit II Religious Knowing and Believing (SLO #1, 2, 3, 4)

Learning Objectives *The student will able to:*

1. Identify concepts of ultimate realities, being, beings and other grounds for existence
2. Explain historical and non-historical claims regarding founders, other pivotal figures and events
3. Critically relate scriptures, stories, histories and artifacts as sources of authority
4. Analyze key features of core doctrinal issues such as the nature of the self, suffering and salvation

Unit III Religious Life and Action (SLO #1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Learning Objectives *The student will able to:*

1. Identify differences in ritual practices and their impacts
2. Explain central bases and means of moral regulating in relation to doctrinal commitments
3. Critically relate different relations between religions and social ordering of communities, particularly with respect to individual rights, economic matters, and public service, such as fighting in wars
4. Identify and justify individuals' preferences and choices regarding the intersections of secular and religious practicing and non-practicing

Unit IV Religious Experience (SLO #1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Learning Objectives *The student will able to:*

1. Identify key varieties of religious experiences and their relations institutional, social and individuals
2. Explicate how different felt, aesthetic experiences are cultivated by objects and individual and communal practices, such as with architecture, visual art, poetry and music
3. Examine relevant aspects of the how the focusing on and pursuit of the goals of religious life impact religiously observant people, and those who are not, as ideals and as achievements

Evaluation of student learning:

- Citizenship:* Course-long assessment of how students demonstrate religious studies literacy and practice Through their contributions to the class learning environment, that may include such factors as attendance, the amount and manner of class participation, helpfulness to other students' understanding, oral presentations (may be broken out as a separate grading categories), etc.
- Homework:* 6 or more short assignments aimed at having the student demonstrate that they did the assigned reading assignment and can address the issues covered in their own words.
- Board Posting*
- Quizzes:* 2 or more brief assessments to allow students to demonstrate topical literacy in a specific unit of instruction
- Tests:* 1 or more longer assessments to allow students to demonstrate topical literacy in covered units of instruction
- Examinations:* 1 or more class-length assessments to allow students to demonstrate topical practices (and

Essays: literacy) in narrative form as applied to units of instruction; includes one comprehensive final exam 1 or more assessments to allow students to demonstrate philosophical literacy and practices as applied to units of instruction. Well-argued papers are the first goal here, as a demonstration of well-evincing reasoning, though assigning and assessing, in part a research dimension to the assignment is fitting, especially for 100-level courses.

Course Grade Breakdown:

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|---------------|--|
| Citizenship | 10-15% (not more than this) (includes 'participation') |
| Homework | 10-15% |
| Quizzes | 5-10% |
| Tests/Exams | 30-50% (no one test/exam worth more than 20%) |
| <u>Essays</u> | <u>30-50%</u> (no one paper worth more than 25%) |
| Course = | 100% |

The particular grading breakdown is to be determined by each instructor in line with above and listed clearly in her/his syllabus.