

Syllabus

SCS 520 World Religions

Course Overview

Course Instructor

Name	Rev. Karen Epps
Virtual Office Hours	By appointment
Telephone	(949) 280-6635
E-Mail	revk@unityglobalheart.org
Response Time Policy	Within 24 hours of call or email

Course Description

Students will embark upon an exploration of many different ways human beings have experienced and expressed religiously throughout history and around the world. The world's religions have produced various answers to questions like: Where have we come from? Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? What is sacred? How do we live a good life? What happens after we die? Across time and place, humans have sought to cope with deep existential issues concerning identity, value and meaning. This course provides students with an introduction to definitions of religion and spirituality as well as overviews of the most influential world religions.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, learners will be able to:

- Describe the different definitions of religion and spirituality discussed in class.
- Identify and explain the basic characteristics of religions(s) as they are expressed in scholarship and present in world religions studied.
- Evaluate how religious worldview encountered in this course understands the basic human problem, answer to that problem, and means of answering the problem and moving toward the ultimate aim of life.
- Assess the role of religion and spirituality in today's postmodern age of plurality, diversity, and ambiguity.

Required Text/Readings

- Prothero, Stephen. *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World – and Why Their Differences Matter*

- Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions*. Updated. New York: HarperCollins 1991

Required Handouts

- Chryssides, G. "The Tools of the Trade," in *The Study of Religion*, pp. 7-31
- Tanner, J. "Methodologies of Religious Study," Unpublished course lecture notes
- Tanner, J. "Characteristics of Religion" Unpublished course lecture notes
- Pew Research Center, "What Americans Know About Religion" Report [PDF] from <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/07/23/what-americans-know-about-religion/>
- Hill, Peter C., et. al. "Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 30:1 (2000)
- Hutton, R. "Writing the History of Witchcraft: A Personal View" *The Pomegranate* 12.2 (2010) pp. 239-262
- Matthews, C. "Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft" in *America's Alternative Religions*, pp. 339-345
- Source Unknown, "Unity Statement of Faith"
- Sanguin, B. "What Colour is Your Christ?"
- Herman, J. "Muslim Prayer" retrieved online

Recommended Readings

- Smart, Ninian. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2000.
- Smith, Huston. *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*. New York: HarperOne, 2009.
- Van Voorst, Robert E. *Anthology of World Scriptures*. 7th ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Learning, 2010.
- Harrington, J. "Towards an Academic Study of British Wicca" Dissertation
- Price, R. "The Future Fate of Religions" retrieved from http://www.robertmprice.mindvendor.com/art_future1.htm
- AJC 2019 Survey of American Jews on Anti-Semitism in America [PDF] <https://www.ajc.org/AntisemitismSurvey2019>

Live Collaborate Class Sessions:

Tuesdays, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm all times Central Time (CT) Zone

January

1. January 4, 2022
2. January 11, 2022
3. January 18, 2022
4. January 25, 2022

February

5. February 1, 2022
6. February 8, 2022
7. February 15, 2022
8. February 22, 2022

March

9. March 1, 2022
10. March 8, 2022