DESCRIPTION

This course, as the title suggests, is a philosophical exploration of the basic principles and practices of religions whose range is global, namely Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Looking philosophically at world religions is not, in itself, rare. What is unique about this course is its radical account of the nature of philosophy: We interpret philosophy, as conceived by ancient Greeks, not as the production of rational treatises, but as the practice of spiritual exercises. In other words, this course relies on the interpretation of philosophy as a form of spiritual asceticism (geared towards the acquisition of virtue and wisdom) in order to approach world religions philosophically. In the process, we acquire a deeper understanding of these religious traditions as well as important strands in the philosophical tradition.

This course is not only a requirement for the Philosophy and Religion major, it is also an elective for the Philosophy major and a requirement for the Religious Studies minor. Moreover, this course is part of GE’s upper division (UD-C) and SF State Studies (Global Perspectives) requirements. Therefore, students can take this class to meet any of these program requirements should they choose to do so. However, credit for the course depends on the limitations described in the Class Schedule and Bulletin.

TEXTS

The main text for the course is Huston Smith’s *The World’s Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions*. Others, mostly pdf documents, are available at iLearn (http://iLearn.sfsu.edu). Please print them out and bring to class.
REQUIREMENTS

There will be two in class tests, and each will count for 45% of the final grade. There will also be an optional essay assignment to improve your midterm grade. I will discuss that in class after the midterm. In addition, regular, thoughtful and active participation in class discussion can enhance your final grade by one gradation. For example, a “B-” might become a “B” if you have contributed productively to the class. A final word about attendance which is required and counts for 10% of the grade. This course is structured in such a way that the later portions of the course depend heavily on the earlier portions. Not unlike a course in language or mathematics, missing the earlier class sessions come at great cost to your work in the rest of the semester. If you know that you will have to miss more than one class sessions, it is recommended that you not take the course this semester.

POLICIES

Missed or Late Work
Assignments turned in late will be docked 1/3 a letter grade per day (e.g. a B+ would become a B).

Electronic Communication
The best way to get in touch with me is via email (azad@sfsu.edu). Feel free to email me at any point during the semester if you have any questions or concerns. I do not answer emails in the evening, but you can expect to receive a response within a day from my receiving your email.

Laptops and Cellphones
Laptops are permitted in class for the sole purpose of taking notes. Please do not visit any websites (especially social media), as it distracts other students and disrupts the learning environment of the class. Please do not text or browse the Internet on your cellphone during class. If you feel that you must use your cellphone, please leave the classroom and do so outside.

Plagiarism
Students are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is, and for not committing it in any of their submitted work. For more details see: http://conduct.sfsu.edu/plagiarism. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an "F" grade. All instances of plagiarism in the College of Humanities will be reported to the Dean of the College.

Religious Holidays
Students who must be absent from class in order to observe religious a holiday must inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays during the first two weeks of the class each semester. If such holidays occur during the first two weeks of the semester, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. Students who meet these conditions will not be penalized for their absence, and will be able to make up the work missed.

The Learning Assistance Center
The Learning Assistance Center (LAC) provides free, on-campus writing tutoring for SF State students. It offers both one-time and ongoing tutoring sessions, with some same day appointments available. The LAC is open Monday through Friday from 9am-4pm and Friday from 9am-12pm. For more information and to schedule an appointment, see http://www.sfsu.edu/~lac/index.html.

Disability Accommodation
Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC: http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC in the Student Services Building 110. They can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2472) or by email dprc@sfsu.edu.
CALENDAR. This calendar is subject to revision. Major changes will be discussed with the students. Underlined items are essential readings.

I. INTRODUCTION: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION

Class 1: July 14:

A. Philosophy as Spiritual Ascetics for the Sake of Knowledge and Freedom
   Plato’s *Republic* (Selections), on iLearn.
   Plato’s *Meno* (Selections), on iLearn.
   Hadot’s “Philosophy as a Way of Life,” on iLearn.

B. Religion as Myth in Practice
   Armstrong, “Faith and Modernity”, on iLearn.

II. RELIGIONS EAST OF MESOPOTAMIA

A: THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF SPIRITUAL ASCETICS

Class 2: July 16: Zoroastrianism
   “Zoroastrianism,” from *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, on iLearn.
   Selections from Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, on iLearn.
   Selections from Widengren’s *The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God*, on iLearn.

Class 3: July 21: July 25: Confucianism
   *The World's Religions*, “Confucianism,” pp. 154-87
   Selections from “Classical Confucianism,” on iLearn.
   The *Analects* (Selections)
   The *Book of Mencius* (Selections)
   Selections from Lee Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas*, on iLearn.

B: SPIRITUAL ASCETICS, THEOPHANY, AND SACRED ART

Class 4: July 23: Hinduism
   Selections from “South Asian Philosophy,” on iLearn.
   The *Upanishads* (Selections)
   The *Bhagavad Gita* (Selections)

Class 5: July 28: Buddhism
   *The World's Religions*, “Buddhism,” pp. 82-149.
   Selections from “Japanese Philosophy,” on iLearn.
   Dōgen’s *Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma* (Selections)
   Takuan Sōhō’s *The Unfettered Mind* (Selections)
Class 6: July 30: MIDTERM EXAM

i. Review for the Midterm

ii. Midterm Exam (in-class)

III. ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS: ON PROPHECY AND PHILOSOPHY

Class 7: August 4: Abrahamic Religions

A. Judaism

B. Christianity

C. Islam
   Henry Corbin on the Islamic theory of prophecy, on iLearn.

Class 8: August 6: Abrahamic Theories of Prophecy

Mohammad Azadpur, “Prophetic Philosophy as a Way of Life.”
Avicenna on the Just Person (Selection from the Metaphysics of al-Shifāʾ), on iLearn.
Avicenna’s Psychology (Selections), on iLearn.
Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Selections), on iLearn.

IV. RELIGION AND MODERNITY

Class 9: August 11:

A. Nietzsche’s Critique of Religion
   Selections from Nietzsche’s *Gay Science, On the Genealogy of Morals, and Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, on iLearn.
   Mohammad Azadpur, “Who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra?” on iLearn.

B. Constructing a Reply to Nietzsche
   Nasr, “Who is Man?” on iLearn.

Class 10: August 13:

A. Review for the Final

B. Final Exam