

## Religion 151

## Religion and the Meaning of Existence

03 credits

MW 11:30-12:45

**INSTRUCTOR:** Professor Sarah Hadmack  
**OFFICE:** Palanakila 140  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Mondays 9:00-10:00am; 1:15-2:15pm  
Tuesdays 12:00-1:00pm  
Wednesdays 1:15-2:15pm  
and by appointment  
**EMAIL:** minnis@hawaii.edu  
**TELEPHONE:** 236-9140  
**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Fall 2016

### WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT

*Windward Community College offers innovative programs in the arts and sciences and opportunities to gain knowledge and understanding of Hawai'i and its unique heritage. With a special commitment to support the access and educational needs of Native Hawaiians, we provide O'ahu's Ko'olau region and beyond with liberal arts, career and lifelong learning in a supportive and challenging environment — inspiring students to excellence.*

### CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Introduction to basic issues of the question of the meaning of human existence. Emphasis is placed upon the student analyzing his/her own beliefs and exploring alternative answers. WCC: DH

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The student learning outcomes for the course are:

1. Identify the various understandings of experience, existence, and/or the Ultimate/Absolute Reality in the world's religious traditions.
2. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between these meanings of existence in two or more religions.
3. Identify the rituals, myths, and symbols/art that shape these worldviews.
4. Analyze their belief systems.

### METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

This course is structured around the following methods of instruction:

- Higher order thinking: class time will be devoted mainly to discussion and activities, both of which focus on problem-solving, analysis, evaluation, and critical and creative thinking



(the top parts of the pyramid.) Therefore, reading, understanding, and identifying the major terms and ideas for each religious tradition must be done at home while reading the textbook and the professor's notes.

- Collaborative learning: this course consists of many in-class group activities (see examples under 'Course Tasks'). Part of the philosophy behind this is that studies have shown that we learn more when exposed to diverse viewpoints; we challenge ourselves when we have to articulate and sometimes defend our knowledge; and group activities develop a sense of community and responsibility for one another. Three heads are better than one!

Collaborative learning is when students work in groups to solve a problem, create a product, and/or consider the meaning of an issue.

- Flip the classroom: this course 'flips' the traditional educational model in that you will receive the professor's notes to read at home and will complete assignments (called 'homework' in other courses) in class. The rationale behind this concept is that some assignments are better completed in class where the instructor can advise the student, answer questions as they arise, and facilitate student success.



- Writing across the curriculum: This pedagogy is also known as 'Writing to Learn.' As Toby Fulwiler and Art Young explain in *Language Connections: Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*: "We write to ourselves as well as talk with others to objectify our perceptions of reality; the primary function of this "expressive" language is not to communicate, but to order and represent experience to our own understanding. In this sense language provides us with a unique way of knowing and becomes a tool for discovering, for shaping meaning, and for reaching understanding." (p. x)



## COURSE TASKS

Please NOTE: Assignments are due during the first 15 minutes of class

The course will be centered on the following tasks, which serve as both learning and assessment tools.

- 📁 Complete a variety of worksheets and in-class activities including think logs, card swaps, webbing, debates, flashcard 'quiz,' movers and shakers, pair square, popcorn reading, reading quizzes, role play, silent Socratic dialogue, toss a 'test,' crossword puzzles, word searches, symbolism identification, game shows, etc.
  - These assignments enhance analysis, synthesis, and critical thinking skills. They also enable you to reflect on themes in class and comprehend the topics in a more sophisticated (and fun!) manner.
  - Many of these activities will be completed in groups typically consisting of 3-4 members. I acknowledge that not all students feel comfortable performing in front of the class. You will not have to participate in all of the activities. For example, role-playing and popcorn reading calls on volunteers and is not a requirement in order to pass the class.

- For some of these in-class activities you will receive detailed feedback. For other assignments you may only receive a check plus mark indicating full credit, a check mark indicating partial credit, or a check minus mark indicating no credit.
  - Since group assignments require being present for class, some of these assignments cannot be made up, regardless of reason, if class is missed. It is the your responsibility to see me to get missed material.
- ✎ Complete portfolio assignments before the portfolio draft collection date and complete all portfolio entries before the final collection date. There will be assignments throughout the semester that are intended for your end of the semester portfolio. Portfolio guidelines and a rubric will be distributed in class.
- ✎ Take two exams. Exams will be based on material covered in class and the course readings. Exam 2 is not cumulative. To do your best on each of the exams, it helps to cultivate good listening, studying, and note-taking skills. You may use a 4x6 notecard on your exams.

## ASSESSMENT TASKS AND GRADING

### Grades will be based on the following:

1 <sup>st</sup> Portfolio Draft .....	10%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Portfolio Draft .....	10%
Portfolio Final .....	20%
2 Exams (15% each) .....	30%
Worksheets and other assignments .....	30%
	100%

### Grades available:

A = 90% -100%

B = 80% -89%

C = 70% -79%

D = 60% -69%


F = 59% and below

N= The 'N' grade indicates that the student has worked conscientiously, attended regularly, finished all work, fulfilled course responsibilities, and has made measurable progress. However, either the student has not achieved the minimal student learning outcomes and is not prepared to succeed at the next level, or the student has made consistent progress in class but is unable to complete the class due to extenuating circumstances, such as major health, personal, or family emergencies.

## LEARNING RESOURCES

- 📖 *The Sacred Quest: An Invitation to the Study of Religion* by Cunningham and Kelsay. You can purchase the book several ways:
- An ebook is available for approximately \$20 from the Pearson website. Register as a student here <https://www.pearsonhighered.com/etextbooks/humanities-and-social-sciences/index.html> and select the title.
  - Amazon prices vary widely. You can rent, buy an ebook, or buy a paperback new or used. Click on [https://www.amazon.com/Sacred-Quest-invitation-Study-Religion/dp/B006Y23NXE/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1469569197&sr=1-](https://www.amazon.com/Sacred-Quest-invitation-Study-Religion/dp/B006Y23NXE/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1469569197&sr=1-)

1&keywords=the+sacred+quest#navbar

 PDFs: Other required readings are available in the 'Resources' folder in Laulima as PDFs.

## COURSE CONTENT

### CLASS SCHEDULE\*

\*Note: Class schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class.

DATE	CLASSROOM TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES	READINGS DUE ON THIS DAY	ASSIGNMENTS DUE ON THIS DAY AND EXAMS TO BE TAKEN ON THIS DAY
M 8/22	Welcome to the class! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Syllabus</li> <li>• A note on reading and note taking</li> </ul>		Please purchase your texts today
W 8/24	Artifact Sharing		
M 8/29	Spiritual Personality Types and Pivotal Values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Toward a Definition of Religion" from <i>Exploring Religious Meaning</i> pp.1-19</li> <li>2. Prof's Notes: Spiritual Personality Types PDF</li> <li>3. (Optional) Ch. 1 "Toward a Definition of Religion" in <i>The Sacred Quest</i></li> </ol>	Worksheet on "Toward a Definition of Religion" from <i>Exploring Religious Meaning</i>
W 8/31	Crash course in World Religions – the Game show	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Religious Traditions" from <i>Exploring Religious Meaning</i> pp. 20-51</li> <li>2. Ch. 3 "The Appearance of the Sacred" in <i>The Sacred Quest</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 3X5 Note card on the main points in "Religious Traditions" pp. 20-51</li> <li>2. Reread the syllabus</li> </ol>
M 9/5	NO CLASSES		
W 9/7	Dimensions of Religious Experience: Myth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ch. 4 "The Language(s) of the Sacred" in <i>The Sacred Quest</i></li> <li>2. Prof's Notes: Myth PDF</li> <li>3. (Optional) "Emergence of Mankind" pp. 19-42 from <i>Myths to Live By</i></li> </ol>	Worksheet on Ch. 3 "The Appearance of the Sacred" in <i>The Sacred Quest</i> if you didn't complete it last class.
M 9/12	Dimensions of Religious Experience: Symbols	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Stripping Down to the I" from <i>Awareness</i> pp.46-50</li> <li>2. Prof's Notes: Symbols PDF</li> </ol>	
W	Dimensions of Religious	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ch. 5 "Ritual" in <i>The</i></li> </ol>	

9/14	Experience: Ritual	<i>Sacred Quest</i> 2. Prof's Notes: Ritual PDF	
M 9/19	1. Sacred Communities 2. Ways of Conceiving the Divine: Interconnectedness	1. Ch. 6 "Sacred Communities" in <i>The Sacred Quest</i> 2. Prof's Notes: Slides 1-6 of Interconnectedness PDF 3. "Zen" from <i>Myths to Live By</i> pp. 126-147	1 typed page reflection paper on the "Sacred Communities" reading. Do not summarize the reading.
W 9/21	Ways of Conceiving the Divine: Interconnectedness	1. "Prologue: A Day in the Life" from <i>One City: A Declaration of Interdependence</i> pp.ix-xvi 2. Prof's Notes: Slides 7-12 of Interconnectedness PDF 3. "Daoist Poems" from <i>The Complete Works of Laozi</i>	
M 9/26	Knowledge, Belief, Authority, and Tradition	1. "Knowledge, Belief, Authority, and Tradition" from <i>Exploring Religious Meaning</i> pp.116-139 2. "On Truth" from <i>Taking Flight</i> pp.180-186 3. "Four Steps to Wisdom" from <i>Awareness</i> pp.78-83	
W 9/28	Competing Beliefs: Creationism and Evolution	"Freedom and the Self" from <i>Exploring Religious Meaning</i> pp.188-194	Worksheet on "Freedom and the Self"
M 10/3	Medical Ethics – Genetic Enhancement and Refusal to Treat	"Five Sources of Ethical Standards"	1 <sup>st</sup> Portfolio Draft
W 10/5	Medical Ethics – Vegetative State and Euthanasia	1. "Schiavo Case Raises Medical Ethics Questions" PBS News Hour 2. "Schiavo Case Divides Religious Bioethicists" from the Los Angeles Times	
M 10/10	Medical Ethics – Vegetative State and Euthanasia	"Vegetative Patient Scott Routley Says, 'I'm Not in Pain'" from the BBC News	
W 10/12	Medical Ethics – Abortion	1. "Abortion" from <i>Billions and Billions</i> 2. "Ireland Abortion Rights Protests: Thousands March in Dublin" from the Huffington Post 3. "Purvi Patel Could Be Just the Beginning" from the New York Times	
M 10/17	Medical Ethics – Abortion		

W 10/19	Review for Exam 1		
M 10/24			Exam 1
W 10/26	Medical Ethics – Attitudes toward Death	“Eric and Ruth Brown Accept Daughter Pearl Joy’s Illness Holoprosencephaly as ‘God’s Will’” in Huffington Post	
M 10/31	Salvation and Redemption	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ch. 9 “The Quest for Salvation” in <i>The Sacred Quest</i></li> <li>2. Prof’s Notes: Death and Salvation PDF</li> </ol>	
W 11/2	Salvation and Redemption		
M 11/7	<i>Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> film		
W 11/9	Existence of Evil	Ch. 7 “The Problem of Evil” in <i>The Sacred Quest</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Portfolio Draft
M 11/14	Problem of Evil Debate		
W 11/16	Religion and Nature	“Natural World Texts”	
M 11/21	Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage	Ch. 8 “Religion and Morality” in <i>The Sacred Quest</i>	
W 11/23	Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Supreme Court Ruling Makes Same-Sex Marriage a Right Nationwide” from The New York Times</li> <li>2. “Queen James Bible Claims to be First-ever ‘Gay Bible’” from the Huffington Post</li> </ol>	
M 11/28	Atheism and Agnosticism	“God and Belief” from <i>How We Believe</i> pp.1-31	
W 11/30	Interfaith Dialogue	“3 Reasons Interfaith Efforts Matter More Than Ever” from The Huffington Post	
M 12/5	Portfolio Celebration		Final Portfolio
W 12/7	Review for Exam 2		
W 12/14			Exam 2

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, and remain for the entire class period. Students who miss class are responsible for material covered in their absence. Consult with peers or the professor to cover what you missed. For every three classes missed, the final grade is lowered by one letter grade.

### Make Up Policy

Students are provided with **three ‘No Questions Asked’ (NQA) coupons** that enable them to turn in an activity or portfolio entry or make up a quiz or exam **up to one week past the due date**. Without the NQA coupon, late work will not be accepted. Coupons may not be shared or replicated. Unused coupons will be counted toward extra credit if the student submitted all assignments and completed all quizzes and exams on time. A coupon may also be used to make up an absence.

If you miss class you need to see me or a classmate **before** the next class period to discover what you missed.

### Academic Honesty:

Students are expected to act with personal integrity, to respect other students’ opinions and property, and to help create an academic environment in which discussion is encouraged. Students are expected not to engage or tolerate acts of plagiarism, cheating, copying, fabrication of citations, or other acts of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is treated seriously in this course. If you are quoting someone verbatim, then you must use quotation marks and cite the source immediately after the quotation in parenthetical form, (author’s last name, page number). Students charged with academic dishonesty face serious consequences that range from an F grade for the assignment to a F grade for the course.

### Extra Credit:

Extra credit can be earned by writing a two-page, double spaced reaction paper to a class lecture, class discussion, religious event, movie that centers on religion, or reading an article or book on religion. Students may write up to **five extra credit papers**. Each paper is worth 2% of the final grade. All papers must be **two full, typed pages**. Only the first paragraph of the reaction paper should consist of a summary of what you read or watched. The rest of the paper needs to be an analysis or reaction. No more than two extra credit papers per student will be accepted during the last two weeks of classes. All extra credit must be received by Dec 7.

### Cell Phones:

Kindly do not answer phone calls, text message, or play games on your cell phone during class. The instructor urges you to turn off your cell phone during class. The consequence for cell phone use is \_\_\_\_\_ (students will vote on a policy during the first week of classes).

### Disabilities Accommodation:

If you have a physical, sensory, health, cognitive, or mental health disability that could limit your ability to fully participate in this class, you are encouraged to contact the Disability Specialist Counselor to discuss reasonable accommodations that will help you succeed in this class. Ann Lemke can be reached at 235-7448, [lemke@hawaii.edu](mailto:lemke@hawaii.edu), or you may stop by Hale Akoakoa 213 for more information.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WILL HELP YOU IN THIS CLASS**

1. Keep up with the readings and note taking! Since the course is set up to discuss the readings in class, if you do not read then you will feel completely lost in class and not have an enriching

educational experience. Additionally, by doing the readings and note taking, you will be well prepared for the exams and portfolio entries.

2. Stay organized. Use a planner! Put important deadlines for assignments from all of your courses into the planner. Create a weekly schedule with your school and work hours. Schedule in blocks of time when you plan to study, read, and complete homework assignments.
3. Always take notes in class. Copy down everything that I have on the PowerPoint slides, KeyNote slides, and the board. Very few of us have a photographic memory ;)
4. Ask questions if you don't understand. Tell me to slow down if I am going too fast. Let me know if you're having any problems. I am here to help you ☺ Let me know how I can make this the best educational experience for you!