  GROSSMONT COLLEGE

COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

Curriculum Committee Approval: 09/27/2022

Approved by GCCCD Governing Board: 10/11/2022

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 110 – INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION

1. Course Number              Course Title                        Semester Units

       RELG 110                       Introduction to the Study of Religion 3  

Semester Hours

3 hours lecture (48-54 hours); 96-108 outside-of-class hours; 144-162total hours

1. Course Prerequisites

      None

  Corequisite

  None

       Recommended Preparation

       None

1. Catalog Description

This course introduces the academic study of religion with emphasis on the origin and functions of religion, religious experience, and major issues within the field of religious studies. Topics of study will include religion and society, the intersection between religion and gender, race, and violence, and the diverse components of religion.

1. Course Objectives

       The students will:

1. Identify common definitions of religion and explain the strengths and weaknesses of these definitions.
2. Explain the terminology and concepts used in the study of religion.
3. Identify major theorists in the development of the field of religious studies.
4. Explain the social, psychological, and sacred functions of religion.
5. Evaluate the main components of religion.
6. Describe major issues in the field of religious studies.
7. Relate the concepts in religion to contemporary society by critically thinking about the questions raised in religious studies.
8. Instructional Facilities

      Standard classroom

1. Special Materials required of Student

None

7. Course Content

1. What is religion?
   1. The nature of religion.
   2. The history of religion.
   3. The origin of religion.
   4. The sacred and spirituality.
   5. The future of religion.
2. Approaches to the study and interpretation of religion.
   1. Phenomenology and the Science of Religion.
      1. Rudolf Otto.
      2. Mircea Eliade.
   2. History of Religion.
      1. Jonathan Z. Smith.
      2. Wendy Doniger.
   3. Sociology of Religion.
      1. Emile Durkheim.
      2. Max Weber.
   4. Anthropological Study of Religion.
      1. Clifford Geertz.
      2. Claude Levi-Strauss.
   5. Psychology of Religion.
      1. Sigmund Freud.
      2. William James.
   6. Feminist Perspectives on Religion.
      1. Mary Daly.
      2. Rosemary Radford Ruether.
   7. Poststructural/Postmodern Approaches to Religion.
      1. Michel Foucault.
      2. Jacuqes Derrida.
3. Dimensions of Religion.
   1. Scripture.
      1. Oral religions.
      2. Process of canonization.
      3. Uses of scripture.
   2. Sacred Stories.
      1. Myths.
      2. Conversation narratives.
      3. Historical and scientific claims.
   3. Ritual.
      1. Rites of passage.
      2. Ritual as drama.
      3. Calendrical rites.
   4. Ethics.
      1. Commandments.
      2. Purity.
      3. Motivation.
   5. Sacred Spaces.
      1. Elements of a sacred space.
      2. Theophany.
      3. Churches, mosque and temples.
   6. Doctrine.
      1. Religious truth claims.
      2. Exclusivism vs. inclusivism.
      3. Pluralism.
   7. Sacred Power.
      1. God.
      2. Enlightenment.
      3. Tao.
   8. Religion and the Problem of Evil.
      1. Religious explanations for the existence of evil.
4. Issues within Religious Studies.
   1. Religion and Gender.
   2. Religion and Violence.
   3. New Religious Movements.
      1. “Cults”.
   4. Religion and the Environment.
      1. Eco-theology.
   5. Religious Identity.
      1. Double-belonging.
      2. Syncretism.
   6. Religious Extremism.
   7. Atheism and Non-Theistic Religions.
      1. Modern alternatives to religion.
   8. Religion and Politics.
   9. Religion and Race.
   10. Religion, Colonialism, and Decolonization.
   11. Secularization.
   12. Interreligious Dialogue.
   13. Material Culture of Religion.

8. Method of Instruction

1. Lecture
2. Discussion
3. Individualized feedback on student work
4. Student Presentations
5. Guest Speakers
6. Instructional Videos
7. Field-Trips

9. Methods of Evaluating Student Performance

1. Short essay responses to primary source documents.
2. Short papers describing the major theoretical approaches to religion.
3. Quizzes, in class and/or online.
4. Midterm and final exams entailing writing and objective components.
5. Special projects, such as visits to local houses of worship or interviews of community members who practice religion.
6. Student journals describing personal responses to the definitions of religion and issues in Religious Studies.
7. Research projects, analyzing the history, beliefs, and rituals of new religious movements.
8. Research paper on a major issue within religious studies, such as the intersection of religion and gender, race, violence and/or the environment.

10. Outside Class Assignments

1. Readings – focusing on primary texts written by the major theorists of Religious Studies.
2. Research to prepare for student presentations, which might focus on new religious movements or the major. theories explaining the rise and function of religion.
3. Interviews of community or family members.
4. Field-trips to local houses of worship.

 11. Representative Texts

  a. Representative Text(s):

1. Campbell, Joseph.  *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
2. Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Harvest: San Diego, 1968.
3. Hedges, Paul. *Understanding Religion: Theories and Methods for Studying Religiously Diverse Societies*. University of California Press, 2021.
4. James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. Forgotten Books, 2015.
5. Kessler, Gary E. *Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008.
6. Martin, C. *A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017.
7. Myhre, P. O. *Introduction to Religious Studies*. Anselm Academic, Christian Brothers Publishing, 2009.
8. Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*. Translated by John W. Harvey, Pantianos Classics, 2018.
9. Pals, Daniel L. *Ten Theories of Religion*. Oxford University Press, 2022.
10. Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *The Church and the Second Sex*. Beacon Press, 1985.
11. Smart, Ninian. *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*. University of California Press, 1999.
12. Tisby, Jemar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*. Zondervan Press, 2020.
13. Van Voorst Robert, E. *Anthology of World Scriptures*. Cengage Learning, 2017.
14. Supplementary texts and workbooks:

None

Addendum: Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, our students will be able to do the following:

1. Identify the major theorists in the development of Religious Studies and explain their understanding of the nature and function of religion.
2. Identify the major components of a religious tradition.
3. Explain the major issues within Religious Studies and apply them to their own religious traditions or worldviews.
4. Analyze definitions of religion and explain their strengths and weaknesses.