REL 2300H
Husain Kassim
Office: PSY 247
Office hours: Tues and Thurs-days: 1:30-2:30
And by Appointment

Text Books: A: Living Religions by Mary Pat Fisher

B: The World's Wisdom by Philip Novak. The main purpose of the book is to use it as a reference source and help toward developing a research paper.

Course Description: The course being an honors course examines and analyzes in depth the major Eastern and Western living religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It explores the basic concepts and their historical developments.

Readings and Assignments:

Eastern Religious Traditions:

1. Hinduism: Before you start reading the text books, study the key terms (pp. 118-119 A) and Review questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; Discussions of the terms Dharma, Advaita and dvaita, Om (p. 119 A). Vedas, Advaita Vedanta, Yoga, Shaktas, Vishnuites and Shivaites, Epics, Hanuman, the Monkey Chief and its significance, what is Ram, Ram, Ram?; Rituals, Castes and their origins and how they functions in ancient times and now how they function; Life Stages (Upanishads); Status of a woman; pilgrimages (pp.71-113 A).

Selections: Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagvat Gita, Shankara and Rama Krishnan, and Single aim and many paths (pp. 1-42).

2. Buddhism: First study the key terms and review Questions 1and 2; Discussions questions 1 and 2 (pp. 185-186).

Life and legend(s) of Buddha; Dharma,; the Four Noble Truths; Eightfold (Middle) path; Reincarnation; Nirvana, Buddhist Scriptures; Theravada Buddhism; How do you become Buddhist (p. 151A); Mahayana Buddhism , Vajrana and Zen Buddhism (pp. 137-173 A).

Selections: Legends; Four Noble Truths; Why Buddha was not satisfied with Hindu practices; Last words (sermon) of Buddha; Unanswered questions; Nirvana; Arhat, and Boddhisatva; Tibetan Book of Death and Timothy Larry’s Book( pp. 50-91B).
3. **Daoism and Confucianism:** Key terms and Review Questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and Discussion 1 and 2.

   Ancient Chinese Beliefs

   **Daoism—the way of nature:** Daoist main Concepts; *Dao de jing* and Zhuangzi; Three in the morning; Lantern Festival (pp. 188-205 A).

   *The Tao te Ching (Dao de Jing)* *(pp. 146-163B).*

4. **Confucianism:** Asian and Western Religions in Sixth Century

   Life of Kong Fu Tzu and Chaos in Zhou dynasty; Concepts of Ren, Li, Filial Piety; Menzi (inherent goodness of human nature) and Xunzi (human nature is essentially evil); Neo-Confucianism (pp. 207-219A) and pp.119-137 and Selections: pp. 146-163B).

**Western Religious Traditions:**

5. **Judaism:**

   Key terms: p. 299 and Review questions 1 and 2; Discussion questions 1, 2, and 4 (p. 300A)

   History of Jews: Hebrew (habiru) and their role in the human history; Bible and Biblical stories through T-N-Kh; Early monotheism and Abraham; Jacob’s twelve sons forming twelve tribes; Moses of Levi tribe and Exodus: Israelis from wilderness to Canaan; Ten Commandments and their significance; First temple of Jerusalem (961-931 CE); Northern and Southern kingdom and birth of synagogue; Rabbinic Judaism; Talmud, Midrash and Haggadah; Four Judaic groups; Judaism in Middle Ages; Jewish holidays (pp. 246-290 A)

   Selections: Noah and universal covenant p 179; origins of the Israelites (chapter 12 of Genesis) Covenant with Abraham; Passover and Exodus; Nevi’m as a national epic of self-criticism especially social justice; Awaiting messiah (pp. 175-198B).

6. **Christianity:**

   Key Terms: p.374 and Review questions 1 and 3, and Discussions questions 1 and 4.

   Historical evidence regarding the life of Jesus and Evidence in the Christian Bible; Jesus’ life and teachings; Formation of the Ministry; Challenges to the authorities; Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension; The Early Christian beliefs and the Church; Gnosticism Nag Hammadi Library and gospel of Thomas; Church administration; Eastern and Western Churches; Protestant Reformation; Roman Catholic Reformation; the Second Vatican Council.

   (pp 302-344 A) and pp. 225-241).

7. **Islam:**

   Key Terms pp. 431-432 and Review questions 1, 2, 3, and Discussion questions 1, 2, 3, 4.
Pre-Islamic Arabia; Life of Muhammad; The Qur’a’n; Meccan and Medinan Suras (Chapters) and their main themes; Two Sects in Islam and the main difference between them; Sufism; Relationship with the West (pp. 377-431 A) and pp. 281-287 and Relationship between Women and Men pp. 302-306 B).

Take Home Exams and Research papers:

Exam I due on 1 October, 2014 and Exam II due on Dec 9, each exam carries 25% of the total grade

Two Research papers: Research paper I due on Oct 1, 2014 on Eastern religious tradition

Research paper II due on Nov. 30, 2014 on Western religious tradition

Each research paper carries 25% of the total grade

Research papers’ theme should be decided in the consultation with the instructor. It is in length 7-10 pages covering at least five sources, should be well organized thematically developed.