

**RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC COURSE OUTLINE**

PHIL – 105 WORLD RELIGIONS

I. Basic course information

- A) Course Number and Title: PHIL 105 World **Religions**
- (B) Date of Proposal or Revision: Spring 2007
- (C) Sponsoring Department: Humanities and Social Science
- (D) Semester Credit Hours: 3 credits
- (E) Weekly Contact Hours: 3 Lecture: 3
 Lab: 0
- (F) Prerequisites: none
- (G) Laboratory Fees: N/A

II. Catalog Description

This course provides a historical and conceptual survey of the world's major religious traditions, with attention typically given to Vedic, Buddhist, Zen Buddhist, Taoist, Judaic, Christian, and Islamic religious belief. Time permitting, certain other forms of religion, such as those of primal cultures and new and emerging faith communities, will be noted.

III. Statement of Course Need

This course provides a valuable encounter with the diverse and varying traditions of the world's major religions. In so doing it provides insight into the historical situation of today's principal faiths and their institutions. It enables the student to see his or her own religion from the outside, as it were, in the wider context of history and the world community.

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

- A.
 - The course can be taken for Humanities credit or as an elective.

- It can be used to satisfy a requirement for the AA degree in International Studies.

V. Outline of Course Content

- the nature and etymology of religion overall
- the Vedic tradition and its scriptures, principally *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad-Gita*
- classical Buddhism and its break with the Vedic (“Hindu”) tradition
- further developments of Buddhism (*e. g.*, Zen Buddhism)
- the Semitic traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
- interpretive issues concerning religious diversity and ultimate truth

VI. Educational Goals and Learning Outcomes

Educational Goals

Students will:

- become acquainted the student with the world’s major religious traditions (GE 1, 4, 5, 6)
- gain historical and philosophical insight into these traditions and into both the contrasts and the similarities between them (GE 1, 4, 5, 6)
- discuss effectively, in speech and in writing, the essential content of these traditions (GE 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)
- confront and explore the question of what sense to make of the world’s religious diversity (GE 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- identify major tenants of the Vedic Indian tradition and the scriptures associated with it
- define the classical *yoga* systems and state what is essential to each; (3) explain how *atman* and Brahman are variously conceived in this tradition
- explain how Buddhism arose in reaction against the prevailing orthodoxy of its day
- state the essential tenants of the Buddha and his teaching with regard to the human condition and escape from it
- describe the development of the Mahayana tradition and its contrast with the older Theravada
- identify what is distinctive in Zen Buddhist practice

- explain what is distinctive in Judaism and its outlook upon such things as God, the world, value, holiness, and humanity
- describe the Jesus movement in its conception and development
- identify and contrast the major branches of the developed Christian faith
- describe the origin, scripture, and essential tenants of the Islamic faith
- explain what is meant by “primal” religion and cite examples in Asian, African, and American traditions
- cite, explain, and discuss at length the philosophical issue that arises with regard to religious truth and the world’s religious diversity.

VII. Modes of Teaching and Learning

- informal lecture
- small group and class-wide discussion
- guest speakers, where available, specializing in particular faith traditions
- video materials concerning the items noted above
- student presentations of research related to the class topics

VIII. Papers, Examinations, and other Assessment Instruments

- essay exams
- individual class presentation relevant to the course

IX. Grade Determinants

- exams
- extra credit where chosen
- in-class performance

X. Texts and Materials

- Varies to some extent with instructor: One current and future collection is Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), ISBN # 0-06-250811-3; Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery* (NY: Vintage Books, 1981), ISBN # 0-679-72297-1; Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1979), ISBN # 0-87481-035-3; and John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), ISBN # 0-664-24419-X.

XI. Resources

- texts
- whiteboard
- guest speakers where available
- vhs and dvd video