

## SYLLABUS



# THE SACRED JOURNEY

## A HUMANITIES CORE DISCOVERY COURSE on Religions of the World

Instructor: Dr. Sharon Kehoe  
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Semester: Spring 2009  
Credits: 3

TLC 248 Tues. Thurs 3:30 – 4:45

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### Course description:

This course is designed as a general introduction to the **field of Religious Studies** through the exploration of **World Religions**. We use the motif of sacred journey; the quest for ultimate meaning. The course affirms the importance of spiritual and religious freedom. It searches for a balance between respect for foundations and the continuing re-visioning of religious traditions to meet contemporary circumstances. Its purpose is to acquaint the student with the nature of religion, the way it contributes to understanding the meaning of human existence, and ways to live with its wisdom in the present. Instruction and **epistemology consists of** lecture, writing, small group work, classroom discussion, invited speakers, panels, films, and slide shows, collaborative projects, as well as the experiences of each of the class members. **The methodology the class uses is phenomenology**, which is descriptive, analytic, empathetic, and non judgmental.

The class is placed within the context of "sacred journey." In order to understand this dynamic we look at pilgrimages which exist in a multitude of variations; transformative journeys in which the traveler is changed profoundly by the process on the pilgrims path. The religions we cover on our class journey are introduced within the process of sacred travel using the progressive segments of **pilgrimage: longing, getting ready, setting out, the sacred way, adventures and difficulties, midway: going on or turning back, doubt and hope, drawing near: anticipation, arrival: excitement and preparation, climax: encounter with the unknown, reflection and redirection, and coming home**. We will look at real pilgrimages to sacred landscapes, temples and shrines.

The first semester of this course will start with our own "sacred journeys", our own spiritual autobiographies. These begin to answer the question "who am I" and other questions of ultimate nature, "what am I doing here? and "where am I going"? These are how we make meaning of our lives in the world, meanings that continually change and transform. The making of meaning is relevant then, in a larger sense, to our communities and our relationships with them and their relations with concept of *the ultimate*. This leads us to the study of religion and how we accomplish that with language, ritual, scripture and sacred art and architecture.

We visit the World Religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Primal religions in the first semester, and then Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the second. After being exposed to a basic understanding of these religions in a general exoteric way, we will then be more specific in approach, going into some of the more esoteric beliefs and practices of these religions. For example, within Islam we will look at the Sufi tradition; and within Judaism, the Kabbalah. Within Christianity we will look at certain non canonical literature such as the Gnostic texts and the theology of Celtic Christianity.

We will be continuing our work within the context of sacred journey or pilgrimage. During the semester each student will be planning his or her own pilgrimage to a sacred site. Although travel itself is encouraged, it is not required. The pilgrimage model is a method for learning about each religion within a cultural framework.

Instruction will consist of lecture, small group work, invited speakers and panels, films, and slide shows. Evaluation will involve in-class writings, mid-term and final exams, individual research papers, and group projects. The unifying thread of the class's spiritual journey will be reinforced by having students read *Siddhartha* and *Sacred Journeys Around the World*, in the first semester and *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*, as well as *The Art of Pilgrimage* in the second semester.

### **Rationale**

Religion is arguably the most powerful influence in the shaping of human cultures and civilizations. As an academic discipline Religious Studies is thoroughly interdisciplinary, involving linguistics, history, archeology, anthropology, sociology, art and architecture, political science, literature, psychology, and philosophy. As we prepare for life and work in a world culture, there will increasingly be interaction with people having religions different from our own. We will need to know the facts about these religions and we will need critical thinking skills to negotiate the interface between our beliefs and the beliefs of others

### **Course Objectives**

1. To introduce students to ancient and contemporary expressions of the world's sacred traditions through texts, buildings, and images.
2. To encourage students to appreciate the rituals, the beliefs, and values of religions other than their own. They should learn to take seriously these beliefs, assuming that the religious thought or practice carries real meaning for those people. Students will be asked to temporarily step into initially alien world-views.
3. To expose students to the social justice issues raised by the world religions and the solutions that they offer.
4. To train students in critical thinking skills, including the ability to identify and evaluate claims and to compare and contrast arguments, and to apply these skills to research and experiential situations.
5. To encourage students to seek out members of other faiths in the Inland Northwest for not only fellowship but also serious field study of those religions.

### **Goals:**

This course is **learning oriented** towards

- the academic study of religion
- respect for cultural and religious differences
- the ability to read and decipher meaning from a sacred text
- the ability to relate your own belief systems to what you've learned

**Texts:**

**The following books will be used both semesters:**

*The Illustrated World's Religions: A Guide to Our Wisdom Traditions*

Author: Huston Smith

Harper SanFrancisco, 1995, Paper, ISBN: 0060674407 I

*The World's Wisdom: Sacred Texts of the World's Religions*

Author: Philip Novak

Harper SanFrancisco, 1995, Paper, ISBN: 0060663421

**The following two books are used the first semester:**

*On Pilgrimage: Sacred Journeys around the World*

Author: Jennifer Westwood

HiddenSpring, 2003, Paper, ISBN: 1-58768-015-7

*Siddhartha*

Author: Hermann Hesse

Dover Pubns (Dover Thrift Editions), 1999, Paper, ISBN: 0486406539

**The new books for the second semester:**

*Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*

Author: Bruce Feiler

HarperCollins, 2004, ISBN: 0-06-052509-6

*The Art of Pilgrimage*

Author: Phil Cousineau

Conari Press, 2000, Paper, ISBN: 1573245097

**Recommended Reading:**

*A History of God*

Author: Karen Armstrong

Alfred a Knopf Inc Cloth. ISBN: 0-679-42600-0

*Where God was Born*

Author: Bruce Feiler

HarperCollins, 2005, ISBN: 0-06-057487-9

**Other resources:**

- On reserve in library: *Exploring Religion*, Roger Schmidt
- Related articles may be assigned and left for you at the Campus Copy Service
- Videos, DVDs, slide shows and hand-outs.

## Course Requirements:

- Because of the importance of collaborative inquiry during the class session class participation is a basic requirement. There are ***impromptu in-class writings (quizzes, reflections in bluebook) (unannounced)***, therefore attendance is crucial. Writings cannot be made up later.
- One ***mid-term***
- One in-class ***final exam***
- ***Project***. The following is what we did last semester. Those who are new to the class may elect to do this project if they choose. The others will be doing a “**sacred films**” project involving films that are considered to be in the genre of “sacred journey” or “pilgrimage”. Small groups will be researching, finding and viewing these films together and collaboratively over the course of the semester and making an oral presentation about the process. Instructions will be given on methodology.

Each new student may elect to plan his or her own **sacred journey to a pilgrimage destination** somewhere in the world, for example Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Mecca in Saudi Arabia, Chaco Canyon in North America, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico or Mount Kailash in Tibet. A Power Point Presentation of at least 30 pages (slides) will show all relevant information, such as a description of the site, the reason for wanting to go to that particular place, itinerary, history, maps, cultural information, photos, travel arrangements, weather, packing and so on. You may use the Internet or other sources for added information or pictures. URLs must be included in your report. It will be turned in on CD.

There will be an **oral presentation** to the class for each project. Progress will be monitored with scaffolding. (This will be explained in class).

### **Requirements**

In-class writings	20% of grade	100 points
Mid-term exam	20% of grade	100 points
Final exam	20% of grade	100 points
Project	20 % of grade	100 points
Oral Presentation	20 % of grade	100 points

### **Grade Point Spread**

450 - 500	90%	=A
400 - 449	80%	=B
350 - 399	70%	=C
300 - 349	60%	=D
299 or less		=F

### **Academic Etiquette**

Class will begin promptly at 3:30; you are expected to arrive on time and stay for the duration of the class. If you have any scheduling conflicts, please see me as soon as possible. Respect for the opinions voiced in class is essential and I expect all students to treat each other courteously and with respect. In order for us to learn from each other, we have to allow each other to make mistakes and to offer unpopular positions for debate. However, name-calling and other forms of verbal harassment will not be tolerated and will result in being asked to leave the class. No cell phones, nor text messaging, nor online chat will take place during class. Laptops will be used only for taking notes and all students using laptops must sit in the first row.

### **Sick Leave**

You are responsible for all material in the books and in the lecture at all times. If you are sick, be sure to contact someone in the class to get the notes you've missed as soon as

possible. Be sure to check with the instructor about any changes, which may have been made. Your absences will normally be excused **only** for reasons of illness or for academic reasons (field trips, athletic participation, and other official collegiate activities) and **only if you inform the instructor in advance** that you have a conflict with a test date or other date of required attendance. The Dean of Students Office can provide the instructor with written notification of deaths in the family, serious illness, etc. that you were not able to inform the instructor of in advance.

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in failing the course and other disciplinary action (See UI Student Handbook-Academic Dishonesty). In all instances, you must do your own work. There is a difference between plagiarism and collaboration. Plagiarism is the act of using another person's words or work without giving them credit for it. On the other hand, collaboration, for purposes of this class, is the act of discussing ideas with classmates, debating issues, examining readings from the class together so that each of you arrives at your own independent thought.

**Mentor: Christiana Mitchell:** our class, our student journeyers, have the advantage of the services and gifts of a mentor. She will be assisting you with information on how to get the most out of your college experience and the experience of this class. If you need help, ask our mentor for anything you need or for advice.

Her contact info and office hours are:

### **Office Hours, Dr. Kehoe**

Offices:            Campus Christian Center, 822 Elm Street at University  
                          (end of "hello walk" and on old Greek Row across from "the Perch" )  
                          Or Morrill Hall, Philosophy Dept. fourth floor.

Hours: Mondays: 2:00 – 4:00 Philosophy Dept., Morrill Hall 403  
          or other times by appointment at the Campus Christian Center Phone: 882-2536

Students are invited and encouraged to stop by and visit your professor for dialog and or help. Students are also encouraged to get together with the rest of your learning community informally as often as possible.

***The professor may alter this syllabus in whatever ways she considers necessary. Check the syllabus on the web for any changes in assignments. Student interest may create revisions. Check your e-mail for special announcements.***

***[www.cccenter.org](http://www.cccenter.org) under "Sharon's class"***