

# History 145: History of World Religions Course Syllabus

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**Course Web Site:** <http://eccwhp.org>

## Course Description

This course is an introduction to the origins, essential doctrines, and historical development of the world's major religious traditions from prehistory to today and their impact on the societies in which they appear. Major religions examined include Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

## Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of History of World Religions, students will be able to develop and persuasively argue a historical thesis in a written assignment that identifies and explains major social, economic, political and/or cultural historical themes or patterns in the history of world religions and apply appropriate historical methods to analyze and use primary and/or secondary sources as evidence to support the thesis.

## Course Objectives

1. Define and analyze the basic characteristics and functions of religion, theories of the origins of religion, and the historical method utilized to study world religions.
2. Assess the evidence of prehistoric religions and their major characteristics.
3. Identify and analyze the major characteristics of Native American religions and the influence of Christianity and non-native cultures in their development.
4. Identify the major characteristics of Native African religions and assess the impact of Christianity and Islam as well as the experience of colonialism and independence on Africa's religious development.

5. Evaluate the pre-Aryan and Aryan contributions to the development of Hinduism in India and the basic beliefs of Hinduism as expressed in the early Vedic scriptures.
6. Analyze the challenges posed to Hindu traditions by the teachings of Jainism and Buddhism and the relations between Hindus and Muslims in India, and the practice of Hinduism in India today.
7. Explain the basic teachings of Mahavira and the major contribution of Jainism to world religious thought.
8. Discuss the life of Gautama, analyze his teachings and the development of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, and identify various Buddhist beliefs and practices today.
9. Analyze Sikhism as a syncretism including its historical development from a pacific movement to a more militant one, and its divisions today.
10. Analyze the traditional religious beliefs of China and how the decline of the feudal system contributed to the development of Confucianism and Taoism.
11. Explain and assess the basic teachings of Confucius and Lao-tzu, and the extent to which they developed into religions.
12. Analyze the impact of the Communist revolution and regime on religious development in China.
13. Examine and analyze the mythological basis of Shinto and its development in Japan, and the impact of Buddhism and Christianity on Shinto and its revival in the 17th century as a patriotic devotional expression.
14. Identify and evaluate the basic beliefs and practices of Zoroastrianism, its contributions to Middle Eastern religious traditions, and its present day status.
15. Discuss and analyze the origins, beliefs and values of Judaism as expressed in the Old Testament, and the impact of the Babylonian exile, diaspora and Holocaust on the development of Judaism.
16. Identify and explain the major divisions within modern Judaism.

17. Analyze the origins of Christianity in the context of first century Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World, and the early teachings and rituals of Christianity as indicated in the New Testament.
18. Discuss and evaluate the development of the Christian Church, differences between Eastern Orthodox and Western Christianity, and the impact of the Protestant Reformation.
19. Explain the significance of Vatican II and the ecumenical movement, and analyze Liberation Theology and fundamentalism as modern Christian movements.
20. Analyze the origins of Islam and its roots in Arab, Jewish and Christian religious traditions, as well as the major issues within Islam and the Muslim world today.
21. Analyze the Shi'ite origins of Baha'i and its major teachings and practices, and assess the significance of Baha'i in the modern world.
22. Identify and discuss contemporary religious trends and issues.

### **Required Books/Materials**

The following books and materials are required for this course.

James W. Laine *Meta-Religion, Religion and Power in World History*, University of California Press, 2014. (Available at the El Camino College Bookstore - this book must be purchased)

All other required readings are available online.

### **Computer/Internet Access**

Students must access the Internet to download lecture notes. If you do not have Internet access, be sure to use one of the many computer labs accessible at El Camino College. For example, computers can be accessed at the Library Media Technology Center (LMTC) located at the East Lower Level of Schauerman Library. Call (310) 660-6715 for hours of operation. What software and hardware will you need for this course? You must have at a minimum:

- Internet access

- Microsoft Internet Explorer – latest version
- PDF File Reader

### Assessment Measures

Student achievement in History 140 will be assessed in four ways:

1. *Essay Examinations (50% of the grade)*: Writing an effective college level in-class essay examination requires that students have knowledge of the subject matter and that students have the ability to organize the knowledge into a coherent set of arguments. An effective essay has a clear introduction, a solid body of evidence and argumentation and a firm conclusion based on what was written. Unlike take-home essay examinations, an in-class essay examination must also contend with time. To ensure that you are exposed to wide range of assessment measures, students enrolled in History 140 will complete two essay exams in which major social, economic, political and cultural patterns will be reconstructed through the analysis and evaluation of historical sources.
2. *Objective Examinations (20% of the grade)*: Students will complete examinations in which historical periods, themes and ideas will be analyzed and evaluated to determine the accuracy of their presentation through true/false statements and multiple choice questions. These examinations will test a student's course knowledge base and a student's ability to read primary and secondary sources critically.
3. *Seminars (20% of the grade)*: Creating a community of learners through academic and social involvement in the classroom encourages students to be active participants in the learning process and promotes their persistence in the pursuit of their educational goals, whether it be completing a certificate program, attaining an Associate of Arts/Science degree, or transferring to a four-year institution. To emphasize this aspect of your academic training, students will collaboratively address a variety of historical questions by analyzing primary and secondary sources in a seminar setting.
4. *Research Methodology (10% of the grade)*: Students will be introduced to research methodology by producing topic-based bibliography that will cite scholarly monographs, articles and websites for a selected topic within the scope of this course. Through the completion of this assignment, students will gain knowledge of library resources and research methods.

**No Make-up Exams/Activities**

Under no circumstances except for a documented medical reason will make-up exams/activities be administered.

**Student Grade Record**

The course grade will be based on two essay exams, one process paper, and three objective exams. All assessment measures are graded on the 100% scale.

90-100%	A	4.0	70-79%	C	2.0	59% and below F
80-89%	B	3.0	60-69%	D	1.0	

**Should I be enrolled in this Course?**

History 145 is a college level history course. Consequently, it requires that students possess sound reading and writing skills. Students who are carrying an excessive load of classes this semester, who are working an excessive number of hours, or who have not completed the recommended preparation eligibility of English 1A, are asked to carefully consider if they should be enrolled in this course.

**Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory in this class! Be sure to look at El Camino College's online course offerings if you do not enjoy being in a classroom setting. Students are responsible for signing the attendance roster. If a student is unable to attend class, it is his/her responsibility to notify the instructor through an e-mail message. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the following statement on attendance taken from the El Camino College Catalog: *Regular attendance is expected of every student. A student may be dropped from the class when the number of hours absent exceeds the number of units assigned to the course.* Please drop this course immediately if you cannot commit to three hours of class time a week and the required time necessary to prepare for this course outside of the classroom. If a student stops attending class, then it is their responsibility to drop the course. Failure to do so will result in an F issued for the course grade.

**Rules of Conduct**

The instructor will not tolerate disruptive behavior in class. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to the following: coming to class unprepared, arriving late to class, striking up a

conversation with your neighbor during class, taking naps during class, failing to take notes during class, leaving class early, not coming to class and forgetting to turn off cell phones and pagers before coming into class. Dishonesty, plagiarism and cheating will result in immediate dismissal from this course. Please drop this course immediately if you cannot follow the rules of conduct cited above.

### **How to Succeed in this Course**

What makes a successful college student? Successful college students accept personal responsibility, are self-motivated and have mastered time-management. This course will call upon students to adopt and apply these principles by requiring them to:

1. Study consistently throughout the semester
2. Stay on top of reading assignments.
3. Take detailed notes.
4. Review their notes regularly.
5. Have assignments ready in advance
6. Work on writing skills.
7. Attend class regularly.
8. Visit the instructor during office hours.

### **American with Disabilities Act**

El Camino College is committed to providing educational accommodations for students with disabilities upon the timely request by the student to the instructor. A student with a disability, who would like to request an academic accommodation, is responsible for identifying herself/himself to the instructor and to the Special Resources Center. To make arrangements for academic accommodations, contact the Special Resources Center.

Also, please inform the instructor if you need course adaptations or accommodation in the classroom because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with your instructor, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated.

### **Proposed Themes and Readings**

The instructor reserves the right to alter or deviate from the proposed themes and reading schedule. Students will be notified in advance should changes be made. The most current schedule will always be available on the instructor's web page. *Assignment and examination due dates are recorded on the course website.*

## Course Introduction

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Log in to Canvas
- Autobiography
- Syllabus

## Topic 1: What is Religion?

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History*
- “Religion: What Is It?” Stewart Elliott Guthrie. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Dec., 1996), pp. 412-419

## Topic 2: Religion and Human Evolution

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- “Evolution of the Human Capacity for Beliefs.” Ward H. Goodenough. *American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (Sep., 1990), pp. 597-612

## Topic 3: Religion in the Agrarian Era

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Laine, *Meta-Religion*, Introduction
- “On the Sexual Division of Labour, Population, and the Origins of Agriculture.” John Vincent. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Jun., 1979)

## Topic 4: Religion and Early Civilizations

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- “Women of Ancient Egypt and the Sky Goddess Nut.” Susan Tower Hollis. *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 100, No. 398, Folklore and Feminism (Oct. -Dec., 1987)
- *Tanakh - Bereshit* (selections)

**Topic 5: The Axial Age**

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Laine, *Meta-Religion*, Chapter 1: Alexander and Ashoka: Cosmopolitan Empires and Religious Policy from Egypt to India, 330–230 B.C
- “The Axial Period: What Was It and What Does It Signify?” Antony Black. *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (Winter, 2008)

**Topic 8: Axial Age East Asia**

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Laine, *Meta-Religion*, Chapter 2: Imperial Religion: China to Rome, 250 BC–250 A.D.
- Confucius, *Analects*

**Topic 9: Axial Age South Asia**

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Laine, *Meta-Religion*, Chapter 3: The Debate over Dharma: Hindus and Buddhists Compete for Ideological Dominance in South Asia
- *Mahābhārata* - *Bhagavad-gītā* and Buddha, *Sermon at Benares*

**Topic 10: Axial Age Mediterranean**

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?” G. E. M. de Ste. Croix. *Past & Present*, No. 26 (Nov., 1963)
- *New Testament - Gospels*

**Topic 11: Abrahamic Religions in the Middle Ages**

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Laine, *Meta-Religion*, Chapter 5: The Rise of Islam and the Early Caliphate, 622–711 A.D. and Chapter 6: Imperial Islam, 690–1500 A.D.



- Qur'an (selections), Ibn Rushd, *On the Harmony of Religions and Philosophy* and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (selections)

### **Topic 12: Old Traditions and New Directions**

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Laine, *Meta-Religion*, Chapter 8: Putting Religion in Its Place: Reformers, Kings, and Philosophers Challenge the Church
- *An Open Letter to The Christian Nobility - The Three Walls of the Romanists* and Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*

### **Topic 13: World Systems and World Religions**

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Laine, *Meta-Religion*, Chapter 9: Putting Religion in Its Place: Revolution and Religious Freedom
- "The Spread of Religions and Macrosocial Relations." Robert L. Montgomery. *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (1991) (located on website)
- *The Morelos Census*

### **Topic 14: The Search for the Historical (D)evil**

*Required Assignments/Reading/Viewing:*

- Laine, *Meta-Religion*, Chapter 10: The Contemporary Era: The Worldwide Regime of Meta-Religion.