

World Religions (HRT3M)
Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School
Course Outline

Credit Value: 1.0

Prerequisites and Co requisites: None

Resources: Quinlan, Don *et.al. Exploring World Religions: The Canadian Perspective*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001. ISBN: 0-19-541660-0.

Course Description/Rationale:

This course provides students with opportunities to explore various world religions and belief traditions. Students will develop knowledge of the terms and concepts relevant to this area of study, will examine the ways in which religions and belief traditions meet various human needs, and will learn about the relationship between belief and action. They will examine sacred writings and teachings, consider how concepts of time and place influence different religions and belief traditions, and develop research and inquiry skills related to the study of human expressions of belief.

Prerequisite: None

Outline of the Course Content:

Unit Title	Content
1. The Religious Impulse	Introduction to the characteristics and nature of religion, key religious concepts and terms, as well as an examination of Aboriginal Spirituality.
2. Early Religions	A brief examination of five early religions (Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Shinto, Confucianism, and Taoism).
3. Hinduism	The origins and history, beliefs, practices and influence of Hinduism
4. Buddhism	The origins and history, beliefs, practices and influence of Buddhism
5. Judaism	The origins and history, beliefs, practices and influence of Judaism
6. Christianity	The origins and history, beliefs, practices and influence of Christianity
7. Islam	The origins and history, beliefs, practices and influence of Islam
8. Sikhism	The origins and history, beliefs, practices and influence of Sikhism.
Total	

A. RESEARCH AND INQUIRY SKILLS

Throughout this course, students will:

- A1. Exploring: explore topics related to world religions and belief traditions, and formulate questions to guide their research;
- A2. Investigating: create research plans, and locate and select information relevant to their chosen topics, using appropriate social science research and inquiry methods;
- A3. Processing Information: assess, record, analyse, and synthesize information gathered through research and inquiry;
- A4. Communicating and Reflecting: communicate the results of their research and inquiry clearly and effectively, and reflect on and evaluate their research, inquiry, and communication skills.

B. APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF THE SACRED

By the end of this course, students will:

- B1. Why Study World Religions and Belief Traditions: demonstrate an understanding of various reasons for the study of world religions and belief traditions;
- B2. Terms and Concepts in the Study of the Sacred: demonstrate an understanding of terms and concepts related to the study of world religions and belief traditions;
- B3. Approaches: demonstrate an understanding and assess the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to the study of world religions and belief traditions.

C. RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL IMPULSE

By the end of this course, students will:

- C1. Functions of Human Belief Traditions: explain some of the ways people use religions and belief traditions to meet human needs;
- C2. The Search for Meaning: analyze ways in which various religions and belief traditions conceptualize

D. SACRED TEACHINGS AND PRINCIPLES

By the end of this course, students will:

- D1. Tenets, Practices, and Teachings: outline the central tenets, practices, and teachings of various religions and belief traditions;
- D2. Sacred Writings and Oral Teachings: analyse the role of sacred writings and oral teachings in various religions and belief traditions;
- D3. Prescribed Roles and Influential Figures: analyse how individuals with specific roles have influenced the development of various religions and belief traditions

E. RITES AND OBSERVANCE

By the end of this course, students will:

- E1. Daily Living as Sacred Reality: demonstrate an understanding of the type of daily observances associated with various religions and belief traditions and of the role of these observances in the lives of adherents;

E2. Rites and Rituals: demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which rituals and rites reflect the understandings and principles of various religions and belief traditions.

F. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

By the end of this course, students will:

F1. Cultural Contexts: identify and analyse ways in which various religions and belief traditions are embodied in cultural forms;

F2. Social Contexts: analyse the interaction between society and various religions and belief traditions;

F3. Social Challenges: demonstrate an understanding of the challenges that adherents of various religions and belief systems experience in society;

F4. Religion, Civil Society, and Popular Culture: describe and analyse ways in which various religions and belief traditions are interpreted and adapted within civil society and popular culture.

GLOSSARY

Abrahamic religions. Monotheistic faith traditions that share Abraham as a common important figure. Specifically, the term is used to describe Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

adherent. A follower of a religion or belief tradition.

agnosticism. The belief that the existence and/or nature of God cannot be known with any degree of certainty.

animism. The belief that all things – including plants, animals, inanimate objects, and other natural phenomena – possess a living soul.

anthropocentrism. The placement of humanity at the centre of existence.

asceticism. A way of life characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures for religious or spiritual reasons.

atheism. The belief that deities and other divine beings do not exist.

atonement. The act of reparation or making amends for wrongdoing.

civil observance. An act performed for ceremonial reasons that is without distinct religious implications.

clergy. Persons ordained for the function of religious duties.

commemoration. The ritualized remembrance of a deceased person or event from the past.

creed. A statement of faith or religious belief.

cult. A minority group with religious beliefs or practices that are viewed by outsiders as strange or excessively zealous and that serve to unduly influence and control its membership.

deity. Within monotheistic faith traditions, this term describes the Creator and supreme being. Within polytheistic belief systems, it refers to a god or goddess.

denomination. A subgroup within a faith tradition with distinct beliefs that may or may not be deemed heretical by others within that faith tradition.

divine. Possessing the attributes of God or a god.

ethics. Ideas relating to morality that influence how one acts.

ethnocentrism. Judging the cultures and belief systems of others based on one's own culture and beliefs.

faith. Absolute trust and confidence in the truth of ideas that cannot be definitively proven.

fundamentalism. Adherence to the beliefs of a faith tradition on the basis of a literal interpretation of foundation documents.

laity. Adherents of a particular belief system who are not members of the clergy.

monotheism. The belief that there is only one God or supreme being.

mysticism. The pursuit of union with divinity through contemplative practice.

oral teachings. Sacred beliefs that emerge from, or are transmitted through, the spoken word.

pantheism. The belief that there is no separation between God and the universe.

pilgrimage. A sacred journey to a place for religious or spiritual purposes.

polytheism. The belief that there exists more than one God or supreme being.

profane. That which is not concerned with or related to the religious or sacred realm.

reason. A process of thought through which conclusions about the universe and nature of being are arrived at through the use of logic.

reductionism. The idea that something or someone can be reduced to the simplest expression of its form.

religion. The belief in and worship of a supreme being or beings.

rite. A solemn act or ceremony with religious significance.

ritual. An act performed regularly by a person or group.

sacred. Anything set apart from the ordinary by virtue of its connection to the divine.

sect. See **denomination**.

secular. Not having a relationship to that which is religious or spiritual.

spiritual. Matters or issues pertaining to the soul rather than the material world.

supernatural. Anything that exists outside of the laws of nature.

tenets. The main principles of a belief system.

theology. The systematic study of the divine.

thick description. A contextual description of the behaviour of an individual or group in such a way that the behaviour is meaningful to outsiders.

typological approach. A way of examining behaviours and contexts based on common characteristics.

vocation. A calling to a formalized religious state of life, or a way of living one's life as an expression of spiritual beliefs.

