



**PHIL 2640-001: World Religions**  
Spring Semester 2025

**Course Description**

In many and diverse ways throughout the world, people have asked ultimate questions in the face of great difficulties: Why do human beings suffer? Why is there evil in the world? How can we bring about peace, both between communities and within the human heart? What is the “self” and what is one’s final purpose in this world? Are there supernatural beings, and if so, what do they have to do with us? What is human salvation and liberation? Likewise, answers to questions like these have been proposed by a wide variety of people in different cultures and traditions. The subjects of this World Religions course are five such traditions, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

**Course Outcomes and Objectives**

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Better understand the basic teachings, beliefs, sources of authority, and sacred texts of these traditions,
2. Appreciate the distinctive cultural and spiritual elements within each tradition, identifying points of convergence as well as divergence between them, and
3. Think critically and effectively communicate (orally as well as in writing) about these five religious traditions.

**Course Requirements**

Students’ grades will be based on their engagement with the course, as evidenced by how many points they earn, which reflects the quantity and quality of the assignments they complete. Students who diligently complete all or almost all of the assignments will certainly pass, and will probably earn an A. Those who do less will receive lower grades. The sum of all possible points is over **140**. But I do not expect students to earn all possible points.

There is one required source of points that ALL students MUST complete:

- **Unit Exams** – Up to **75 points** will come from five unit exams (one exam per religion), worth 15 points each. Students are *required* to take these exams. Exam dates are listed in the course schedule below. Prior to the exam, a brief study guide will be posted to Canvas, and will be covered in class a day before the exam is due. Exams will be entirely multiple choice, and consist of anywhere between 10-20 questions.

Students earn the rest of their points by completing some combination of the following assignments:

- **Weekly Reflections** – Worth up to 2 points each; with 14 weeks of possible entries, students can earn up to **28 points** with this option. Further details and instructions on Canvas.
- **Short Essays** – Worth up to 10 points each; there are four paper options to choose from, which means students can earn up to **40 points** with this option. Deadlines are listed in the course schedule; details and further instructions on Canvas.
- **Participation** – Up to **10 points** will be awarded for exceptional engagement in class discussions over the course of the semester. Details about grading on Canvas.

## Grading Scale

Your final grade will be calculated based on the following point-scale:

Grade	Points	Grade	Points	<b>Note:</b> Canvas will display to you a percentage of points you have earned. That percentage does not matter.  Only this point scale matters, terms of determining your final grade.
A	100+	C+	81-83	
A-	94-99	C	78-80	
B+	90-93	C-	75-77	
B	87-89	D+	72-74	
B-	84-86	D	69-71	

## University Policies

Updated mandatory syllabus policies regarding the ADA Act, Safety at the U, Addressing Sexual Misconduct, and Academic Misconduct can be viewed at: <https://cte.utah.edu/instructor-education/syllabus/institutional-policies.php>

## Preliminary Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic/Discussion</u>	<u>Due Dates:</u>
<b>Week 1:</b>	Course Introduction and Syllabus/Schedule Review	
<b>Week 2:</b>	Hinduism: History, Philosophy, Scripture	
<b>Week 3:</b>	Hinduism: Beliefs & <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>	
<b>Week 4:</b>	Buddhism: History & Scripture	Unit 1 Exam due 1/28
<b>Week 5:</b>	Buddhism: Beliefs, Society, & Words of the Buddha	1 <sup>st</sup> Essay deadline 2/9
<b>Week 6:</b>	Judaism: History	Unit 2 Exam due 2/11
<b>Week 7:</b>	Judaism: Scripture & Beliefs	

<b>Week 8:</b>	Judaism: Society, Holocaust, Branches	
<b>Week 9:</b>	Judaism & Christianity: The Concept of the Messiah	Unit 3 Exam due 3/6 2 <sup>nd</sup> Essay deadline 3/8
<b>Week 10:</b>	Spring Break	
<b>Week 11:</b>	Christianity: History, Jesus, Scripture	
<b>Week 12:</b>	Christianity: Beliefs, Society, Worship	
<b>Week 13:</b>	Islam: History, Unity, Variety	Unit 4 Exam due 4/1 3 <sup>rd</sup> Essay deadline 4/6
<b>Week 14:</b>	Islam: Beliefs, Scripture, Society	
<b>Week 15:</b>	Islam: Science, Art, Culture	Unit 5 Exam due 4/19
<b>Week 16:</b>	Course recap	
<b>Finals Week:</b>	No class	4 <sup>th</sup> Essay deadline 4/27