

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
SPRING 2010

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 333 L20
RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH AND AFTERLIFE

INSTRUCTOR: Anne White, Ph.D.
COURSE TIME AND DAYS: MW -14:00 – 16:45
OFFICE: SS 1322
OFFICE HOURS: MW 13:00-13:50
TELEPHONE: (403) 220-3285 or (403) 220-5886 (main office)
E-MAIL ADDRESS: awhite@ucalgary.ca
WEBSITE ADDRESS: Blackboard

REQUIRED TEXT: Chidester, David. *Patterns of Transcendence: Religion Death, and Dying.*

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Airies, Philippe.	<i>The Hour of our Death</i>
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Bailey, Lloyd R.	<i>Biblical Perspectives on Death</i>
Coward, Harold.	<i>Life After Death in World Religions</i>
Johnson, Christopher, ed.	<i>How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife</i>
Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth.	<i>On Death and Dying</i>
Kea, Michael C.	<i>Endings: A Sociology of Death and Dying</i>
Lewis, James R., ed.	<i>Encyclopedia of Afterlife Beliefs and Phenomena</i>
Obayashi, Hiroshi, ed.	<i>Death and Afterlife: Perspectives of World Religions</i>
Reynolds, Frank E. et al. eds.	<i>Religious Encounters with Death: Insights from the History and Anthropology of Religions.</i>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will study the issues surrounding the finality of death and the hope of an afterlife as expressed within diverse religious traditions throughout the ages. These studies will take us from the cosmological (religious world view) belief systems of primitive man, through to modern religious thought expressed within secular society. The religions studied will provide perspectives within historical and cultural contexts in order for the student to gain a working knowledge of the complexity and sophistication that has evolved over millennia concerning these issues.

In addition to utilizing a lecture based format, there will also be class discussion as we review video documentaries pertinent to course content. We will consider how people use religious beliefs in order to negotiate the five basic steps in the human recognition of death: (i) denial and isolation; (ii) anger; (iii) bargaining; (iv) depression; (v) acceptance. We will then consider how the variety of religious beliefs are incorporated to provide those suffering and sorrowing with courage, hope, and often great assurance.

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

To enable students to organize, evaluate, and understand various religious approaches to the reality of physical mortality.

CORE COMPETENCIES:

- Students will develop a number of the skills identified in the University of Calgary statement of learning outcomes. These include communication, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, computer literacy, writing competency, information retrieval, and group interaction.

N.B. It is important to note that the attainment of any learning endeavour requires that students regularly attend classes, read the required material, and complete all course work.

SELF DIRECTED STUDY:

Students are encouraged to read web notes and the assigned pages of text before each lecture, and come prepared to ask questions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

May 31 Section Test 30%
June 7 Section Test 30%

June 25 Essay 40%

Essay Specifications: (2500 words) plus 1 page bibliography with a minimum of six sources, four textbook and two from academic journals.

Pages to be numbered

Chicago style format

Footnotes or endnotes. If you have extensive footnotes, do not include this in the page count.

You must have 2500 words of essay text separate from footnotes.

Endnote page is not part of the page count.

Separate bibliography - at least six sources, two academic/scholarly website sources permitted.

Essay Methodology:

- (i) Choose one belief in an afterlife as per lectures from the dates of May 17 to June 7th.
- (ii) Discuss this belief – compare/contrast in the context of Abrahamic.

EXAMPLE: Ancestral transcendence – saints, intercession, judgment on the ‘other side.’ What is the difference between the teachings? What could be the similarities?

**There will be no Registrar scheduled final exam for this course.*

NOTE: You are required to submit your paper via the Blackboard digital drop box.

GRADING:

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme:

A+	100-96	A	95 - 90	A-	89 - 85
B+	84 - 80	B	79 - 75	B-	74 - 70
C+	69 - 65	C	64 - 60	C-	59 - 55
D+	54 - 53	D	52-50	F	Under 50

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Students should be familiar with the University regulations regarding academic honesty. See University Calendar, 2009-2010.

GNOSIS:

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: gnosis@ucalgary.ca or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

PLEASE NOTE: SCHEDULE MAY VARY SLIGHTLY DUE TO CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND TIME CONSTRAINTS.

MAY

17

Chapter 1 Religion, death and dying.
Typologies
Various concepts of transcendence.
Documentary

19

Chapter 2 Indigenous beliefs - plus video. (Tribal typology: Australian, N. American, African)

24

VICTORIA DAY – NO CLASS

26

Chapter 3 Introduction to eastern ideas
The India Tree
(Hinduism, Buddhism)
Reincarnation and salvation/liberation.

26

Chapter 4 Hinduism, Buddhism continued,
Jainism, Sikhism

31

Section Test – worth 30 points
Time allowed: 75 minutes.
Class resumes at 3:15pm.

Chapter 3 +
Webnotes

South East Asian Tree (Chinese and Japanese traditions)
Ancestral transcendence, the Dao, karma, reincarnation,
the Kami.

JUNE

2

Chapter 3 +
Webnotes

South East Asian Tree (Chinese and Japanese traditions)
Ancestral transcendence, the Dao, karma, reincarnation,
the Kami.

7

Section Test – worth 30 points
Time allowed: 75 minutes.
Class resumes at 3:15pm.
Documentary

9	Intro to Abrahamics Zoroastrianism
14	Judaism
16	Christianity
21	Islam
23 Chapter 7 Webnotes	The Near Death Experience Elizabeth Kubler Ross – the Five Stages of Grieving in approaching death. Grieving and mediating grief, growing beyond mortality Video.

Research paper to be handed in via the Blackboard digital drop box, on Friday, June 25th.