

New Jersey Institute of Technology
Phil 337
Face-to-Face

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Phil 337 World Religions Fall 2025

Course Description

This course explores the religion as part of human culture. It will cover what we know about religion from the earliest periods of human existence; the functions of religion in human life, the varieties of religious beliefs, practices, and experiences; how religion relates to other parts of culture; and the relevance of religion to modern societies. The course takes an anthropological perspective which considers all cultural phenomena as valid in their own contexts and requires the student to explore beyond the bounds of any personal beliefs without judgment or criticism. The class also looks at the religions of the world as they exist at the present time, exploring their cosmology, dogma, ritual, and myth.

Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to define religion from an anthropological perspective.
2. Students will be able to explain the relationship between religion and culture.
3. Students will be able to define and give examples of shamanism, witchcraft, and sorcery.
4. Students will be able to discuss the universality of religion.
5. Students will be able to explain the common functions of all religions.
6. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the world's major religions.
7. Students will be able to use the comparative method to analyze religious similarities and differences

Optional Text

Malefijt, Annemarie de Wall. Religion and Culture: an Introduction to the Anthropology of Religion. Waveland Press, 1968. ISBN 0-88133-483-9

Grading

The final grade for the class will be calculated as follows:

Class Engagement: 20%

This includes spending sufficient and regular time on the Canvas website, completing PDF reading assignments, article links, and videos, coming to class, and on-time submission of assignments.

Basic Concepts Exam: 25%

Covers material in Modules 1 through Module 4.

Module 9 Essay: 25%

Follow the instructions provided in Module 9. **Your topic should be approved by the instructor.**

Final Exam: 30%

Covers all modules.

A=	92-100
B+=	87-91
B=	82-86
C+=	77-81
C=	70-77
D=	60-69
F=	<60

Academic Integrity

All students must abide by the university's policy on academic integrity. Please review:

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:

<http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that it is the instructor's professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu

Module 1: Introduction and Basic Concepts

Culture and Religion: Definitions

The Study of Religion

Animism, magic, witchcraft, ghosts

All course resources are posted on the course

Canvas Site. You should review them all.

Module 2

Shamanism and sorcery

Module 3

Indicators of prehistoric religion

Module 4

Religious Change

Revitalization Movements

New Religious Movement

Basic Concepts Exam

Module 5

Hinduism and Buddhism

Module 6

Judaism

Module 7

Christianity

Module 8

Islam

Module 9

Other significant religions

Your essay is part of this module. Read the essay instructions carefully.

Module 10

Religion and the State

The First Amendment

Religion and Violence

Final Exam

The final exam will be posted the last week of class.
