

Religions Of The World IB/Honors

Mercyhurst Prep School

2015 - 2016

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Curriculum: This IB course is designed for seniors completing their theological study here at Mercyhurst. This course is designed for the scholar who wishes to receive International Baccalaureate credit or work on the honors level. This year will consist in the study of the world's enduring religious traditions. The course concentrates on two major world religions in-depth: Judaism and Buddhism, and thoroughly overviews Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Taoism. Students will learn the major belief structures for each of these faiths, examine their sacred scripture, understand how they image the divine, and explore where they call humanity.

Content Breakdown: We will explore these religions in this progression; Term 1: Foundations of Religious Thought, Judaism, and Christianity, Term 2: Islam, Hinduism, and beginning our the Investigative Study, Term 3: Completion of the Investigative Study, Buddhism, Taoism, and preparation for exam.

Required Texts: *Exploring the Religions of Our World* by Nancy Clemmons, SNJM from Ave Maria Pr.

The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra
by Thich Nhat Hahn from Parallax Press

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho from HarperCollins (provided in class)

Suggested Texts: *The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* translated by Barbara Stoller-Miller from Bantam Classics

The Dhammapada: The Path of Perfection translated by Juan Mascaro from Penguin Classics

Supplies: A notebook or binder is required for taking notes. Either works fine and it is the student's discretion as to which they prefer. A pen or pencil is required for taking notes. Ink color for note taking is the student's personal preference but any work to be handed in must be done in blue or black ink. A folder for class handouts is also required. The iPad will be used as a tool in conjunction with the lessons but doesn't serve as a replacement for an actual notebook.

Class Information (Of course, all school rules apply):

- Parent, as well as student, communication is *very important*. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.
- Students are expected to be prepared and on time for class daily.
- Please be at your seat and ready to begin when class starts.
- *Note taking supplies, class handouts, and your book must be brought to class each day.*

- The dress code will be enforced.
- The school discipline policy will be followed in this class.
- Please keep a copy of all your computer generated work in your school folder on the MPS server and please keep a hard copy of all your other work. In case of a question regarding a grade or missing assignment, the burden of proof rests with you.
- No gum, no food, no cell phones – period! Thank you.
- You can find my website on the school's website (www.mpslakers.com). Here you will find a copy of this syllabus along with homework assignments and other useful links.
- Please let me know if you are struggling with the material or have any questions about what we cover in class. Never be embarrassed to ask for help.

Integrity Policy: It is expected that the student will exhibit respect for everyone in the classroom in both word and action. Disrespect for another student or for the teacher will not be tolerated nor will cheating on tests or assignments. Plagiarism in any form is equal to cheating. No credit will be given for the assignment and detention will be issued.

Grade Breakdown:

All assignments will be graded on a total points system. We will follow the grading scale as published in the Mercyhurst Prep School handbook. The student's overall grade will be based on the following:

1) Class Participation

The material in this class can't be fully absorbed by simply reading and listening. It must be engaged. Dialogue is a necessary tool to understand and internalize this information. Part of the IB experience is pushing this exploration of the material to the next level. These discussions are also the natural result of the study of religion. Religion, by nature, looks at central beliefs and big issues. It's the sort of stuff that generates opinions. Ask your questions. Raise your observations. The class will be so much the better for them. Points will be available every day for participation in class and group discussions. Several online posts to our discussion board forum will also be required through each term. These posts will be described as they are placed online. The same rules of respect for one another obviously exist in the online forum as they do in class. If respect for one another isn't demonstrated the points for the assignment will be forfeit and the same actions will be taken as if it happened in class.

Each term students will be required to complete a self-evaluation where they consider what grade they deserve in this category and why. The evaluation will be turned in and the grade they have given themselves will be taken into consideration when the final participation grade is awarded. Failure to return this sheet will result in a loss of the participation points for the term.

2) Homework

Homework will come in a variety of forms in this class. The student can expect a reading assignment from the text or accompanying handouts almost every class. There will also be a variety of written work. This will be seen most commonly in smaller reflection papers scattered

throughout the year as well as one more substantial research paper. More information on these paper will be forthcoming as it is assigned.

It is expected that the students come to class every day having read the assigned section and be ready to participate in a class discussion about the material. They also need to have any written work that may be due that day. Assignments will be considered late if they are not completed by the *beginning* of class the day they are due. (See more on late work below.) If an assignment is late, the assignment will still need to be completed and turned in.

3) Late Work

Late work will be accepted. However assignments late one day will receive half credit. Assignments turned in after one day late will receive a "0." Please note that if you have this class on an A Day then the assignment would need to be turned in on the following B Day for half credit and vice versa. Any day after that would result in the "0."

4) Quizzes and Tests

Students will be given quizzes and tests throughout the year. The unit exams will be the primary means for measuring their content knowledge of each section. However, quizzes may become more frequent if the material warrants it or if a lack or regular reading is apparent. *Quizzes may be given without notice.* Students will always be given a few days notice for a test.

There will be an essay exam at the end of each chapter. The essay exam will usually take the entire mod to complete.

5) Extra Credit

Extra credit will be given occasionally and at the instructor's discretion throughout the year. Only students who have completed *all* of their assignments for a term, even those they did not receive credit for, may participate in the extra credit issued during any given term.

6) Other

Specific assignments for the IB grade include a 1500-1800 word Investigative Study concerning an area of a world religion (not necessarily one we study) and two IB exams given in May that will be sent to an IB examiner for grading.

The notes from the class discussion and lectures are vitally important to the student's understanding of the material. Student's notebooks will be checked once a term for content and neatness. All notes written on the board should be written in the notebook each day, along with the date and topic covered. Notebook checks will be random and will be given a homework grade.

Projects will be given throughout the year and will graded based on what is required of the student in each one.

Make-up Tests, Extra Help Sessions, and Personal Conferences: I will be available in my room, 206, most mornings by 7:45 and will be in my classroom most afternoons as well. If you need to meet with me on a specific day, I can be available from 3:00-4:00 on any weekday by appointment.

Responsibilities when Absent: When students are absent it is their responsibility to see me upon their return and to turn in any work that was due while they were absent. If they are absent they must report to me their first day back in school to see what they missed, regardless if it is the day they have me in class or not. They will receive the same amount of time for homework given while they were out as the students in class had. The timeframe for that assignment will begin on their first day back. When turning in work from when they were absent, it should be clearly marked as ABSENT at the top to receive full credit. Otherwise it will be marked as LATE and will be graded accordingly. If they were absent for an exam they will have *exactly one week* from their first day back to make-up the exam. If they fail to meet with me to schedule a time for the make-up exam or if they fail to take the exam within the allotted week they will receive a "0." It is the students' responsibility to get any and all notes they missed as well as any handouts that were given out that day.

iPad usage: Students are to follow all school policies in regard to their iPad use in this class. Unless otherwise indicated for an assignment, the iPad is to be put away in the student's bag when class begins and is to stay away for the duration of the class. If a student has their iPad out when they are not supposed to or are using it for something other than the work assigned in class it will be taken away and they will receive a detention. To honor our daily discussions and the opinions and views shared, no portion of this class may be recorded in either an audio or video format. To do so will result in the loss of the iPad as well as detention. Obviously the use of the iPad in class, while exciting, is a privilege and not a right.