

World Religions – High School

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Throughout the ages, religions from around the world have shaped the political, social, and cultural aspects of societies. This course focuses on the major religions that have played a role in human history, including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shintoism, and Taoism. Students will trace the major developments in these religions and explore their relationships with social institutions and culture. The course will also discuss some of the similarities and differences among the major religions and examine the connections and influences they have.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Analyze different definitions of the word “religion”.
- Consider how different groups of people approach religion.
- Identify characteristics that all religions have in common.
- Discover ways in which religion affects culture and artistic expression.
- Recognize the role religion plays in politics, diplomacy and social policy.
- Understand Hinduism’s ancient origins.
- Discuss several denominations of Hinduism.
- Identify the four objectives of Hinduism and the four paths to God.
- Name important Hindu texts and rituals.
- Recognize the influence of Hinduism on South Asian culture.
- Discuss the historical and religious figure of the Great Buddha.
- Understand the Buddha’s basic teachings.
- Describe some of the basic developments that have occurred in Buddhism since the time of the Buddha.
- Identify the two primary divisions of Buddhism.
- Recognize the influence of Buddhism on different world cultures.
- Identify the origins of Judaism.
- Briefly summarize the 3500 year history of the Jewish people.
- Understand how Jewish monotheism spread throughout the world.
- Distinguish among the major divisions of modern Judaism.
- Understand the beliefs and practices of modern day Jews.
- Learn about Jesus of Nazareth and other key figures in the origin of Christianity.
- Understand the basic teachings of Jesus.
- Map the spread of the Christian faith throughout Europe and the world.

- Distinguish between Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism.
- Identify Christian influences in world art and culture.
- Identify the origins of Islam.
- Learn about the life of the prophet Mohammad.
- Map the spread of Islam throughout the world.
- Distinguish among the major divisions of modern-day Islam.
- Gain an understanding of the role of Islam in current affairs.
- Understand the world in which Confucius lived.
- Outline the basic principles of Confucian thought.
- Become familiar with developments in Confucian thought that came after Confucius' lifetime.
- Identify components of Confucianism that cause it to be classified (by some) as a religion rather than merely a philosophy.
- Recognize the influence of Confucian thought in Chinese culture.
- Understand the ancient origins of Shinto.
- Identify the basic Shinto beliefs and rituals.
- Follow the development of Shinto traditions over time.
- Gain an understanding of how Shinto is practiced alongside Buddhism and other religions.
- Recognize the influence of Shinto in modern Japanese culture.
- Examine the ancient origins of Taoism.
- Identify the historic/religious figure of Lao Tzu.
- Understand the basic principles of Taoist thought.
- Have a basic understanding of the rituals and customs common to Taoist practice.
- Recognize the influence of Taoism in the cultures of China and other Asian countries.
- Define challenges to religion that are presented by the modern world.
- Identify the role of religion on global politics and social policies.
- Recognize reasons why religious tolerance is more important than ever.
- Learn about the Interfaith Movement.
- Theorize about the future of religious practice.

PREREQUISITES: None

COURSE LENGTH: One Semester

REQUIRED TEXT: No required textbook for this course.

MATERIALS LIST: No required materials for this course.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Unit 1: The Study of World Religions

Unit 2: Hinduism

Unit 3: Buddhism

Unit 4: Judaism

Unit 5: Christianity

World Religions Midterm Exam

Unit 6: Islam

Unit 7: Confucianism

Unit 8: Shintoism

Unit 9: Taoism

Unit 10: Religion in the 21st Century

World Religions Final Exam