Comparative Religon

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This elective course introduces students to a wide variety of religious, ethical and ideological belief systems. Students will gain first-hand knowledge of different faiths through direct experiences with guest speakers and personal visitations. A broad range of spiritual and intellectual life will be explored. A research project is required. This course is open to juniors and seniors; however, it is recommended that the course be taken during the senior year. It is one semester.

People, Groups and the Institution of Religion

1. Examine the various structural components of the institution of religion, for example: history and founder, beliefs, rituals and practices, organization, physical structures, holy books etc.
2. Analyze the extent to which the religious institution meets individual needs and promotes the common good in contemporary and historical settings.
3. Identify and analyze examples of tension between individuality and efforts of religion to promote social conformity.
4. Evaluate the role of religion in furthuring both continuity and change.
5. Develop appropriate questions and engage in reasoned dialogue with guest speakers representing the various religious and ideological traditions.
6. Evaluate the development of religion as a major institution in American society.
7. Compare and contrast the major religious and ideological traditions in the world today.
8. List and examine the major moral and ethical issues of today and their impact on the institution of religion.
9. Analyze proposed solutions to current issues from the perspective of the different speakers.

Cultural History and Religion

1. Understand the historical, philosophical, and social development of religion and ideological traditions.
2. Perceive significant historical periods and patterns of change within the various religions and ideological traditions.
3. Critically evaluate the positive and negative impact of religion and ideological traditions in the world today.

Inquiry, Research and Analysis

1. Critically evaluate the information and arguments made by the guest speakers concerning their religious and ideological tradition.
2. Critically evaluate the positions presented by the guest speakers on contemporary, moral and ethical issues.
3. Examine and evaluate the use of primary sources: guest speakers, visits to religious, spiritual or ideological institutions, and books (philosophical, theological, inspirational, historical fiction, etc.).
4. Research a religion or ideological tradition by: locating information from a variety of credible sources; evaluating the sources for bias or perspective of authors, institutions or speakers; examining the strength of the evidence and arguments; and evaluating the quality of the materials.
5. Research an ethical issue by gathering, recording, evaluating, and interpreting relevant data.
6. Choose a position on an ethical issue and develop a rationale for that position.

Communication

1. In Writing All Papers

a. Present a coherent thesis.
b. Support the thesis with apropriate evidence.
c. Organize ideas to achieve coherence in communication.
d. Use correct grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.
e. Synthesize information into logical sequence.
f. Present a concise, clear closing when making an argument.

2. Group Work

a. Analyze ethical and moral issues in the world today.
b. Build a consensus within the group by finding points of agreement, making sure that all voices are heard, and attempting to understand the view of others.
c. Research decisions by: identifying the problem; analyzing the interest, values and points of view; identifying the causes of the problem or dilemma; proposing alternative solutions; formulating a position; and evaluating the consequences of taking that position.

Impact of Technology on the Institution of Religion

1. Examine changes in the institution of religion due to technological innovations.

2. Analyze the impact of technology on moral and ethical issues.

3. Predict changes in religion and ideological traditions as a result of continued technological progress and evalute the consequences.

Technology and Information Literacy

1. Determine and apply an evaluative process to all information sources chosen for a project	a. Evaluate information collected to answer both personal and curricular needs to determine its accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency and coverage. b. Acknowledge intellectual property in using information sources. c. Determine and apply an evaluative process to all information sources chosen for a project.
2. Apply a research process model to conduct research and meet information needs	a. Derive a personally developed research model to conduct independent research. b. Refine the information question to focus the research process, modifying the question as necessary to broaden or narrow the inquiry. c. Critique information sources to determine if different points of view are included. d. Integrate multiple information sources in the research process. e. Create a product to communicate information, representing a personal point of view based on findings. f. Adhere to copyright and intellectual property laws and guidelines when creating new products (e.g., standard bibliographic format, permission to use information created by others). g. Monitor progress and evaluate actions during the process, revising and incorporating new information as indicated by personal evaluation. h. Archive the final product in a format that will be accessible in the future.
3. Formulate advaced search strategies, demonstrating an understanding of the strengths and limitations of the Internet and evaluate the quality and appropriate use of Internet resources.	a. Incorporate defined field searching by initiating a search string identifying the desired field of information to be retrieved (e.g., search author or title). b. Create a stand-alone system for tracking Internet resources for personal and academic needs (e.g., postsecondary institutions of interest). c. Synthesize search results retrieved from a variety of Internet resources to create an information product for a targeted audience. d. Critique research retrieved through the Internet for authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency, coverage, and relevancy.

4. Evaluate choices of electronic resources and determine their strengths and limitations.

a. Research information from electronic archives (e.g., online database, Web-based index).

b. Use a variety of technology resources for curriculum and personal information needs (e.g., streaming video, CD/DVD, subscription database).

c. Evaluate technology resources and determine strengths and weaknesses for curricular or personal needs.

d. Select an appropriate tool, online resource or Website based on the information needed.