

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
WINTER 2011**

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 333 L01
RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH AND AFTERLIFE

INSTRUCTOR:	Anne White, Ph.D.
COURSE TIME AND DAYS:	MWF 2:00– 2:50pm
OFFICE:	SS 1322
OFFICE HOURS:	MWF 1:00 – 1:50pm
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 by 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 a 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:

Jan. 24	- Section Test	20%
Feb. 7	- Section Test	20%
Mar. 2	- Section Test	20%
Registrar scheduled Final Exam (TBA)		40%

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 the current University Calendar.

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.

JANUARY

10-14 Religion, death, and dying
Chapter 1 Various concepts of transcendence

17-21 Indigenous beliefs - plus video (Tribal typology: Australian, N. American, African).
Chapter 2

24 **SECTION TEST (50 MINUTES) – WORTH 20 POINTS**

26-31 Introduction to eastern ideas
Chapter 3 The India Tree (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism) - reincarnation and salvation/liberation.

FEBRUARY

2-4 Introduction to eastern ideas
Chapter 3 The India Tree (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism) - reincarnation and salvation/liberation

7 **SECTION TEST (50 MINUTES) – WORTH 20 POINTS**

9-10 South East Asian Tree (Chinese and Japanese traditions)
Chapter 3 + Ancestral transcendence, the Dao, karma, reincarnation, the Kami.
Webnotes

14-18 South East Asian Tree (Chinese and Japanese traditions)
Chapter 3 + Ancestral transcendence, the Dao, karma, reincarnation, the Kami.
Webnotes

20-27 **READING WEEK – NO CLASSES**

28 **Documentary**

MARCH

2 **SECTION TEST (50 MINUTES) WORTH 20 POINTS**

4 Introduction to the Monotheistic belief systems (Abrahamic Tree)
Chapter 5 + Zoroastrianism.
Webnotes

7-11 Judaism
Webnotes

14-16 Judaism
Webnotes

18-25 Christianity
Webnotes

28 Christianity

30 Islam

APRIL

1- 8 Islam

13 – 15 The NDE phenomenon.
Chapter 7 Elizabeth Kubler Ross – the five stages of grieving approaching death.
Webnotes Grieving and mediating grief, growing beyond the mortality