PHIL 1620 Introduction to Eastern Religions

For additional course information, including prerequisites, corequisites, and course fees, please refer to the Catalog: https://catalog.uvu.edu/

Semester: Spring   **Year:** 2025
Course Prefix: PHIL   **Course and Section #:** 1620-002

Course Description

For students majoring in humanities-related disciplines and other students interested in the academic study of religion. Presents the comparative study of the history, ritual, "theology," and ethical beliefs of the major eastern religious traditions including Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. Explores similarities and differences between them by examining the primary sources and sacred texts along with the unique beliefs and practices of each tradition.

Course Attributes

This course has the following attributes:
- ☐ General Education Requirements
- ☐ Global/Intercultural Graduation Requirements
- ☐ Writing Enriched Graduation Requirements
- ☒ Discipline Core Requirements in Program
- ☐ Elective Core Requirements in Program
- ☐ Open Elective

Other: *Click here to enter text.*

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Chris Weigel

Student Learning Outcomes

1	Develop understanding of philosophical aims and methods.
2	Develop a deep appreciation for some representative global philosophical and religious issues that have and continue to confront human beings with an emphasis on Eastern religions
3	Become conversant in the language and terminology used by philosophers in discussing various problems, and appreciate the value of precision in thought and in use of language.
4	Develop a sophisticated understanding of various philosophers' positions on questions of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and social organization.
5	Cultivate reading, reasoning, and critical analysis skills through working directly with primary texts drawn from the history of philosophy and religion to the present.

6	Develop speaking and writing skills with respect to philosophical issues through discussion oriented classes and a writing intensive curriculum.
7	Develop the habits of thinking, speaking, and writing with maximum clarity about complex issues.

Course Materials and Texts
free, fair use pdfs/films available on Canvas.

Course Requirements

Course Assignments, Assessments, and Grading Policy
1. (20%) Class preparation. Because careful reading is an important skill and is crucial to successful discussions, you will annotate our readings on a collaborative note-taking tool before each of our class meetings. *See assignment for further details.*
2. (20%) Class participation. In this class, critical thinking is largely achieved through collaborative discussions, so your class participation (which can be demonstrated in multiple ways) will be evaluated after each class meeting. *See assignment for further details.*
3. (20%) Group discussions. In order to deepen your understanding of the material, at the end of each topic, in class, you will work with classmates on a short project that you briefly present to the class. *See assignment for further details.*
4. (20%) Unit essays. To develop your writing skills and your understanding of the material, you will write unit responses where you explain the major theories and positions from class, connecting the outline we give on the first day of the unit to all of the readings. *See assignment for further details.*
5. (20%) Final exam. Our final exam will be modeled on the national collegiate ethics bowl competition, but we will adapt it to be a "worldview bowl." You will actively engage in debates and dialogue in teams. *See assignment for further details.*

Required or Recommended Reading Assignments
 free, fair use pdfs/films available on Canvas.

General Description of the Subject Matter of Each Lecture or Discussion
INTRODUCTION: COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY
Driving questions: Why is it relevant for people in the contemporary United States to study Asian Philosophy? What is the value of a cosmopolitan mindset, and are there any limitations to it? What is the value of comparing cultures and their traditions?
1. **Introduction to the course.** Discussion of driving questions, course expectations, and syllabus.
2. **Comparative philosophy.** Van Norden: "A Manifesto for Multicultural Philosophy."
FREE WILL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY
Driving questions: What is free will, and do we have it? Are we morally responsible for our actions? Is it best to set our own path in life, or is it better to follow the duty that has been given to us? Does God negate the possibility of human freedom? Is anger at the actions of others ever justified? Is the refusal to believe in free will just a way for bad people to justify their failures?

3. **Comparative philosophy.** Smullyan: "Is God a Taoist?"
4. Compatibilism vs determinism through *Bhagavad Gita* excerpts
5. Hard determinism through excerpts of Sri Ramakrishnan's *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*
6. Compatibilism vs determinism through Śāntideva's "The Perfection of Patience"
7. Libertarianism/anti-fatalism through Mozi's "Against Fatalism"
8. **Group discussions**: Narayan's "The Blind Dog"

PERSONAL IDENTITY AND THE SELF

Driving questions: What is the self? Does it exist? How does it persist through time? How can you be the same person even if you have changed? Is the self a thing or more like an idea? Or is the idea completely empty?

9. **Comparative philosophy:** Dennett's "Who Am I?"
10. The Buddha's no self view in Saṃyutta Nikāya excerpts
11. No self view in Melinda Panha excerpts
12. Soul theory and eternalism in excerpts from the Nyāya-sūtras and commentaries
13. Emptiness of the self in excerpts of Nāgārjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*
14. **Group Discussion:** Johnson's "Nirvana"

ETHICS AND HUMAN NATURE

Driving questions: What are the cardinal virtues? How do we cultivate them? What is wisdom? Are virtues bound by rules? How do we ensure we don't falter? What role does attention play? Where does our capacity for evil come from? Why do good people fail? When it comes to virtue, what is the balance between thinking and feeling? Are humans inherently selfish, and if so, is that a good thing? Should we favor our family and friends or treat everyone equally? Is striving to become ethically better the best way to live?

15. **Comparative philosophy:** Jackson's "The Lottery."
16. Virtue ethics in excerpts from Confucius's *Analects*
17. Impartial caring in *Mozi* excerpts
18. Ethical egoism of Yangzi as represented in *Zhuangzi* excerpts
19. Paradoxical nature of our knowledge in Hui Shi and Gongsun Longzi
20. *Group Discussion: Saunders's "Exhortation"*
21. Goodness of human nature in *Mengzi* excerpts
22. (No class because I will be at a conference.)
23. State-of-nature arguments to the badness of human nature in *Xunzi* excerpts
24. Mysticism and the limits of virtue in excerpts from the *Tao Te Ching*
25. Limits of virtue in excerpts from *Zhuangzi*
26. *Group Discussion: Lispector's "The Fifth Story"*

REVIEW

27. Catch-up day TBA
28. AND 29. *Prep for final*

FINAL EXAMINATION:

Required Course Syllabus Statements

Generative AI

The Department of Philosophy and Humanities recognizes that Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing Tools are largely accessible to students and will be used by many in higher education for the foreseeable future. However, the skills taught in the humanities are unique. We aim to

educate students in the careful reading of texts, the development of rigorous writing skills, the analysis and use of arguments, and to foster the thoughtful application of each of these skills in students' personal and social development. Research has not yet determined what bearing the use of AI tools in the classroom will have upon the successful acquisition of these skills.

Therefore, at this time, online learning support platforms (like ChatGPT or Google Bard) may not be used for course assignments in our department except as explicitly authorized by the instructor. Any assignment or content composed by any resource other than the student (whether human or digital) must be attributed to the source through proper citation. Unacknowledged use of online learning support platforms is a form of scholastic dishonesty and will be treated as such.

Some of our language has been adapted from the University of Minnesota

Using Remote Testing Software

☒ This course does not use remote testing software.

☐ This course uses remote testing software. Remote test-takers may choose their remote testing locations. Please note, however, that the testing software used for this may conduct a brief scan of remote test-takers' immediate surroundings, may require use of a webcam while taking an exam, may require the microphone be on while taking an exam, or may require other practices to confirm academic honesty. Test-takers therefore shall have no expectation of privacy in their test-taking location during, or immediately preceding, remote testing. If a student strongly objects to using test-taking software, the student should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to determine whether alternative testing arrangements are feasible. Alternatives are not guaranteed.

Required University Syllabus Statements

Accommodations/Students with Disabilities
Students needing accommodations due to a permanent or temporary disability, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions may contact UVU Accessibility Services at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu or 801-863-8747.

Accessibility Services is located on the Orem Campus in BA 110.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing students requesting ASL interpreters or transcribers can contact Accessibility Services to set up accommodations. Deaf/Hard of Hearing services can be contacted at DHHservices@uvu.edu

DHH is located on the Orem Campus in BA 112.

Academic Integrity
At Utah Valley University, faculty and students operate in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Maintaining an atmosphere of academic integrity allows for free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential. Our goal is to foster an intellectual atmosphere that

produces scholars of integrity and imaginative thought. In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and UVU students are expected to produce their own original academic work.

Faculty and students share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at UVU. Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the university by not participating in or facilitating others' participation in any act of academic dishonesty. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their rights and responsibilities. In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, assessments, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Likewise, instructors are responsible to clearly state expectations and model best practices.

Further information on what constitutes academic dishonesty is detailed in UVU Policy 541: *Student Code of Conduct*.

Equity and Title IX
Utah Valley University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age (40 and over), disability, veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth, or pregnancy-related conditions, citizenship, genetic information, or other basis protected by applicable law, including Title IX and 34 C.F.R. Part 106, in employment, treatment, admission, access to educational programs and activities, or other University benefits or services. Inquiries about nondiscrimination at UVU may be directed to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights or UVU's Title IX Coordinator at 801-863-7999 – TitleIX@uvu.edu – 800 W University Pkwy, Orem, 84058, Suite BA 203.

Religious Accommodation
UVU values and acknowledges the array of worldviews, faiths, and religions represented in our student body, and as such provides supportive accommodations for students. Religious belief or conscience broadly includes religious, non-religious, theistic, or non-theistic moral or ethical beliefs as well as participation in religious holidays, observances, or activities. Accommodations may include scheduling or due-date modifications or make-up assignments for missed class work.
To seek a religious accommodation, a student must provide written notice to the instructor and the Director of Accessibility Services at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu. If the accommodation relates to a scheduling conflict, the notice should include the date, time, and brief description of the difficulty posed by the conflict. Such requests should be made as soon as the student is aware of the prospective scheduling conflict.

While religious expression is welcome throughout campus, UVU also has a specially dedicated space for meditation, prayer, reflection, or other forms of religious expression.