

BREL403 Major World Religions

ECTS Value: 5 ECTS

Module Description

This module deals with the study of major world religions; the exploration of areas related to the attitudes, traditions, practices, aspirations, customs and values of millions of people in our world. It promotes an in-depth exploration of major world religions and focuses on common features while drawing attention to the unique characteristics of the tradition under consideration. It emphasizes how these religions express the sense of the Sacred in their daily life.

Through our studies together, participants are encouraged to learn about the major religions through the process of inquiry and exploration, to develop the ability to think systematically, and to acquire a sympathetic understanding of people of various beliefs and religious practices. Major areas of concentration include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Each area emphasizes the rationale and teachings of religion, explores the influence of its leaders on society, and examines its impact on everyday activity. Religion affects many aspects of human life and expresses itself in many forms: painting, sculpture, art, architecture, music, drama, and poetry. To have a sympathetic understanding demands an inquiry into a wide range of human activities. Therefore, the emphasis of this module will be on asking questions rather than answering them, and on sustaining each student's search for answers. The value of diversity in religious traditions is stressed.

Overall Objectives and Outcomes

By the end of this module, the learner will be able to:

Competences

- a. advise school setting regarding the impact of diverse religious traditions upon each other and their respective cultures;
- b. collaborate with SMT with problems related to religion diversity;
- c. be responsible for any initiatives that students in the school might raise regarding this area;
- d. guide students in their inquiries about religion beliefs; e) possess the learning skills to develop further studies in this area.

Knowledge

- a. identify the components of 'a religion': the sacred/divine/supernatural realm, ritual, logically consistent system of beliefs, cosmology, and mythology;
- b. evaluate the world's major faiths on the basis of their origin and historical development, social and cultural context, theology, cosmology, key points of doctrine, scriptural sources, major ritual practices, ethical and moral teachings;
- c. identify how each religious tradition studied interprets its ultimate point of reference (or Absolute);
- d. implement the ability to adapt and define the concepts and terms used in the study of major world religions;
- e. systematically identify between "fundamentalist" and "mystical" approaches in religious doctrine and practice;
- f. comprehend the conceptions of God: polytheism, henotheism, pantheism, monotheism, theism, deism; the questions of God's existence: cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments;
- g. identify an objective conceptual framework as to what each tradition offers to today's world.

Skills

- a. demonstrate a broad knowledge of the development of the world's major religions and will understand how and why they have similarities and differences;
- b. formulate new skills how to articulate the place of these religions in today's world;
- c. execute fundamental questions about Christian theological engagement with the understandings of other faith traditions and the implications of such an exploration for understandings of Christian faith;
- d. guide sensitively and intelligently to debates relating to interfaith dialogue, exploring and expanding their own perspectives on the theological issues raised;
- e. construct systematic and creative research into complex issues and communicate their findings with clarity, sensitivity, fairness and imagination to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- f. demonstrate initiative, self-direction and independence in tackling and solving problems, and in planning and implementing tasks;
- g. exercise their independent learning skills to pursue further professional development or academic study.

Mode of Delivery

This module adopts a blended approach to teaching and learning. Information related to the structure and delivery of the module may be accessed through the IfE Portal. For further details, kindly refer to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and Procedures found on the Institute for Education's website.

Assessment Methods

This module will be assessed through: Assignment, Presentation and Online Tasks/Reflections.

Suggested Readings

Core Reading List

1. Davie, G. (2013) *Sociology of Religion*. London, Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hamilton, M. (2001) *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*. 2nd ed, London, Routledge.
2. McQuire, M. (2008) *Religion: The Social Context*. Waveland Press Inc.
3. Prothero, Stephen. (2010) *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World*.
4. Russell, G. (2013) *Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms: Journeys into the Disappearing Religions of the Middle East*. New York, Basic Civitas Books.
5. Smart, N. (1998) *The World's Religions (2nd ed)* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Supplementary Reading List

1. Catoir, John T. (1993). *World Religions: Beliefs Behind Today's Headlines*. Makati: St. Paul Publications.
2. Gaer, Joseph. (1956). *How the Great Religions Began*. New York: The New American Library, Inc.
3. Keown, Damien. (2005). *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
4. Lewis, John. (1968). *The Religions of the World Made Simple*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.
5. Markham, Ian S. & Christy Lohr. (eds.). (2009). *A World Religions Reader*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
6. Partridge Christopher (3rd ed.) (2005). *The World's Religions (The New Lion Handbook)*. Oxford: Lion Hudson.
7. Saint-Laurent, George E. (2000). *Spirituality and World Religions*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.
8. Sheldrake, Philip. (2012). *Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: University Press.
9. Smith, Huston. (1958). *The Religions of Man*. New York: Harp