

PHIL3333
Comparative Philosophy of Religion 比較宗教哲學

Course Outline

Time : H 2:30pm-5:15pm

Location : LDS214

Course overview (as shown on CUSIS)

This course introduces philosophy of religion with a global perspective and a comparative approach. It will explore the reasons and rationalities embedded in a variety of religious traditions including Buddhism, Chinese religions (Confucianism and Daoism), Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. The main topics will fall into three areas: the human condition, ultimate realities, and religious truth.

Advisory to Majors: to be taken in year 2 or above.

Learning outcomes (as shown on CUSIS)

1. Acquire knowledge of major world religions in a comparative approach.
2. Understand the major concepts and issues in philosophy of religion.
3. Ability to work independently and critically on related primary and secondary sources.
4. Explore the contemporary relevance of concepts and issues discussed.

Topics

Each one of the below mentioned religions will be discussed – as far as possible--from the points of view of their **(i) religious truth; (ii) ultimate reality; (iii) social life**. [In some philosophies/religions the religious truths are the ‘personalization’ of the Absolute, as for example, in Buddhism, where Buddha, in fact, is the Impersonal Absolute. We have to look into both Impersonal Absolutes and Personal Absolutes in Religions.

In Hinduism, the emphasis will be laid on Vedānta and its three major schools.

In Buddhism, although the Ultimate state to be attained is conceptualized as the one and the same in all its shades, the various methods adopted –logically and practically – to attain it are what actually make the difference and constitutes the internal difference in their monolithic philosophy. This happens especially in Mahāyāna.

By and large, World Religions — both Personalistic and Impersonalistic – contain metaphysics and the social, where the former is the base upon which the respective social-fabric is conceived. Metaphysics itself is conceived *conceptually* progressively from Buddhism to Dvaita/Judaism, based on the ‘design of the Universe’ in accordance with (among others) the modes of “Destruction” (Rudra/Laya), “Creation” (Śrī/Sṛṣṭi), and “Sustenance” (Brahma/Sthiti). Chronologically, Semitic religions have a development-order.

While three Vedāntic schools generally give us non-synthetic, singular modal view, a synthetic view seeks to ‘synthesize’ all these modes of Universe at one go. These designs are primarily mathematical in nature. [Scriptural testimony, in fact, derives its strength from these *a priori* models.] The designs are usually embedded most of the time

in the ‘Tantra’ part of the literature; at others they are represented by the religious structures themselves, mainly for logical/metaphysical reasons. In this way we have both classifications of Personal/Impersonal and Synthetic/Non-synthetic religions.

The leading logical dictum is ‘Object-Subject duality as interdependent in their existence’ at all times without exception. --- Role of ‘coded language’ – numeric code; linguistic code.

- (i) Comparative aspects will enable us to address the contemporary global perspective, and also further facilitates us to explore the contemporary relevance of concepts and issues. By and large, all major religions of the world, follow a pattern of division between “means” and “end”— i.e., **means for attaining** the ultimate and the **ultimate** itself. Dharma and Mokṣa are Śreyas and Artha and Kāma are preyas. In this schema ‘Dharma’ is the means and ‘Mokṣa’ is the end. Generically, the “means” are generally classified as prescribed ‘social ethical life’. The specific ‘means’ for the attainment of the specific mokṣa is the prescription put forward by the system itself. For example, dhyāna, nididhyāsana in Advaita (though not causally related to Niḥśreyasa).
- (ii) Most generically, in Vedic terminology, it is the “smṛti” that guides our daily social life and the “śruti” (‘apauruṣeya’) shows us what is the ultimate. More or less, the same pattern is followed by all the major world religions though a full-fledged analytical discussion of the body of different conceptions in (infallible) scriptures is yet to be carried out. Attainment of the ‘Ultimate’ is termed as (generically speaking) “liberation” (mokṣa).
- (iii) Reasons and rationalities underlying specific conceptions of the “Ultimate” in the said major religions. The **logic of “social life”** is a byproduct of the conception of the “Ultimate” and of the corresponding ‘individual; (jīva) and NOT *vice versa*. However, the conception of the ultimate itself hinges on logical and other felt preferences for the beginning axiomatic necessities, such as, for example, the ‘state of the Universe’ (Destruction, Creation, Sustenance), **need to retain (or otherwise) individuality** without losing it at the time of ‘liberation’. And, the actual realization of various conceptions of the ultimate make use of some or the other **mathematical models**.
- (iv) Metaphysical arguments to support various conceptions.
- (v) If required, a short original source such as Nāgārjuna’s work (Mūlamadhyamakakārikā or Vigrahavyāvartanī) may be studied with the above framework in mind, at least partly to illustrate the interpretive value of our framework.

Briefly: (Comparative Religion) Problems and methods in the study of religion. Religion and Sociology/Psychology/Culture

Buddhism (Impersonal Absolute in Metaphysics/Personal Absolute as in its religious phase)

[Selection of concepts from the following]

(A) Beliefs prevalent at the advent of Buddha – (Original Classic) Pāli Dīghanikāya I (Dialogues of Buddha)

[Akāryavāda of Purāṇa Kaśyapa; Niyati sangativāda of Maskari Gośāla; Uchchedavāda of Ajitkesarkambati; Śāśvatavāda of Prakuddha Kātyāyana; Amaravikṣepavāda of

Sanjaya; Catuyama samvaravāda of Nigrantha]

(B) Early doctrines: Madhyama Pratipada, Fourfold Truth, Pratīyasamutpāda; Nairātmyavāda, Doctrine of Karma; Nirvāṇa; Silas; Dhyāna and Samādhi; Prajña; Pratyayas or Causal relations; Paramita – Original Classics: Majjhima Nikāya; Dharma sanghani; Abhidhammatasangha---Mahāsaṅghika; Sarvāstivāda Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika (Original Classics—Pāli Kathāvattu; Abhidharmakośa, Mahāvastu)

(C) Mahāyāna---Ekayānatā; Bodhisattva; Bhūmi –Stages of Progress; Trikāya; Nirvāṇa; Śūnyatā; Vijñaptimātratā; Tathā + gata; Tathā + āgata; Tathāgatagarbha; Ālayavijñāna (Classics: Lankācaryavatārasūtra; Bodhicaryāvātāra; Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi) Ālayasamughghāta

(D) Tāntric Buddhism: Maṇḍalas— Popular understanding of Tantra – underlying scientific picture--4D Hypersurfaces—4D cone-formation—(Vibhajjavāda) Sautrāntika, Vaibhāṣika, Ālayavijñāna, Madhyamaka understood from this perspective.

Hinduism

Vedas and Vedānta (Upaniṣads) as the foundation; religious pluralism; Śruti and smṛti; Schools of Vedānta—Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita; soul/self/Ātman; karma and transmigration; three maṇḍalas—Śrīyantra/Śrīcakra, Cakrābja/Sumeru, Cakrābja as the Rta or order of the universe; Impersonal and Personal Absolutes (Theistic)

Confucianism/Daoism (Taoism) (C & D)

C and D as ritual-based traditions; non-superstitiousness of Daoism in its liturgical traditions; Confucianism’s social matters; Taoism’s search for meaning; Confucian Perspectives on Democracy; Commonalities between C and T; Initial Philosophical tenets turning into religious overtones. Ideal of Ren (C); Confucius and Laozi as manifestation of Buddha; Chinese Chan Buddhism; Ne-Confucianism’s Universal Principles of Neo-Confucianism -- Hayashi Razan. Purpose of rituals is to reorganize the cosmos and society.

Judaism and Christianity

Judaism: General: Monotheism; Creatorship; Personal God; Specific: Sephirot—Yosher and Iggulim; Tetragrammaton YHWH; Old Testament/Jewish (Hebrew) Bible – TANAKH Torah (5 books), Nevii’im (8 books), Ketuviim (11 books) --- Star of David-- Spinoza’s take —Sphere-packing 24D Universe

Christianity: Pater Noster (Our Father); Holy Triune; Christianity—synthetic or not? Tesseract; Creation Mode; 4D universe; Jesus Christ; Immaculate Conception; Pascal Triangle/Pyramid; Book of Revelation or Apocalypse.

Islam

Purification of body and mind; five pillars—secrets of shahada (profession of faith); secrets of salat (prayer), secrets of sawn (fasting), secrets of zakat (alms), secrets of Hajj (pilgrimage); tolerance and moral virtues; Shirk; Masjid and Kaaba as metaphysical designs—al-Hatim, Hajr-al-aswad, Tawaf, Zam Zam; different souls, Al-lah the Ultimate; Islam as a full-fledged synthetic religion with **Creation-focus**. [Sikhism is “**Destruction-focus**” Synthesis; and Baha’I is “**Sustenance-focus**” synthesis]

Learning activities v

Assessment scheme as prescribed on CUSIS (revise if necessary)

<i>Task nature</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Weight</i>
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Essays		30%
Essay test or exam		40%
Others		10%
Presentation		20%

Backup plan for assessment in case face-to-face teaching and assessment is not possible due to the pandemic (no need to fill in if the class and related assessments are to be conducted online)

<i>Task nature</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Weight</i>

Remarks on Assessment Scheme (if any)

Recommended learning resources

Batchelor, Stephen (2000), *Mūlamādhyaṃyama Kārikā*, with Tibetan, by Nāgārjuna.

Bell, Daniel A. and Hahn Chaibong (Ed.), *Confucianism for the Modern World*, [City University of Hong Kong & Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea] Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Bhatt, S.R and Anu Mehrotra (2000), *Buddhist Epistemology*, Contributions in Philosophy No. 75, Frank J. Hoffman, Series Adviser, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, London, CT 06881.

Bhikku, Thanissaro (1996), “No-Self or Not-self?” —

Bhikku. T., (1999), *Noble Strategy: Essays on the Buddhist Path*, Metta Forest Monastery.

Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna (1882), Cf. in the *Theosophist*, Cf. “Śūnyatā, the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness — What does H.P. Blavatsky say? — Metaphysics: emptiness in Buddhism and Theosophy”, <http://www.katinkahesselink.net/metaphys/empty.htm> : Last accessed: 5/13/2011

Buswell, Jr., Robert, E (ed.) (2004), *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Macmillan Reference, USA, Thomson, Gale.

Catholic Encyclopedia (2012) <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm>, Holy Ghost.

Chan, N.H (2009) “The Trinity as understood in Islam and Christianity (Part I)” <http://loyarburok.com/2011/06/09/the-trinity-as-understood->

Clemen, Carl (2005) *The Religions of the World — Their nature and History* p.118 for vyūhas)

Cronk, George (rendition and editing) (1998), *Mūlamādhyaṃyama Kārikā*

Donzel, E. van, B. Lewis, and Ch. Pellat (ed.) (1990) *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New edition, Vol. IV, Second Impression, Leiden E.J. Brill, 1990, First Published 1978.

Edwards, Paul (ed.) (1967), *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Crowell Collier and MacMillan, Inc. USA

Ejei, Mohammad ‘Ali (2011), “Individuation in Mullá Sadrá’s Philosophy”,

http://www.mullasadra.org/new_site/english/PaperBank/Ontology/Ejei

Eliade, Mircea (ed.) (1987), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, London, 1987.

Gardner, Daniel K., *Confucianism: A Very Short Introduction* Oxford University Press 2014.

Gilchrist (2012), “Muslim Movements and Schisms: Sufism in Theory and Practice”
<http://answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Vol1/9a.html>

Hawking, Stephen, W. (1988), *A Brief History of Time, From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, Bantam Books, New York, 1988.

Hawking, Stephen, W (2008), *The Theory of Everything: The Origin and the Fate of the Universe*, Eighth Jaico Impression, Jaico Publishing House, 121 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400 001. First Jaico Impression, 2006.

Hawking, Stephen, W and Leonard Mlodinow (2010), *The Grand Design*, Bantam Books, New York, 2010.

Hick, H. John (1987) *Philosophy of Religion*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, USA 1987

Hoobler, Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler *World Religions: Confucianism*, Series Editors: Joanne O’Brien and Martin Palme, An imprint of Infobase Publishing, 132 West 31st Street, New York NY 10001, Third Edition 2009.

IEP, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2011a), “Pudgalavāda Buddhist Philosophy”
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/pudgalav/> Last accessed 25 July 2011

Indianetzone (2011), <http://www.indianetzone.com>, Sautrāntikas’ School of Thought — Buddhism, Last accessed 25 August 2011.

Jesus-is-saviour (2012)

http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Religions/Illuminati/great_pyramid.htm

Just, Felix, SJ Ph.D, (2007) “Jewish and Christian Bibles: A Comparative Chart”,
<http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Heb-XnBibles.htm> Updated on Feb. 26, 2007.
Last accessed

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Komjathy, Louis,(2014) *Daoism*, Bloomsbury, London, First Published, 2014

Koslowski, Peter (ed.) (2003), *Philosophy Bridging the World Religions*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands, Dordrecht/Boston/London, 2003.

Kumar, Vinay U.A (2008) “Indian Social Contract and its Dissolution”

Lehigh, David W (2012), *The Incarnation of Jesus Christ*, A Bible Helps Booklet No. 289, <http://www.anabaptists.org/bh/289.html>

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Michaelson, Jay (2009), *Everything is God: The Radiant Path of Non-dual Judaism*, Shambala Publications, ISBN 1-59030-671-6.

Miller, James (2008) *Daoism: A Beginner’s Guide*, Oneworld Publications, 185 Banbury

Road, Oxford OX2 7AR, England

Moore, Alvin (Tr.) Christianity and the Doctrine of Non-Dualism (Original work is by 'A Monk of the West')

Murti, T.R.V (1960), The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., Ruskin House, Museum Street, London, First published in 1955.

Narain, Harsh (1964), Śūnyavāda: A Reinterpretation, Philosophy East and West 13, No. 4, January, 1964, pp. 311 – 338.

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http://www.hinduonline.co/Books/BookIndex/YB.htm: Last accessed 29 July 2011.

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http://www.gotquestions.org/Holy-Spirit-gender.html

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Sheth, Noel (2002) Hindu Avatāra and Christian Incarnation: A Comparison, Philosophy East and West, Vol. 52, No. 1, Jan., 2002, University of Hawai'i Press,
http://www.jstor.org/stable/1400135

Syed, Ibrahim B (2012), "The Nature of Soul: Islamic and Scientific Views", Islamic Research Foundation International, Inc. 7102 W. Shefford Lane, Louisville, KY 40242-6462, USA. pp.5-6.

Taoism and Confucianism — Ancient Philosophies

<https://www.ushistory.org/civ/9e.asp#:~:text=Confucianism%20deals%20with%20social%20matters,later%20taking%20on%20religious%20overtones>

Tucci, Giuseppe (1974), The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala, Translated from Italian by Alan Houghton Brodrick, Rider & Company, 3 Frizroy Square London W 1 (English 1961), First published 1961.

Vasubandhu (2011), Abhidharma Kośa Bhāṣyam, Eng. Tr. Leo M. Pruden from Louis de La

Wallace, Vesna, A., and B. Alan Wallace (Tr. Sanskrit and Tibetan) (1997), Bodhicaryāvatāra, A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life, by Śāntideva, Snow Lion Publications, P.O. Box 6483, Ithaca, New York, 14851, USA.

Details of course website

Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)

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Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

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