

CUNY Common Core Course Submission Form

Instructions: All courses submitted for the Common Core must be liberal arts courses. Courses may be submitted for only one area of the Common Core. All courses must be 3 credits/3 contact hours unless the college is seeking a waiver for another type of Math or Science course that meets major requirements. Colleges may submit courses to the Course Review Committee at any time. Courses must also receive local campus governance approval for inclusion in the Common Core.

College	Lehman College
Course Prefix and Number (e.g., ANTH 101, if number not assigned, enter XXX)	REL 200
Course Title	Introduction to Religious Studies
Department(s)	Philosophy
Discipline	
Credits	3
Contact Hours	3
Pre-requisites (if none, enter N/A)	n/a
Co-requisites (if none, enter N/A)	n/a
Catalogue Description	This course introduces students to the academic study of religion. Religious thought and practice are examined from a variety of historical, cultural, and intellectual perspectives.
Special Features (e.g., linked courses)	
Sample Syllabus	Syllabus must be included with submission, 5 pages max recommended
Indicate the status of this course being nominated:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> current course <input type="checkbox"/> revision of current course <input type="checkbox"/> a new course being proposed	
CUNY COMMON CORE Location	
Please check below the area of the Common Core for which the course is being submitted. (Select only one.)	
Required <input type="checkbox"/> English Composition <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning <input type="checkbox"/> Life and Physical Sciences	Flexible <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> World Cultures and Global Issues <input type="checkbox"/> Individual and Society <input type="checkbox"/> US Experience in its Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific World <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Expression
Waivers for Math and Science Courses with more than 3 credits and 3 contact hours	
Waivers for courses with more than 3 credits and 3 contact hours will only be accepted in the required areas of "Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning" and "Life and Physical Sciences." Three credit/3-contact hour courses must also be available in these areas.	
If you would like to request a waiver please check here:	<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver requested
If waiver requested: Please provide a brief explanation for why the course will not be 3 credits and 3 contact hours.	
If waiver requested: Please indicate whether this course will satisfy a major requirement, and if so, which major requirement(s) the course will fulfill.	

Learning Outcomes

In the left column explain the course assignments and activities that will address the learning outcomes in the right column.

I. Required Core (12 credits)

A. English Composition: Six credits

A course in this area must meet all the learning outcomes in the right column. A student will:

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read and listen critically and analytically, including identifying an argument's major assumptions and assertions and evaluating its supporting evidence. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write clearly and coherently in varied, academic formats (such as formal essays, research papers, and reports) using standard English and appropriate technology to critique and improve one's own and others' texts. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate research skills using appropriate technology, including gathering, evaluating, and synthesizing primary and secondary sources. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support a thesis with well-reasoned arguments, and communicate persuasively across a variety of contexts, purposes, audiences, and media. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formulate original ideas and relate them to the ideas of others by employing the conventions of ethical attribution and citation. |

B. Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: Three credits

A course in this area must meet all the learning outcomes in the right column. A student will:

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpret and draw appropriate inferences from quantitative representations, such as formulas, graphs, or tables. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use algebraic, numerical, graphical, or statistical methods to draw accurate conclusions and solve mathematical problems. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Represent quantitative problems expressed in natural language in a suitable mathematical format. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effectively communicate quantitative analysis or solutions to mathematical problems in written or oral form. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate solutions to problems for reasonableness using a variety of means, including informed estimation. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply mathematical methods to problems in other fields of study. |

C. Life and Physical Sciences: Three credits	
A course in this area <u>must meet all the learning outcomes</u> in the right column. A student will:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a life or physical science.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply the scientific method to explore natural phenomena, including hypothesis development, observation, experimentation, measurement, data analysis, and data presentation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the tools of a scientific discipline to carry out collaborative laboratory investigations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather, analyze, and interpret data and present it in an effective written laboratory or fieldwork report.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and apply research ethics and unbiased assessment in gathering and reporting scientific data.
II. Flexible Core (18 credits)	
Six three-credit liberal arts and sciences courses, with at least one course from each of the following five areas and no more than two courses in any discipline or interdisciplinary field.	
A. World Cultures and Global Issues	
A Flexible Core course <u>must meet the three learning outcomes</u> in the right column.	
<p>Students will learn the histories, cultural practices, and intellectual foundations of a range of global religious traditions. Topics may vary, but traditions that will be addressed include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, the classical religions of India (Hinduism and Buddhism), African traditional religions, Indigenous American religion, and many others.</p> <p>Students will, for example, assess the historical evidence for considering the ancient traditions of the Hebrew Bible as one coherent religion in a writing assignment. They will compare Christian and Buddhist conceptions of the self in a writing assignment. They will assess the historical impact of Islam in the early Middle Ages in a writing assignment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
<p>Students will evaluate historical evidence, philosophical arguments, and sociological analyses of these various religious traditions in writing assignments and/or exams.</p> <p>Students will, for example, evaluate Anselm's argument for the existence of God and Mackie's argument against it in a writing assignment. They will evaluate the evidence that African traditional religion is the oldest religion on Earth in a writing assignment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
<p>Students will produce arguments analyzing the history, thought and practice of various religious traditions in a term paper.</p> <p>Students will, for example, argue a position on the question of whether polytheistic traditions are more tolerant than monotheistic traditions in a writing assignment. They will argue for a position on the concept of God in a writing assignment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.
A course in this area (II.A) <u>must meet at least three of the additional learning outcomes</u> in the right column. A student will:	
<p>Students will produce a term paper in which they apply historical, philosophical, and sociological concepts and methods to the thought and practice of the world's religions. An example term paper might apply historical and sociological methods to the question of how Indigenous religion has been neglected in serious academic study.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures or global issues, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, ethnic studies, foreign languages (building upon previous language acquisition), geography, history, political science, sociology, and world literature.

<p>Students will identify and analyze points of diversity among the world's religions in a number of ways, including, for example, the roles of women in Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism; the role of class systems in Hinduism and Buddhism; and the role of marginalized women in the history of witchcraft. These points of cultural and religious diversity will be assessed in a final exam.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.
<p>Students will assess the global impact of the rise of Islam in a writing assignment. They will examine early Christianity's interaction with the remaining political institutions of Europe after the decline of Rome in a writing assignment. They will examine the Jewish diaspora in a writing assignment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies. • Analyze the significance of one or more major movements that have shaped the world's societies.
<p>Students will identify and analyze ways that religious differentiation has intersected with class, gender, and race in world culture in writing assignments and/or exams. For example, students will examine the role of women in modern Judaism, in early Christianity and in early Buddhism, the differing views of caste and class that distinguish Hinduism and Buddhism, and the place of religious exclusivism in monotheistic social divisions in a final exam.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak, read, and write a language other than English, and use that language to respond to cultures other than one's own.

B. U.S. Experience in its Diversity

A Flexible Core course must meet the three learning outcomes in the right column.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

A course in this area (II.B) must meet at least three of the additional learning outcomes in the right column. A student will:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the U.S. experience in its diversity, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, history, political science, psychology, public affairs, sociology, and U.S. literature.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and explain one or more major themes of U.S. history from more than one informed perspective.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate how indigenous populations, slavery, or immigration have shaped the development of the United States.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain and evaluate the role of the United States in international relations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and differentiate among the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government and analyze their influence on the development of U.S. democracy.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and discuss common institutions or patterns of life in contemporary U.S. society and how they influence, or are influenced by, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation.

C. Creative Expression

A Flexible Core course must meet the three learning outcomes in the right column.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

A course in this area (II.C) must meet at least three of the additional learning outcomes in the right column. A student will:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring creative expression, including, but not limited to, arts, communications, creative writing, media arts, music, and theater.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze how arts from diverse cultures of the past serve as a foundation for those of the present, and describe the significance of works of art in the societies that created them.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate how meaning is created in the arts or communications and how experience is interpreted and conveyed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate knowledge of the skills involved in the creative process.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use appropriate technologies to conduct research and to communicate.

D. Individual and Society

A Flexible Core course must meet the three learning outcomes in the right column.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

A course in this area (II.D) must meet at least three of the additional learning outcomes in the right column. A student will:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the relationship between the individual and society, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, history, journalism, philosophy, political science, psychology, public affairs, religion, and sociology.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine how an individual's place in society affects experiences, values, or choices.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate and assess ethical views and their underlying premises.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate ethical uses of data and other information resources to respond to problems and questions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and engage with local, national, or global trends or ideologies, and analyze their impact on individual or collective decision-making.

E. Scientific World

A Flexible Core course must meet the three learning outcomes in the right column.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

A course in this area (II.E) must meet at least three of the additional learning outcomes in the right column. A student will:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the scientific world, including, but not limited to: computer science, history of science, life and physical sciences, linguistics, logic, mathematics, psychology, statistics, and technology-related studies.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate how tools of science, mathematics, technology, or formal analysis can be used to analyze problems and develop solutions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate and evaluate the empirical evidence supporting a scientific or formal theory.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate and evaluate the impact of technologies and scientific discoveries on the contemporary world, such as issues of personal privacy, security, or ethical responsibilities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the scientific principles underlying matters of policy or public concern in which science plays a role.

REL 200: Introduction to Religious Studies

Sample Syllabus

(Departmental approval for Common Core submission: 10/18/24)

Course Description

3 hours, 3 credits. This course introduces students to the academic study of religion. Religious thought and practice are examined from a variety of historical, cultural, and intellectual perspectives.

Course Texts

Christopher Partridge, *Introduction to World Religions*, Fortress Press (2018).

Learning Outcomes

- Explain some of the history, thought, and practice of a variety of at least two religious traditions.
- Identify social, ethical, and/or political issues related to religion as they arise in the broader world.
- Apply the methods of at least one discipline in the humanities or social sciences to at least one religious tradition.

Course Schedule

The general organization of the course, after an introductory week, will be to proceed through a wide range of world religions, arranged roughly in their chronological order of appearance. Within each religious tradition, we will examine their histories, ancient and modern, and then focus in on a few specific issues, some philosophical, some textual, and some social or political.

Week 1: Introduction to Religious Studies

Weekly Writing Assignment: What exactly is religion? Are there any markers that can pick it out as a unique cultural and historical phenomenon? What does the academic study of religion look like? Is Disney a religion?

Monday readings

- Emile Durkheim, from *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1995).
- Mircea Eliade, from *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1993).
- Sigmund Freud, from *The Future of an Illusion* (1989).

Wednesday Readings

- Alexander Moore, "Walt Disney World: Bounded Ritual Space and the Playful Pilgrimage Center," *Anthropological Quarterly* (1980).
- Gary Laderman, "The Disney Way of Death," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (2000).
- Kevin Schrilbrack, "What Isn't Religion?" *The Journal of Religion* (2013).

Week 2: Judaism

Weekly Writing Assignment: To what extent does it make sense to speak of the traditions of the Hebrew Bible as one religion? And what is the role of the diaspora in modern Judaism?

Monday Readings

- Marc Brettler, "Judaism in the Hebrew Bible? The Transition from Ancient Israelite Religion to Judaism," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (1999).
- Jacob Neusner, "The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (1975).
- Selections from *Genesis*, *Leviticus*, and *The Book of Job*.

Wednesday Readings

- Allan Arkush, "From Diaspora Nationalism to Radical Diasporism," *Modern Judaism* (2009).
- Claudine Vassas, "Presences of the Feminine within Judaism," *CLIO: Women, Gender, History* (2016).

Week 3: Hinduism

Weekly Writing Assignment: Is the notion of Hinduism a modern European invention, or does it reflect a real and coherent ancient tradition? What are some modern political and social influences of Hinduism?

Monday Readings

- David Lorenzen, "Who Invented Hinduism?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1999).
- A selection of Upanishadic texts, *Katha* and *Chandogya*.

Wednesday Readings

- Stephan Schlenso, "Hinduism and Politics: On the Role of Religious Antagonisms in Indian History and Politics."
- Sarah Strauss, "The Master's Narrative: Swami Sivananda and the Transnational Production of Yoga." *Journal of Folklore Research* (2002).

Week 4: Buddhism

Weekly Writing Assignment: How did early Buddhist differ from their neighbors in their views on women and the caste system? And how do Buddhists and Christians conceive of the self in different ways?

Monday Readings

- Pratap Chandra, "Was Early Buddhism Influenced by the Upanishads?" *Philosophy East and West* (1971).
- Barbara Watson Andaya, "Localizing the Universal: Women, Motherhood, and the Appeal of Early Theravada Buddhism." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (2002)
- A selection of Theravada Buddhist texts from the *Samyutta Nikaya*

Wednesday Readings

- Ilkka Pyysiainen, "Buddhism, Religion, and the Concept of 'God.'" (2003)
- Julia Ching, "Paradigms of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* (1984).

Week 5: Early Christianity

Weekly Writing Assignment: The role of women in the early Christian church is sometimes emphasized, and sometimes minimized – where does the truth lie? As Rome declined and fell in late antiquity, what was the relationship between the church and the remaining political institutions?

Monday Readings

- Nelson Bondioli, "Roman Religion in the Time of Augustus" *Numan* (2017).
- N.T. Wright, "Jesus' Resurrection and Christian Origins," *Gregorianum* (2002).
- Passages from Mark, Luke, and Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Wednesday Readings

- Christoph Stenchke, "Married Women and the Spread of Early Christianity," *Neotestamentica* (2009)
- James Skedros, "'You Cannot Have a Church Without an Empire': Political Orthodoxy in Byzantium," from *Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine* (2017).

Week 6: Islam

Weekly Writing Assignment: The rise of Islam is a seminal event in the early Middle Ages – arguably nothing else had as great an impact on world history from 600-1000 A.D. Describe some of its social and its political impact in the early Middle Ages.

Monday Readings

- Ahmed Afzaal, “The Origin of Islam as a Social Movement,” *Islamic Studies* (2003).
- Stephen Shoemaker, “‘The Reign of God has Come’: Eschatology and Empire in Late Antiquity and Early Islam,” *Arabica* (2014).
- Passages from the *Koran*.

Wednesday Readings

- Gareth Matthews, “Augustine and Ibn Sina on Souls in the Afterlife,” *Philosophy* (2014).
- Chris Hewer, “Theological Issues in Christian-Muslim Dialogue,” *New Blackfriars* (2008).

Week 7: African Traditional Religion

Monday: What are some major features of African traditional religion, and where does it fit in the history of religion more broadly? Is it perhaps the “oldest” religion after all?

Monday Readings

- John Pobee, “Aspects of African Traditional Religion.” *Sociological Analysis* (1976).
- J.G. Platvoet, “African Traditional Religions in the Religious History of Humankind.” *Journal for the Study of Religion* (1993).

Wednesday Readings

- Austine Okwu, “Life, Death, Reincarnation and Traditional Healing in Africa.” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* (1979).
- Ronald Green, “Religion and Morality in the African Traditional Setting.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* (1983).

Week 8: The Reformation and Modern Christianity

Weekly Writing Assignment: Try to characterize some of the differences between the sects that arose in the Reformation. To what extent does the violence of the Reformation contrast with Martin Luther’s arguments in “The Two Kingdoms”?

Monday Readings

- Diarmaid MacCulloch, selections from *The Reformation* (2003).
- Martin Luther, selections from “The Ninety-Five Theses” and “The Two Kingdoms.”

Wednesday Readings

- Kent Jackson, “Are Mormons Christians?” *Novo Religio* (2000).
- Michael Dummett, “Fundamentalism.” *New Blackfriars* (2002).

Week 9: Paganism, Witchcraft, and Polytheism

Weekly Writing Assignment: What was behind the European witch trials? Is Bettini right that polytheism is inherently more tolerant than monotheism?

Monday Readings

- Richard Horsley, “Who Were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused in the European Witch Trials,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (1979)
- Ethan White, “Devil’s Stones and Midnight Rites: Megaliths, Folklore, and Contemporary Pagan Witchcraft,” *Folklore* (2014)

Wednesday Readings

- Maurizio Bettini, *In Praise of Polytheism*. (2023)

Week 10: God (or No God)

Weekly Writing Assignment: Analyze Anselm’s argument for the existence of God and Mackie’s argument that the concept of God is incompatible with the existence of evil. Who has the better argument, and why?

Monday Readings

- St. Anselm, *Proslogion* (2014).
- Paul Gastwirth, “Concepts of God,” *Religious Studies* (1972).

Wednesday Readings

- Bertrand Russell, “Why I Am Not a Christian,” (1927).
- J.L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence,” *Mind* (1955).

Week 11: Art and Music

Since the creation of this course and the new religious studies minor, I have been in contact with some people in the art and music departments. I would like to reserve some class time to devote to religious art from various cultures, and/or some discussion of the role of music in religion. We may include some live performances and/or museum visits. I hope to coordinate with some colleagues from those departments if possible.

Weeks 12-15: Deeper Investigations

In the last month of this course, the students and I will choose an academic book and use it to do a deeper investigation of an advanced topic, culminating in a final paper. Some sample books that might be chosen:

- Julian Baldick, *Black God: The Afroasiatic Roots of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Religions* (1997)
- James Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions*. (2007)
- Nancy Auer Falk, *Living Hinduisms: An Explorer's Guide* (2006)
- Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation*. (2003)
- Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (1995)
- Susan Niemann, *Evil in Modern Thought* (2002)

Term Paper

Students will be required to produce an 8-10 page paper in which they argue for a thesis on an advanced topic from the book we have chosen. For example, we might choose to spend those weeks examining James Cox's book on how we can treat indigenous religion as worthy of more serious academic study, and students will be expected to produce a term paper on this topic.

Final Exam

There will be an in-class final exam covering all of the course material. Students will be expected to identify points of diversity and overlap in all of the religions we have studied in terms of culture, politics, class, gender, and belief.

Grading

Weekly Writing Assignments	30%
Term Paper/Project	30%
Final Exam	30%
Attendance and Participation	10%