



Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

World Religions

Course Code	G_BATRSCC101
Credits	6
Period	P1
Course Level	100
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Religion and Theology
Course Coordinator	dr. L. Minnema
Examiner	dr. L. Minnema
Teaching Staff	dr. L. Minnema
Teaching method(s)	Lecture

Course Objective

After finishing this course, the student:

- has acquired basic knowledge of and structural insight in global religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism). Aim: religious literacy.
- has acquired analytical knowledge of similarities and differences between the ways in which these global religions have developed historically, in particular during the Axial Age and Modernity. Aim: historical comparison.
- is capable of presenting both insider and outsider views, among different religious views, and back and forth from academic views to religious views. Aim: empathy and theory.
- can explain the complexity of the issues raised and display the necessary knowledge and insights in writing. Aim: communication.

Course Content

This course focuses on the acquisition of basic knowledge and analytical understanding of religion in general and of six transnational and transcultural religions (so-called 'world religions') in particular:

Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. The course offers basic access and in-depth insight into these religions and worldviews. Functioning as the introductory backbone course of religious literacy for several bachelor and minor programs in Religious Studies, it will go beyond a superficial overview.

Each religious tradition or worldview may be studied separately, as handbook chapters tend to do, but things become more interesting and relevant if such traditions and worldviews are also compared in terms of shared issues and patterns. The competence to compare is a much needed skill since people increasingly have to communicate across cultural and religious boundaries, in case of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in a context of global exchange.

In order to allow for structural comparisons between these global religions, their historical development will be traced. The historical perspective will draw from the Axial Age framework, on the one hand, and

the Modernity framework, on the other hand. The Axial Age constituted a period of comparable cultural breakthroughs when the main 'world religions' emerged (around 550 BCE – 100 CE). Modernity is much later (1500 EC in Western Europe and 1800 EC in colonized parts of the non-Western world). Contemporary issues will be addressed against the background of the transition from traditional to modern forms of religion and in light of the ways in which these religions have come to cope with Modernity. A separate session will be dedicated to the definitions of 'religion' and to the notion of 'world religions.'

The academic field of Religious Studies starts from outsider views of religion that draw from theories of religion current in the Humanities and Social Sciences. But it also tries to take seriously how religious

believers view and experience the world and their own traditions from within and the religious traditions of others from without. Thus, it includes the scholarly capacity of empathy to switch from outsider views

to insider views and back again.

Additional Information Teaching Methods

Lectures

Method of Assessment

Written exam

Entry Requirements

No previous knowledge of religions is expected, only the willingness to academically familiarize oneself with a variety of religions.

Literature

Mandatory literature:

- Prothero, Stephen. Religion Matters: An Introduction to the World's Religions. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020. [Note: The printed book edition includes access to the E-book version with its interactive InQuisitives and small video fragments, but is more expensive than if you only buy the E-book version. Moreover, actual arrival of the book before the lectures start is not self-evident, so make sure you will have ordered it in time with a bookseller that can deliver.]

- additional capita selecta from other books and a variety of articles (via Canvas and VU library)

- PowerPoints and handouts (in class)

Additional Information Target Audience

This is a level 100 course that takes students seriously as future intellectuals. It is open to bachelor, premaster, minor, and exchange students.

Additional Information

The course will be offered on campus only, not online or hybrid; 75% attendance in class required (exceptions considered on request).

Explanation Canvas

The course manual with detailed information will be made available via Canvas.