

**Taipei American School: World Religions 2020-21**

***Honors Seminar World Religions***

***IBSL World Religions***

***Seminar World Religions***

Teacher: Mr. Chris Ciambarella

Email: ciambarellac@tas.tw

Class Website: www.mrciambarellaclass.com

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This class begins and ends with humanity’s big questions: 1)What is the meaning of life?; 2)Is there a God?; 3)What happens after death?; 4)What does it mean to be human? During the course of this year we will explore together how different World Religions, Cultures, & Philosophies have answered these questions. A major theme of this class (and the IB Program for you IB students) is to also explore if there are different “ways of knowing” the answers to these big questions through the use of different faculties: reason, emotion, faith, imagination, intuition, language, memory, and experience. The goal of this course is to assist students in the exploration of these questions by looking at how different religions, cultures, and ways of knowing have approached them. As such we will not only read about religious ideas but also experience them through doing such activities as yoga, meditation, mandala-making, tai-chi, calligraphy, field trips and guest speakers.

**COURSE GENERAL SCHEDULE**

**Semester I:**

Unit 1 Hinduism

Unit 2 Buddhism

Unit 3 Taoism

**Semester II:**

Unit 4 Feminine/Goddess Spirituality &

 Work on your Independent Project/Internal Assessment

Unit 5 Judaism

Unit 6 Christianity

Unit 7 Islam/ IB Students Final Review

**CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**

**Grading**

**Class Participation (20%)**

After each class you will complete the "Class Participation Rubric", which can be found on my website under "Week 1 World Religions Participation Rubric." Please note that this is a Seminar Class, which means your class attention and participation will determine 20% of your overall grade!

**Socratic Seminars (30%)**

Instead of quizzes, tests, and exams we have "Socratic Seminars". During these seminars students in the class are expected to prepare for and lead class discussions on assigned topics related to class. Part of your grade is your preparation and part of your grade is your participation.

Note: IB Students- will write IB Paper 1 and Paper 2 Essays as part of the Seminar Grade

 Honors Students- will write 1 essay only per seminar as part of the Seminar Grade

 Non-Honors Students- do not have to write any essays as part of the Seminar Grade (only notes)

**Homework & Portfolio (30%)**

You will NOT have a lot of homework, so I expect you to do the little homework that is assigned so that you will be able to participate in class activities and discussions.

Note: IB Students will have the most homework: if you want a score of 6 or 7 on the IB Exam you must read on your own.

Honors Students will have minimal homework; it should be no more than 15-20 minutes/class.

Non-Honors Students should essentially have no homework other than seminar preparation.

Every student must have an "art portfolio" for this class. The portfolio MUST be like the one the teacher showed you in class. Your art portfolio should be 'enjoyable homework' and a nice souvenir from this class. You are graded on effort, content, and artistic effort.

**Independent Project for non-IB Students …or**

 **Internal Assessment for IB Students (20%)**

 I believe this project should be enjoyable for you!

For **non-IB students** you may learn about anything related to World Religions, philosophy, world cultures, etc. I will pretty much accept any topic that you are passionate to learn more about! This is a great opportunity to read and learn about something you are interested in. Here are some examples from last year's topics:

 Wiccan/Witch Practices Chinese Medicine Yoga & Meditation Practice

 Quantum Physics & Spirituality Bob Marley & Rastafarianism Science Fiction & Religion Learning Sanskrit Sufi Dancing

 The Lord of the Rings Philosophy Chinese Calligraphy Tibet Culture

Of course, many students used this opportunity to learn more about any of the religions we are studying such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, etc.

Some students also decided to learn about other religions we did not cover, such as Shinto, Jainism, African Religions, Voodoo, etc..

 Note:

Only Honors Students are required to complete an Independent Project that is due in May (and which is usually a video project)

Non-Honors Students are not required to complete any final project; you will only read about your topic for fun.

For **IB students**, this 20% of your grade will be your **Internal Assessment.** So you must follow the directions for the IBSL World Religions Internal Assessment. I think you will discover that this Internal Assessment is "relatively fun and easy" also. The purpose is also for you to research and learn about ANY RELIGION or religious practice that interests you. It can be one of the religions we cover; however, it does not have to be. You can choose any religion you want. You will learn about it, read about it, and hopefully conduct interviews/field trips about it. The final IA is only 1,900 words long and is more an 'exploration' than a research paper.

Updated Note for 2020: All 9 IB Students from the 2019-2020 cohort received perfect 7/7 scores on their Internal Assessments, so relax and enjoy it!

**CLASS MATERIALS**

1. We have 1 Textbook for this course: *Invitation to World Religions* Third Edition, 2019 by Jeffrey Brodd & Oxford University Press.

You will check out this textbook for you to bring home. I will have extra copies to use in the classroom.

1. I will also use readings from many other textbooks, books, and sources. I will always put all of these extra readings on my website.
2. YOU MUST have an ART PORTFOLIO. It MUST be like the big ones I showed you in class. You canNOT use a normal notebook with lines for this!
3. The textbook above is the only 1 official textbook for this class which TAS loans to you to use; however, there is one other 'textbook' that I use A LOT in this class called "The Illustrated World's Religions" by Huston Smith. I will copy this book's readings onto my website; however, it is a very beautiful book you may want to buy yourself. Here it is:

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| https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/51RcZ5TDaCL._SX392_BO1,204,203,200_.jpg | Title: The Illustrated World's ReligionsAuthor: Huston SmithPaperback: 256 pagesPublisher: HarperOne; 1st HarperCollins Pbk. Ed edition (August 18, 1995)Language: EnglishISBN-10: 0060674407ISBN-13: 978-0060674403 |

**CLASS POLICIES**

1. **Please remember that 20% of your grade is "Class Participation". If you are not paying attention in class, surfing the internet, etc. you CANNOT get an "A" in this class. Also, if you do not speak up in class and join our discussions you cannot get an A+.**
2. **All homework turned in late will always lose a letter grade/day it is late.**
3. **Exceptions to this rule can only be made if you are officially sick/absent from class and/or for Official School Trips/Activities Extensions (IASAS, MUN, etc.).**
4. **Exceptions can also be considered for students if the student emails me a request for extension at least 24 hours in advance.**
5. **If you are given permission for an extension on a class Socratic Seminar or Activity then usually you must meet with me individually during free time to make up the seminar or activity.**