

**PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY –
in partnership with The Gap Year Association study abroad**

PHL 299: Introduction To Spiritual / Religious Studies & Their Roles In Culture

COURSE SYLLABUS

CREDITS: 4 quarter-credits – Continuous Enrollment Course

Students who plan to use this course to fulfill specific curriculum areas should discuss transfer options and obtain written approval from a counselor or study abroad advisor at their own college/ university PRIOR to enrollment in this course.

PREREQUISITES: There are NO prerequisites for this course.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:

This course is field-based. The course instructor will be available via e-mail.

INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD:

PSU has approved the following Instructors of Record, one of whom will be assigned to you typically two+ weeks prior to the beginning of your program:

- Britt Basel, MS - brittbasel@ecothropic.com
 - Dianna Hahn, MA – dianna.hahn@gmail.com
 - Alexander Papouchis, MS - alexpapouchis@gmail.com
 - Cam Sylvester, MA – camsylvester@gmail.com
- Office: 503-206-7336
Web: <https://gapyearassociation.org>
Address: PO Box 17427, Portland, OR 97217

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course engages students in meaningful work/volunteer experiences while helping them gain understanding, acquire knowledge, and develop the necessary skills for living in a globally interdependent and culturally diverse world. Students will study the spirituality and religious practices in their region to understand a sense of local spiritual traditions and provide a level of insight into personal belief structures and how they structure daily life during their academic study away.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

- **Environment of Respect:** Disagreement and diversity of opinions are encouraged. You will be challenged to think critically about the impact of cultural differences, which may include gender, race, the roles environment has in business and market development, socioeconomic status, physical and cognitive ability, sexuality and other forms of diversity. You are encouraged to ask difficult questions and engage in discussion and critical reflection. Please be respectful of others, listen, and try to understand differences.
- **Experiential Learning:** In this course, learning is an experiential process in which you have the opportunity to engage in and reflect on a variety of different experiences throughout the term. The richness of this class will depend on the questions, insights, and active participation that you bring.
- **Personal Responsibility:** You are expected to engage fully in this class and take action if you need help. Please communicate any concerns about assignments, deadlines, or classroom activities.
- **Academic Integrity:** Please adhere to university policies. Please take special note of policies regarding plagiarism and course withdrawal. It is expected that each student will prepare his or her own assignments and that any assignments submitted will be the sole work of the student. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information, will not be tolerated. The University's Code of Student Conduct may be found at <https://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct>.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Examine differences and similarities in spiritual/religious practices and their role in structuring daily living.
- Understand traditions and customs of different spiritual/religious practices, by working or volunteering in an unfamiliar environment.
- Analyze and summarize insights gained from engaging in varied local spiritual/religious experiences.
- Improve cross-cultural communication and interpersonal skills through volunteer activities.

CONTACT HOURS, EXCURSIONS, AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

A total of 40 contact hours will be facilitated. These hours will come in the forms of:

- Homestays
- Introduction to relevant cultural norms
- Introduction to religion and its role on world view
- Excursions to sites of religious import
- Attendance at religious events (including churches, temples, monasteries, etc.)
- Excursions to historical sites
- Excursions to markets and culturally significant sites
- Interviews with local contacts
- Service-learning projects focusing on social service
- Service-learning projects with an environmental focus

STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS:

ATTEND AT LEAST TWO RELIGIOUS SERVICES OR EVENTS for each religion discussed. These are meant to augment, but not replace, living in the religion's host culture for an extended period of time.

A DAILY JOURNAL in English will be a descriptive study/journal of your semester. Use it to keep brief narratives of your daily experiences. It should contain notes on places visited, interviews, daily purchases, oral language activities, student observations of different and unique cultural traits, etc. Self-reflection is important and will be a significant part of your journal grade. Self-reflection will involve answering questions that force you to think critically about your experiences. When writing journals consider questions like:

- How is this experience different from my expectations?
- What challenges have I faced throughout this experience? How am I overcoming them?
- Explore differences, similarities to your home culture.
- What have been the most poignant learning experiences? How has that impacted my world-view?

A 15-MINUTE PRESENTATION must be made during your group semester detailing what you've discovered about your chosen subject. Please note that this presentation may serve as the foundation for your final report. Please note, the presentation can also be a guided exercise or experiential lesson orchestrated and led by you, the student.

REQUIRED READING – must read at least 1 book from the Recommended Reading list and demonstrate knowledge learned and/or perspectives expressed (with citations) in your FINAL REPORT.

FINAL REPORT of insights gained from this international service experience. Our expectation is that the papers you submit will reflect college-level writing. Your report will be 10-12 pages in length. Reports must be typed (double spaced) with a cover page that includes your name, the quarter (eg. fall 2018), the international program attended, and course number.

Submit a comprehensive analytical paper comparing and contrasting a religious/ spiritual practice you experienced during your travels with your own religion(s) / spiritual beliefs. How has your introduction to this host spiritual practice/religion changed your worldview? How has this host spiritual practice/religion changed your perception of yourself?

Final Report will be graded as follows:

- Description and history of the local religious/spiritual practice - 20%
- Description of our own religious/spiritual practice - 10%
- Description of your experience with the local religious/spiritual practice - 10%
- Self-evaluation and observations - 20%
- Clarity and organization of ideas - 20%
- Grammar and punctuation - 10%
- Ability to demonstrate knowledge from the required readings - 10%

DUE DATES, SUBMITTING JOURNAL AND FINAL REPORT:

Calendar/Schedule:

All course requirements must be submitted by:

- Fall Semester: January 20th
- Spring Semester: June 20th

Submitting Journals & Final Reports:

Please email your final report to the instructor, and post any necessary journals or supportive documents to:

The Gap Year Association
PSU Grading Instructor
PO Box 17427
Portland, OR 97217

*** Purchase tracking for anything you post as some materials have gotten lost in the past.

COURSE EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Daily Journal (30%): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, clearly presented observations, creative thought and appropriateness.

Final Report (70%): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, insight, format, content appropriateness, organization skills, and analysis of topic.

Required Readings: This is a requirement for successful completion of this class and 10% of your paper grade depends on your referencing key lessons learned or examples. (Citations are required)

Attendance at Two Events: This is a requirement for successful completion of this class.

Presentation: This is a requirement for successful completion of this class.

Required Hours: The Gap Year Association will provide verification of these hours.

Grading: This course is graded with letter grades; A - F. See more details about PSU's grading system [here](#).

READING LIST:

Students must read and cite at minimum ONE book in the final assignment. The following books have been approved for this course and are listed by program region. Any other books not a part of this list must first be approved by the instructor.

All Regions:

Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life: Thich Nhat Hanh
World-renowned Zen master, spiritual leader, and author Thich Nhat Hanh shows us how to make positive use of the very situations that usually pressure and antagonize us.

Animism: Respecting the Living World: Graham Harvey
In this study, Graham Harvey explores current and past animistic beliefs and practices of Native Americans, Maori, Aboriginal Australians, and eco-pagans.

The Sacred Path of the Warrior. Author: Chogyam Trungpa

There is a basic human wisdom that can help solve the world's problems. It doesn't belong to any one culture or region or religious tradition—Chögyam Trungpa calls this the sacred path of the warrior.

The Cosmic Serpent: Jeremy Narby

This is a first-person narrative of scientific discovery that opens new perspectives on biology, anthropology, and the limits of rationalism.

(Fiction) The Story of B: Daniel Quinn

The story of how the "big four" religions of the world are actually fairly new to human history and that returning sustainable living practices will be the only way to avoid the destruction of our planet.

(Fiction) Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: Robert M. Pirsig

The story of a summer motorcycle trip across America's Northwest, undertaken by a father and his young son that becomes a personal and philosophical journey into life's fundamental questions.

Central America:

I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala: Rigoberta Menchu

The remarkable life of Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan peasant who became a Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Secrets of the Talking Jaguar: Martin Prechtel

The autobiography of Martin Prechtel, who spent thirteen years studying Tzutujil (Maya) culture and became a village chief and a famous shaman.

God's Will in Cuba: The Plight of the People and the Churches in Cuba: Daniel Fulton

This book is written as a travel log to the Churches that have survived and thrived during and after the Castro revolution in Cuba. The author takes you on a journey to the Cuba that Castro has neglected and time has forgotten

Teachings of the Santería Gods: The Spirit of the Odu: Ócha'ni Lele

The first book to explore the sacred myths of Santería

East Africa:

The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior: Tepilit Ole Saitoti

The autobiography of Tepilit Ole Saitotu, from his birth into a traditional society in Tanzania in 1949, through his youth, initiation as a warrior, career as a game park guide and ranger and life in the USA.

(Fiction) The Famished Road: Ben Okri

The narrator, Azaro, is an abiku, a spirit child, who in the Yoruba tradition of Nigeria exists between life and death.

India:

Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India: William Dalrymple

A look at the nine varieties of religious devotion in India today.

The Bhagavad Gita: Eknath Easwaran (Translator)

In the Bhagavad Gita, Prince Arjuna asks direct, questions of his spiritual guide on the eve of a great battle. This is one of the most famous and popular of Hindu scriptures.

The Tibetan Book of Living & Dying: Sogyal Rinpoche

This book is an introduction to Tibetan Buddhist wisdom. An enlightening, inspiring, and comforting manual for life and death.

South America:

The Four Winds: A Shaman's Odyssey into the Amazon: Albert Villoldo

In this narrative of spiritual discovery, the authors journey to Peru to investigate the jungle plant Ayahuasca, used by Indian shamans to access the four paths of the medicine wheel.

Journey to the Heart of Pachamama: Ann Windes

Professional athlete and adventurer, Ann Windes travels to from California to this is her journey the indigenous villages of Peru in order to learn about her own limitations.

South Pacific:

Returning to the Void: Papa Joe, Maori Healing & Sacred Teachings: Iris Loesel

The teachings of Hohepa Delamere, alias Papa Joe, who is a widely known and highly respected Maori elder and healer from New Zealand.

Southeast Asia:

Phra Farang: An English Monk in Thailand: Phra Peter Pannapadipo

At forty-five, successful businessman Peter Robinson gave up his comfortable life in London to ordain as a Buddhist monk in Bangkok.

(Fiction) Siddhartha. Author: Herman Hesse

In the novel, Siddhartha, a young man, leaves his family for a contemplative life and questions the nature of suffering, rejection, peace, and, finally, wisdom.