**RELI 10023 IDEAS AND ISSUES**

focus on **worldviews**: ways of looking at the world (traditional *and* modern)

religion: inquiry into ultimate meaning, concern, reality; includes belief *and* action

 where do we come from and go to, why are we here?

**aims of study**: **pluralism**--seeing global diversity and understanding others on their

 terms, includes respect and appreciation

 **“mental migration,”** leads to increased self-understanding

 this is not relativism, should critically evaluate after understanding

studying religion vs. being religious, bias and interests inevitable, all have lenses

everything is a point of view, including “everything is a point of view”

worldviews/religions are profoundly conditioned by cultural and historical context,

 given when children, so often simply seems true (Nacirema)

**Modern academic study of religion**

beginnings: Western colonialism, rise of historical and scientific study

 concept of evolution (best religions seen as “naturally selected”)

ideas of animism (world pervaded by spirits), polytheism (natural objects and human

 qualities person-ified), totemism (animals/symbols uniting group)

then, religion as projection, effect of socioeconomic and/or psychological forces,

 functions to socialize and control, justify order, give comfort

 Marx: this a false “opium of masses”

psychology of religion: Wm. James: religion reflects individual disposition

 Freud: religion an illusion, defense mechanism, make up God as father

sociology of religion: Marx, Durkheim (collective projection, feels real but socialized)

 Weber (religion can be creative force)

anthropology of religion: myth and ritual make sense and give meaning to a culture

modern ways of study (see aims above): 1) history of religions: all religion is in a cultural setting, do fieldwork (cultural immersion), learn languages and context

 attend to historical conditions and plurality within traditions

2) phenomenology of religion: observe cross-cultural patterns/structures

 compare and contrast, using neutral *epoche* (God vs. *dharma* vs. *Dao*)

**Six dimensions of worldviews**:

experiential, mythic, doctrinal, ethical, ritual, social (will expand for next exam)

“blocs of belief” around world (see Smart, pp. 36-37); also note current diaspora

“religious” worldviews: nationalism/patriotism, willing to die/kill for group

 examples: Japanese Imperial Rescript, Pledge of Allegiance

scientific humanism: this-worldly happiness, human focus, individualism

 Paul Tillich, religion as ultimate (human) concern, Christian humanism

all worldviews have cosmologies: scientific, animist, theistic, monistic

**experiential dimension:**

numinous and shamanic experiences, direct experience with divine being

theist cosmology, love relationships, strong feeling

 Oracle possession, speaking in tongues, Radha and Krishna

mystical experiences: monism (all is one), Pseudo-Dionysius and Divine Dark

 everyday appearance is not highest reality: Plato and cave

threefold yogic practice (right moral life, posture and breathing, meditation)

Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, mindfulness meditation