



Chapter 1: Point of Departure

Simply take note of the four things that Smith says his book is not and the three things he says that it is. Be forewarned that the things that the book is not, the course is or tries to be, at the same time that it also is or tries to be what the book is. In other words, while the book and the course diverge (and therefore complement each other) with respect to approach to the world's religion, they very much agree and overlap in intention.

1. It is not a textbook in the history of religions
 2. Does not give a rounded view of the religions considered.
 3. The book is not a balanced account of its subject.
 4. The book does not compare religions based on their value/worth.
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1. The book seeks to embrace the world.
 2. It takes religions seriously.
 3. The book makes a real effort to communicate.

Chapter 2: Hinduism

1. As a general note, it may be helpful for the student to know that Smith's account of Hinduism runs, for the most part, in the reverse order from Laughlin's course notes and lectures. So whereas Smith ends this chapter with a reference to Hinduism's openness and diversity, Laughlin begins his own account with an "Overview" that acknowledges Hinduism's remarkable inclusiveness and tries to sort it out. Likewise, whereas Smith begins his account of Hinduism with an explanation of Hinduism's four "wants," Laughlin introduces these rather late

as Hinduism's four "goals," as they are more traditionally called. One approach is not better than another. Whichever end of a submarine sandwich you bite into first, it's the same meal in the end – if, of course, you eat the whole thing!

2. Another general note is this: Smith is not very interested in the historical development of Hinduism in this book, though he is very well aware of it. The fact is that Hinduism has gone through distinct phases in which some one aspect of it – ritual or philosophy or devotion, for example – was more important than others. We shall take a more historical approach in class.

3. Smith bows to the Western tendency to call Hinduism's Ultimate Reality "God." Under Western influence, many modern Hindus do as well. It is really better for Westerners, however, to refer to Ultimate Reality consistently by its formal name, Brahman, in order to distinguish it from the 330 million gods and goddesses and from the monotheistic Christian-Jewish-Muslim God.

4. If you pay careful attention, you will notice a triad of terms recurring throughout the chapter, beginning on page 20: being/eternality, knowledge/consciousness, joy/bliss. The key to this triad he gives all too quickly on p. 60: the chief attributes of Brahman (which, strictly speaking, has no attributes, but is neti neti, "not this, not that," i.e., indescribable) are sat, chit, and ananda. These, as it turns out, are "what we really want," "what we can have," and "what is already ours"! What we want and have, you see, is absolute identity with Brahman!

4. You will be responsible for all italicized terms In Smith's book (which are mostly Sanskrit), for the meaning of all of the subheadings, and how they fit together. (Most are a part of a group or list – mostly in patterns of four, you'll notice. Hmmm.)

Harijan – God's people

Moksha – liberation

Atman – hidden self (God within)

Brahman – the Godhead

Yoga – to unite / to place under disciplined training

Jnana Yoga – intended for spiritual aspirants

Bhakti – to be attached to God (devoted service)

Japam – repeating God's name

Jnana – knowledge

Raja yoga – outlines a series of steps that are followed rigorously

Samadhi – "together within" -> the state in which the human mind is completely absorbed in God

Sannyasin – "one who neither hates nor loves anything"

Brahmins – seers / first caste

Kshatriyas – administrators / second caste

Vaishyas – artisans & farmers / third caste

Shudras – followers / servants

Brih – to be great

Jivas – individual souls

Samsara- endless passage through cycles of life, death, and rebirth

Maya – magic

Karma – total effect of a persons actions & conduct

Chapter 3: Buddhism

1. What was the Buddha's response when he was asked what he was?

I am awake

2. What were the Four Passing Sights, and what did Siddhartha learn about from them?

An old man taught him 'old age'

The diseased man taught him sickness / disease.

The corpse taught him about death.

The monk (with a shaven head) taught him withdrawal from the world.

2. *What was the Great Going Forth? What three phases did Siddhartha go through at this point?*

The G.G.F. was his break with his regular life. He went through a) yoga , b) asceticism, and c) moderation/meditation/enlightenment.

4. *What is the Immovable Spot, and how long did Siddhartha stay there? t what point during that time did his Great Awakening occur?*

The immovable spot is the place where Bhudda sat under the Bo tree and reached enlightenment after six years. (six days according to other sources).

5. *What two Sanskrit names did the Buddha bear, and what does each mean?*

Bodhisattva – ‘one who is going to become a Bhudda’

Bhudda – ‘the enlightened one’

6. *What did the Buddha think about the following: authority? ritual? speculation? grace? supernatural mystery? What did he offer in place of each of these? What are the seven traits of Original Buddhism?*

All those six traits contribute primarily to religion, but they can also clog its works.

Authority – too hereditary

Ritual – too mechanical

Speculation – lost its experiential base

Tradition – turned into dead weight

Grace – misread in ways that undercut human responsibility

Mystery – become mystification

Supernatural – B. condemned it

They were replaced with intense self-effort to reach grace.

Original Buddhism was

1. Empirical

2. Scientific
3. Pragmatic
4. Therapeutic
5. Psychological
6. Egalitarian
7. Individualistic

8. *What are the Four Noble Truths? What is dukkha? tanha? skandas? What are the eight steps in the Eightfold*

1. The noble truth of suffering. Life is dukkha -> suffering
2. The noble truth of the origin of suffering. The cause of life's dislocation is tanha -> desire
3. The noble truth of the cessation of suffering. The end of suffering comes in getting rid of desire.
4. The noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Prescribes the Eightfold Path : the cure for life.

The eight steps are:

- A) Right View
- B) Right Understanding
- C) Right Speech
- D) Right Action
- E) Right Vocation
- F) Right Application
- G) Right Mindfulness
- H) Right Concentration

9. *Explain the Buddhist view of nirvana, anatta, karma, and anicca. What is an arhat?*

Nirvana: "to blow out" / "to extinguish" cannot be described

Anatta: No soul -> no dualistic soul, life lives on, but no ghostly soul

Karma: moral philosophy

Anicca: transitoriness of everything finite

Arhat: one who has attained enlightenment

10. What are the Big and Little Rafts of Buddhism? List at least six points at which they disagree or differ.

What's

Mahayana: the big raft: God(s) grace is certain, open to lay person, key virtue: compassion, Buddha a savior, emphasizes ritual

Theravada: the little raft: progress is up to the individual, no help from god(s), professional monk life, key virtue: wisdom, Buddha a saint, minimizes ritual,

11. the difference between an arhat and a bodhisattva?

Arhat: is enlightened

Bodhisattva: is on the way to be enlightened

10. What is the main emphasis of Pure Land? T'ien Tai/Tendai? Ch'an/Zen?

The emphasis is on a sort of paradise similar to the Christian heaven.

12. What was the Buddha's Flower Sermon, and which disciple "got it"?

13. In twenty five of your own words, explain what Zen is about. What do these words mean? inka? roshi?

zazen? koan? sanzen? satori?

Zen is the art of intuitive understanding based on practice to become one with everything else and then some.

Koan: riddle

Zazen: seated meditation

Sanzen: consulting the master

Satori: breakthrough intuitive experience

14. What is the Diamond Thunderbolt and what is its geographical center? What is Tantra? What are lamas?

mantras? mudras? mandalas? What is the Dalai Lama?

Tantra: spiritual sex practice

Mudras: sacred pantomime/dance

Lamas: ritual body movement

Dalai Lama: is a real bodhisattva (on the way to absolute enlightenment)

15. What is Buddhism's relationship to Hinduism like in India today? What do Hindus make of the Buddha?

Hinduists accommodated Buddhists within.

The Buddha was a rebel child

Chapter 4: Confucianism

1. Whom do the Chinese call The First Teacher? At what age did he turn to his true vocation as a teacher?

In what cause did he enroll his students? When did his reputation really skyrocket? How long did his influence in China last?

The first teacher was Kung Fu-tzu a.k.a. Kung the Master a.k.a. Confucius.

Divine mission perceived at 50. Students enrolled in redressing the social order.

Glorification after his death.

Influence until today.

2. What problem did Confucius face? What was his answer? What were the answers of his two chief (sets of) rivals?

He was faced with the problem of social cohesion. His answer was to establish traditions.

Rivals: Realists: wanted social progress through punishment & rewards and through government

3. Define jen, Chun tsu, li, te, and wen. Now explain how they relate to one another. What are (1) The Rectification of Names; (2) The Doctrine of the Mean; (3) The Five Constant/Great Relationships; (4) and Respect for Age? How do these fit the total picture of Confucius' thought?

Jen: the ideal relationship between people

Chun tzu: ideal term in such relations

Li: propriety

Te: Power

Wen: “the arts of peace”

The Five Great Relationships: parent-child, husband-wife, elder sibling – junior sibling, elder friend – junior friend, ruler – subject.

Doctrine of the Mean: no extremes in life, stay in the middle

Rectification of Names: the call for normative semantics (key nouns carry the meanings)

4. *What was Confucius’ “project” and in what context did it take place?*

The project was to become a better person through constant self-cultivation.

It takes place in the midst of our daily lives through our everyday relationships with other human beings.

5. *What did Heaven and Earth mean in ancient China? What was their relationship? How did they “speak” to one another? On which one did Confucius focus and how was that revolutionary?*

Heaven and Earth were a continuum. Not places, but people who lived in those places. They spoke to each other through sacrifices. Confucius focused on the earth, whereas traditionally, the focus was on heaven.

6. *What was Confucius’ lasting impact on China? Asia?*

China: glorification and admiration of Confucius.

Asia: helped to create social emphasis

Chapter 5: Taoism

1. *Whom do the Chinese remember as The Old Master? In what sense is he a “shadowy” figure?*

The old master is Tao Tzu. He is shadowy because his whereabouts are very mystical and there are few historical documents.

2. *What are the Three Meanings of Tao?*

The way of human life, the way of the universe, the way of ultimate reality.

- 3. Explain briefly the Three Approaches to Power and the Three Taoisms that correspond to them. Which one does Smith describe as “transportable”? Why? What are *te* and *chi*, and how do they relate to the three Taoisms?**

The three approaches are Philosophical Taoism, Taoist Hygiene & Yoga, and Religious Taoism.

Philosophical is the most exportable b/c it is an attitude towards life.

Chi means breath / vital energy. All approaches are concerned with attaining, maximizing, and using chi.

- 4. How does Smith translate *wu wei*? How was Taoism’s approach to improving human behavior different from that of Confucius? What nature phenomenon most resembled the Tao? How? What else did it resemble? How? What is Taoism’s attitude toward nature generally?**

Wu wei : supreme action that flows through us.

In contrast to Confucianism, Taoists are a lot more relaxed and easy-going.

Water is the natural phenomenon closest to Tao. They were struck by the way it carries objects.

Taoists avoid being strident and aggressive towards nature (& people).

- 5. Name at least five important ways that Taoism differs from Confucianism in attitude toward one thing or another.**

Confucius: classical, stresses social responsibility, roams within society

Tao: romantic, spontaneity, naturalness , wanders beyond society.

- 6. The first paragraph of the Conclusion of this chapter is a gem. Read it several times, until you understand its implications and can use it to explain the difference between Confucianism and Taoism, even to a sophomore.**

The two sources of traditional Chinese religions are Confucius and Lao Tzu. The first stressed the importance of social activities and our place in society. The second was more concerned with the intuition of life to flow easily like water.

Chapter 6: Islam

1. What is the root of the word “Islam,” and what do they mean? What about “Allah”?

The root is “s-l-m” which means “peace” and “surrender”.

Allah is formed by joining al (the) and ilah (God). -> allah -> the God

2. What do Muslims mean when they call Muhammad “The Seal of the Prophets”?

There had been prophets before Muhammad, but he was their culmination, hence “the seal” since no valid prophets will follow him.

3. Who was Muhammad’s first convert?

Kkadjia

4. What and when was the Hijra? What was its destination? How soon/when did Muhammad gain control of Mecca? How long did he live after that?

The Hijra arrived in Medina in 622. He lived for ten years (died 10 A.H.)

5. What exactly is “The Standing Miracle”? What does al-qur’an or koran mean in English?

How many chapters does it have? How are they arranged? In what language is it written? What is the difference between the Created Koran and the uncreated Koran? How do Muslims compare and contrast it with the Old and New Testaments?

The Standing Miracle is the Koran (God’s book).

Literally, Koran means recitation.

The Koran has 114 chapters (suras) written in Arabic.

The Old & New Testament are considered earlier revelations, but the Koran presents their culmination. Muslims are disappointed that the O & N Testament only report what has happened, whereas the Koran speaks from God’s voice.

6. *Who were the hanifs? In what sense were they forerunners of Islam? Why do Muslims have a problem with Christianity's Trinity and Incarnation?*

Hanifs are sensitive souls similar to unseen spirits. They were forerunners because they were already established, but pre-Islam, they were idoled and worshipped.

The problem w/ the Trinity is that in order for Jesus to be God's son, God would be too human

7. *What is the root characteristic of God's nature for Muslims? What do compassion, mercy, wrath, and vengeance have to do with that, and in what proportions do they mix in the Koran/Qur'an?*

God's nature is very fear-inspiring. God's compassion and mercy are listed 192 times in the Koran, but his wrath and vengeance only 17 times.

8. *What do Muslims think about the material world in terms of its reality and goodness? What are fitra and ghaflah?*

The material world was created by Allah's will. It is both real and important.

Fitra – human nature in its God-established original

Ghaflah – forgetting (of divine origin)

9. *What are the two basic characteristics of the soul or self in Islam?*

It is individualistic and it never dies.

10. *What belief about the afterlife unites all Muslims?*

After the reckoning, we will go to heaven or hell.

11. What are the Five Pillars of Islam? Describe each in 30 words or fewer.

1. *Islam's creed. There is only one God, the God, and Muhammad was his prophet.*
2. *Canonical prayer. Muslims pray 5 times a day to keep their lives in perspective.*
3. *Charity. Muslims don't worry why material wealth is so different, the point is to equalize the distribution.*
4. *Ramadan. The month when Muhammad received his revelation. To celebrate, Muslims fast.*
5. *Pilgrimage. As a devotion to God, every Muslim must travel to Mecca once, if not too handicapped.*

12. What is hadith and how is it important to Muslims? What does Islam have to say about economics? the role and status of women? marriage? clothing for women? race relations? the use of force vs. pacifism? toleration of other religions? What is jihad and what different interpretations does that word have?

Hadith – traditions based on what Muhammad did.

Economics: bodily needs need to be met for spiritual life to flourish

Clothing: Women are advised to cloak themselves in order not to be recognized and annoyed. Extremes are local customs and religious.

Race: racial equality has a high priority

Force: the Koran teaches forgiveness and the return of good for evil, but it allows for punishment of wrongdoers to the full extent of the injury they impart.

13. What exactly is Sufism? What do "exoteric" and "esoteric" mean in this context? What is fana, and what does it mean for Sufis? How does Sufism reinterpret the Creed (Shahadah)? What is dhikr and what does it mean for Sufis?

Sufis bore the inner message of Islam.

Exoteric Muslims – satisfied with explicit teaching of Koran

Esoteric Muslims (sufis) – contemplate in God

Fana – extinction: consciousness is extinguished, not self-awareness.

Dhikr – to remember (Allah by saying his name)

Chapter 7: Judaism

1. What, according to Smith, “lifted the Jews from obscurity to permanent religious greatness”?

They were lifted by their passion for meaning

2. Who or what was “The Other” for Jews? What four traits did they not give it? What four did they give it instead? What was “the basic contribution of Judaism to the religions of the Middle East”? What was “the supreme achievement of Jewish thought”?

The other is (the world) of God.

They did not give it prosaic, chaotic, amoral, or hostile traits.

They gave it personification, divine unity (order), God of righteousness and love.

Judaism contributed monotheism to the Middle East religions.

3. How does Judaism regard the created order in terms of whether it is good or evil? real or illusory? important? What does this attitude have to do with modern science? In what sense is Judaism (along with Christianity and Islam) “materialistic,” and what consequences has that orientation had?

Judaism has an affirmative and buoyant attitude towards nature.

It is materialistic because God created nature for our domination. This attitude reflects in modern science by assuming we can control nature, which is opposite to East Asian views.

3. What, according to Smith, is “the striking feature of the Jewish view of human nature”? In what sense is this view “realistic”? What did they see as “the basic human limitation”?

The most striking feature is its frailty. The view is realistic because it focuses on our human shortcomings. The basic human limitation is morally: we are sinners.

4. *In what four ways is history important for Judaism? What two “c” words capture their view of how life should be lived?*

Contrast, Chosen people

1. History was towering significance.
2. Collective action is crucial for life.
3. History is a field of opportunity.
4. Life’s opportunities are not monotonously alike.

6. *What relationship did Judaism see between God and nature? What was the “momentous” consequence of this? What did they see as the tension in history? How did this view lay “the groundwork for social protest”?*

History is in tension between its divine possibilities and manifest frustrations.

The momentous consequence was social protest.

The prophet could induce change if things were not in order.

6. *How many commandments are there in the Hebrew Bible? How many moral precepts are there in the Ten Commandments? What are they? What has been the importance of the Ten Commandments in the Western world?*

There are ten commandments.

Four underlying precepts: force, wealth, sex, and speech.

They are so universal that they have maintained their status up into our world.

7. *What impact did the prophets make on the Western world? What are the general and specific meanings of the word “prophet” in Judaism? What stages did the prophetic movement pass through? Give examples of each. What did each new stage add to what went before it? What is the “Prophetic Principle”? What conviction did the later prophets (like Hosea, Micah, and Jeremiah) have in common?*

- (1) the future of any people depends on the justice of their social order
- (2) individuals are responsible for social structure of their society

First Stage: Prophetic Guild

Prophecy is a group phenomenon, collective, self-induced ecstasy.

Second Stage: Individual Pre-writing prophets

They could receive the divine visitation & the divine spoke to them clearly.

They challenged individuals.

Third Stage: Great Writing Prophets

Received God's word and challenged the social order and oppressive institutions

8. ***What meaning does Judaism find in suffering? What part did the experience of defeat and exile play in this view? In this regard, why are the dates 721, 586, and 538 BCE important? what was "the deepest meaning the Jews found in their Exile"?***

Suffering is God's way of underscoring his demand for righteousness.

Defeat and Exile would teach the Israelites a lesson.

721: Northern Kingdom disappeared

586: Southern Kingdom was conquered

538: Babylon conquered

The deepest meaning was that giving up would be evidence that the opponent's God is bigger and better.

9. ***In what did suffering climax? What does that have to do with the idea of progress? what exactly did the Jews mean by "Messiah"? What three features did the idea have?***

It climaxed in Messianism

Progress can be seen most clearly when hitting rock-bottom

Messiah means anointed./ chosen

1. Hope
2. National restitution
3. World upgrade

10. How does Judaism go about “hallowing life”? How did Judaism go about preserving “the sense of the sanctity of all things”? What is the Torah, and what role did it play in this?

All life can be seen as a reflection of the infinite source of holiness.

They enjoyed the goodness in life, but shared it with God.

The Torah is the first five books of the Bible. It is the basic manual for the hallowing of life.

11. What role does revelation play in Jewish thought? What exactly do they think has been revealed and through what mechanism? How is the Exodus a good (maybe the best) example of this? What did it disclose? what does “covenant” mean in Judaism and why is it important?

Revelation is the disclosure God’s nature and will for humankind.

Exodus disclosed God’s power, love and concern for human life.

12. How can Jews think of themselves as both “chosen” and “nothing special”?

They were chosen to relay their wisdom, but nothing special since they had no privileges before God.

13. *What gave rise to Rabbinic Judaism, and what characterized it? What view of the Bible did Rabbinic Judaism have? What are the “four great sectors” of Judaism’s “spiritual anatomy”? What are the Talmud and midrashim (Midrash)?*

Rabbinic Judaism grounded itself in the commandment to study the Torah.

Four sectors are faith, observance, culture, and nation.

Midrashim: collection of legend, exegesis, and homily

Talmud: vast compendium of history

Chapter 9: The Primal Religions

1. *Make a list of the main features or characteristic of primal religions, as Smith discusses them. (You should find at least six.) On the basis of these, describe primal religions in your own words (twenty-five or fewer).*

Orality, Place, Time, the primal mind, the symbolic mind, social roles

Primal religions are very focused on the location of their tribe and their place in the universe Through oral tradition, the wisdom of the elder and the spirits is passed on to the tribe.

2. *In another twenty-five or fewer of your own words, state Smith’s view of the primal belief in a High God. How is it different from the God of Christianity and Judaism, as you understand that at this point, from your own experience?*

God is viewed as the creator, but there is a constant communication through nature spirits. It differs from our modern ‘God’ as they lived more religiously and were attuned to the nature spirits. In comparison, the people of Christianity and Judaism always seem to be searching for, and trying to comprehend, God.

3. *In yet another twenty-five words, describe Smith's attitude toward primal religions. Is he patronizing toward them, critical about them, appreciative of them, or what? What do you think that we modern folks or our so-called "higher" religions might learn or gain from them?*

Smith is not critical, but very appreciative of tribal religions. I, like him, believe that tribal religions hold 'secrets' (wisdom is a better word) that they will share with us when they feel the time is right.