

AAR

IN THIS ISSUE

*The Frontlines:
Teaching Religious
Studies and Theology in
Community Colleges*

Teaching Weekend Religion
Classes Part-time at Red
Rocks Community College . . .ii
Joy Lapp, Red Rocks Community College

Developing the Religious
Studies Program At Tulsa
Community Collegeiii
Cherie Hughes, Tulsa Community College

Teaching Biblical Languages and
Biblical Archaeology
in the Community College . . .iv
M. Douglas Nelson, Northwest College

Comparative Religion from on
Ground to Online: Design to
Implementationv
*Paula A. Drewek
Macomb Community College*

The Pragmatic Dimension
of the Community College
and its Impact on Religious
Studiesv
*Peter D. Jauhiainen
Kirkwood Community College*

Teaching Religion in
Community Collegesvi
*Mary Karen Solomon
Colorado Northwestern Community College*

Weekend Warrior:
Adventures in the
Teaching Tradevii
*Jan Briel
Red Rocks Community College*

The AAR Committee on
Teaching and Learning
(Thomas Peterson, Alfred
University, Chair), sponsors
Spotlight on Teaching. It appears
twice each year in *Religious
Studies News, AAR Edition*
focusing on teaching and
learning around a
particular theme, concern,
or setting.

*Richard A. Freund
University of Hartford
Editor,
Freund@mail.hartford.edu*

*Laurie L. Patton
Emory University
Associate Editor*

Guest Editor

*Kerry Edwards
Red Rocks Community College*

Spotlight on Teaching
is published by the
American Academy of Religion
825 Houston Mill Road
Atlanta, GA 30329
Visit www.aarweb.org

spotlight on TEACHING

October 2002

Published by the American Academy of Religion
www.aarweb.org

Vol. 17, No.3

THE FRONT LINES

Teaching Religious Studies and Theology in Community Colleges

*Kerry Edwards,
Red Rocks Community College
Guest Editor*



Kerry Edwards holds a Master of Religion from the University of Toronto and earned his Ph.D. in Theology and Philosophy of Religion from the University of Denver/Iliff School of Theology. He has taught at both public and private universities and is currently Associate Professor of Humanities and Social Science at Red Rocks Community College in Denver, Colorado where he combines his academic interests with occasional forays into whitewater canoeing instruction.

THIS SPOTLIGHT continues the journey through the American education system that began in the last issue with an account of the teaching of religion in the public schools. The next step for many public school students is into a community college. This segment of American higher education is often neglected by the Academy. If my own experience is a reliable indicator, there are very few graduate students in religion who enter the profession with the goal of becoming a community college professor. I have not asked the other contributors to this *Spotlight* about their pathway into community college instruction but I am willing to bet that most of them did not think about it as a career option until well into their graduate work. There are probably a lot of reasons that explain this including the fact that many graduate students may have never attended a community college themselves. There is a fair amount of irony in this fact because the father of the community college movement in the US was one of our own: William Rainey Harper, Professor of Biblical Literature at Yale. When he became president of the new University of Chicago and began thinking about how students would matriculate there, he concluded that one inexpensive way for students to begin their college education would be to create a number of two year colleges, spread throughout the state of Illinois. These rural students could begin their college education while living at home and transfer to Chicago to complete their degrees.

The movement that he began is generally considered to be the most successful unique American contribution to higher education. In 1900 there were 7 junior colleges in the US. By 1937 that number had climbed to 528. This growth took place largely in the Midwest and West when the burgeoning population of new states had to deal with the lack of educational institutions. This was complicated by greater distances between large urban areas and the need for educating more of the population as the U.S. industrial economy expanded. As higher education made inroads into lower socio-economic classes, the expenses associated with higher education became more of a factor in the design of new educational institutions. Today there are over 1100 community colleges. 45% of all US undergraduates attend community colleges. In California there are over a million students attending community colleges. In Colorado, where I teach, 71% of all lower division college students attend community college.

The study of Religion at these unique American institutions has an uneven history. In 1930 a study of the curriculum of community colleges revealed that 45% of the 279 colleges studied, offered courses in Bible and Religious Education. Similar studies in the 1970's and 80's showed this number hovering in the mid 20% but in 1998, the percentage leaped upwards to 42 percent. While these classes comprise a limited proportion of all the courses at community colleges, the number of students

See EDWARDS, p.ii

Teaching Weekend Religion Classes Part-time at Red Rocks Community College

Joy Lapp
Red Rocks Community College



Joy Lapp is a Ph.D. candidate in New Testament Literature at the University of Denver/Iliff School of Theology. She teaches part-time at Red Rocks Community College and Metropolitan State College of Denver.

MY EXPERIENCE at a community college has been as a part-time faculty member, teaching weekend-intensives. Each component of the job — community college, part-time, and weekend-intensive format — involves an interesting set of dynamics. The 100-level course I teach, *Early Christian Literature*, has never failed to bring together a dynamic mix of students who have made the weekends lively and stimulating.

Community College. A community college attracts a unique body of students. Nearly all the students in my classes are employed full-time and most are older than traditional college age. The reasons students offer for taking the class vary

widely. Although a number of them are fulfilling a religion requirement for a program into which they hope to transfer, other reasons range from "an answer to prayer" to "I won three free credit hours in a drawing" to "my advisor suddenly realized that I needed three more hours to graduate in May!" from a student planning to graduate from a nearby university. Some are taking advantage of an employee benefit, so their employer pays the tuition if they do well enough. Others enroll in the class purely for personal enrichment.

Almost invariably, the students I have encountered at the community college are interested and curious and motivated. Adult learners bring a vast array of past experiences to the classroom and a level of engagement with the material that often surpasses what I find in more traditional college classes. Older students tend to be more articulate than younger students, more willing to express themselves, and simply have more experience on which to draw. They are interested in each other, and engage one another in discussion. Teaching at the community college easily ranks among the best teaching experiences that I have ever had.

Part-time. Teaching part-time has been a gift because it has allowed me to gain classroom experience while working on my dissertation. The weekend format appeals to me for the same reason that many students like it: it is compact and can fit into an already busy schedule. I only have to drive to campus six times, rather than three times a week for a full semester. The pay is far from glamorous, but has been sufficient to make the experience worthwhile. The challenge of being part-time, however, has been combating a feeling of dislocation and isolation. I have no office, nowhere to ground

me on campus, nowhere to keep my things. I lug crates of books to each class. Nor do I have the chance to interact with colleagues. Because I teach on the weekend, and furthermore at an "extended campus" location, I have barely met any colleagues. If I am mulling a question or problem, there is no one next door with whom to compare notes. Since I have never taught at the main campus, I have never set foot in the Philosophy Department. I don't know how many faculty teach in the department. I communicate with the department chair, who fortunately is extremely helpful and supportive, by e-mail and phone. I miss the sense of being part of a community working toward a common purpose and the chance to develop collegial relationships. To be fair, the college does organize workshops and events specifically for part-time faculty, but my schedule has never allowed me to participate in these events. For me, however, the rewards of teaching part-time at this point in my career far out-weigh the difficulties.

Weekend Intensives. The "weekend intensive" format presents its own set of dynamics. Students gain forty hours of classroom time, which translates into three credit hours, in just three weekends. On the first weekend, the class meets four hours on Friday evening, and eight hours on Saturday; on the second weekend, we meet eight hours on Saturday, and eight hours on Sunday; on the final weekend, we meet eight hours on Saturday and four hours Sunday morning. Spending forty hours together on three successive weekends tends to create a sense of community and camaraderie among the students which engenders active participation and energetic classroom discussion. I try to enhance the community aspect of the class by keeping a pot of hot water and tea bags and instant coffee in the classroom. I

bring cookies for the first Friday evening meeting, and after that students generally maintain a constant supply of snacks to share beside the teapot.

The pedagogical challenge is keeping students actively engaged for eight hours a day. I limit lecture time, and intersperse it with a variety of learning activities. We begin the first Friday evening with a time-line activity that students do in small groups, arranging a pack of cards listing events from the monarchy of King David to the writing of 2 Peter in chronological order. Then I write the time-line on the board, where it remains as a reference throughout the course to help students place all the material we cover in historical context. Students spend a good deal of class time comparing various texts — comparing parallels in the Synoptic Gospels, comparing the Christmas stories in Matthew and Luke, comparing the Synoptics with John, comparing the Gospel of Thomas with the Synoptics, comparing Acts with Paul's letters and so on. When we read Paul's letter to the Romans, students create characters and we do a simulation of a house church in Rome based on the book *Paul and the Roman House Churches: A Simulation* by Reta Finger (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993).

By Sunday afternoon of the second weekend, there is a tendency for students to feel wrung out, so I bring popcorn and we watch movies. I use the book *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies: Triumph Over Shame* (Robert Jewett, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) in which the author experiments with "bringing films and biblical texts into dialogue" (p. 4). The students divide up into various rooms throughout the building to watch

See LAPP p.xii

EDWARDS, from p.i

and percentage of enrollment is roughly equal to the students in Sociology. My own recent investigations indicate that there are at least 150 community colleges that offer distinct Religious Studies majors (This number does not include departments that might offer a joint emphasis in religion and philosophy). While this number is substantial, it strikes me that community colleges are fertile ground for the expansion of the study of religion. Such an expansion would serve the interests of the Academy by providing employment for our members but it would also serve as one of the most effective ways of spreading the influence of the scholarly study of religion throughout the community. (For those of you interested in pursuing this career option, see the article entitled "The Community College Job Search" in the Chronicle of Higher Education at: <http://chronicle.com/jobs/2002/04/2002041901c.htm>)

My own journey into community colleges began as an undergraduate when I took two summer courses at the local community college. I thoroughly enjoyed those courses, at least partly because of the diversity of the student population. The

liberal arts college I attended during the school year was populated almost exclusively by 18-22 year olds. The community college class had people of all ages with very diverse outlooks on life which made the classes much more interesting. This appreciation for the value of institutional context was soon lost as I focused my attention on graduate work. I forgot about community colleges until I was working on my doctoral dissertation and looking for places to hone my teaching skills. There were a number of community colleges in the Denver area and I was able to secure part time employment teaching philosophy and religion. Since my degree was in philosophy of religion and theology, I was able to obtain full-time employment as a philosophy instructor at Red Rocks Community College and took the opportunity to begin developing and expanding our offerings in religion. When I arrived at Red Rocks in 1992, we had one Philosophy of Religion course and a Comparative Religion course in the works. We have since added courses in Religion and American Culture, Psychology of Religion, Religion and Film, Early Christian Literature, and Literature of Ancient Israel. Because of the peculiar nature of course prefixes in the Colorado community college system,

these courses are all taught under the Philosophy prefix or jointly listed with the Psychology or Humanities departments.

Community colleges have a number of distinct characteristics that influence the teaching of religion. One is what Peter Jauhiainen in his essay calls the 'pragmatic dimension'. They draw no sharp line between academic and vocational education. This results in an unusual mix of students and faculty. Your colleague down the hall is as likely to be able to give advice on plumbing the new addition to your house as she is on interpreting the economics of Taiwan. Another characteristic is the emphasis on the lifelong learner and the local community. Community colleges aim to provide educational opportunities for the lifetime of an individual. To us, the years between 18 and 24 are not the sole or prime years for learning. Doug Nelson's essay on how he developed the study of religion at Northwest College explains the results of this. He tells a delightful story of educating an elderly gentleman in Greek and how the interests of the adult learners in his community shaped the direction of his program. These distinctive characteristics lead to a kind of maverick or experimental attitude amongst community college educators.

They are willing to try just about everything. Paula Drewek provides an interesting example of this. Community colleges were some of the first schools to experiment in online education. In fact, Colorado, has a completely online community college. Paula provides a detailed account of how this attitude of experiment can translate a traditional religion class into a successful online experience. Joy's account of her teaching will be foreign to most since few of her classes last for less than 4 hours and an 8 hour class is just a normal day for her. Her description of life as a community college adjunct instructor is far from pretty but it is the reality for 75% of the teachers at my college. I have contributed to it by offering courses for which I know my college will only hire part-time instructors (at least at the moment). Mary Karen Solomon, like Doug Nelson, writes from a rural college. A typical teaching day for her would not only include a course in religion but also courses in Philosophy, Literature, English or Humanities. This requires a breadth of knowledge and courage unknown to most of us. These unusual characteristics of community colleges can provide both challenges and opportunities for the scholar of religion who chooses this career path. For me it has been deeply rewarding. ♣

Developing the Religious Studies Program At Tulsa Community College

Cherie Hughes

Tulsa Community College



Cherie Hughes directs the Religious Studies program at Tulsa Community College where she has been a professor of Humanities and Religious Studies since 1986. She previously taught at the University of Tulsa. She has Bachelor's and Master's degrees in History from Boston University and a Master's degree in Theology from the University of Dallas. Cherie Hughes is currently completing a dissertation on the life and spirituality of St. Katharine Drexel under the direction Prof. Ann Loades of Durham University. She has been awarded numerous scholar and program grants by the Oklahoma Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities, particularly for her first person portrayal of the nineteenth century feminist Lucy Stone. chughes@tulsa.cc.ok.us

finally made with four students. I called them "The Fab Four." Because the course was designed to be experiential and discussion based, we suffered mightily when a student or two was absent. The students were well aware of the dynamics and tried very hard not to miss class. Despite of the small number of students, or even perhaps because of it, the class was a very successful learning experience for both faculty and students.

The department began an active marketing campaign. It sent letters to all students who had declared a Religious Studies major to inform them of the program offerings. Oddly, the program had majors before long before any one enrolled in the first course. There were four majors in fall of 1990, three semesters before the first class of the discipline was taught. Faculty held open meetings during the fall semester where students could meet the faculty and discuss the Tulsa Community College Religious Studies program. The faculty was on hand to counsel students and to provide information about transfer to senior institutions in and around Oklahoma. The department provided refreshments, luring students with cookies and punch. The department held other meetings by invitation to targeted populations of students.

On the level of individual effort, faculty members designed fliers for specific courses to entice students. The college student newspaper was cooperative in printing articles about the courses and the program.

The following year saw a jump to 29 students in two courses. By the next year, 69 students were enrolled in one of four courses and ten students had declared Religious Studies as their major.

Encouraged by the success of the first classes to make in Religious Studies, we added two additional courses to the schedule for the spring semester, one at night and one during the day. We began to alternate day and night offerings of Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Scriptures during the fall and spring semesters. We offered Introduction to Religious Studies, the one absolutely required course for the major, during the day in the fall and during the night in the spring semester.

After several semesters of low enrollments in the scripture classes, we discovered that many students did not know to what the titles referred. Many expected that Hebrew Scriptures would be taught in Hebrew, not English; they did not recognize the title as referring to the Hebrew Bible, or that the Hebrew Bible was the same as the Old Testament for Christians. Many students did not recognize Christian Scriptures as referring to the New Testament. Obviously the nomenclature, though academically correct, was getting in the way of student enrollment. The courses were entitled with their more vernacular names: *Old*

Testament and *New Testament*. Only one of these courses has had to be cancelled for low enrollment since the change of titles went into effect. Students know at a glance what course is being offered. Faculty members are still free to include non-canonical texts for study in these classes. By changing the names of two courses, both faculty and students benefited. The faculty has two more courses to teach regularly and students are comfortable signing up for courses where the titles describe to them at least the majority of the content.

The largest number of majors in the program has yet to exceed sixteen. Usually there are between ten and fifteen majors in any academic year. Most of these students wish to complete the Associate of Arts degree in Religious Studies at Tulsa Community College and then continue their studies in a senior institution. Many more have ministerial aspirations than academic ones, but there has been a noticeable shift towards academic goals in the last five years.

As the one full-time member of the Religious Studies faculty, I have done community outreach through letters and personal visits with local clergy. I regularly send notification of course offerings to the Christian and Jewish congregations that are proximate to our downtown Tulsa location. A few pastors have asked Tulsa Community College to provide credit courses off-campus at their churches. Their requests have been accommodated every time. The chairman of the Liberal Arts division and I take part in numerous local ecumenical and inter-collegiate scholarly groups. By doing so, TCC has been able to share resources with other entities. The Tulsa Jewish Federation has an Israeli scholar-in-residence program and it shares its scholars with us. Our participation in inter-collegiate groups has facilitated numerous articulation agreements through which to ensure the seamless transfer of our students to senior institutions. Additionally, these relationships have aided the success of student study abroad trips. Members of various faith communities have joined Tulsa Community College students, becoming students themselves, for trips to Israel and Greece.

The Religious Studies curriculum at Tulsa Community College includes the following courses: *Introduction to Religious Studies*; *Religions of the World: The Eastern Traditions*; *Religions of the World: The Western Traditions*; *Old Testament*; *New Testament*; *Religion and Society*; *Religion in America*; *Christian Ethics and Social Thought*; *Religion in Film*; *Field Studies in Religion*; and *Selected Topics in Religious Studies*. The International Language department offers *Biblical Hebrew I and II*, *Biblical Greek I - IV*, and *Latin I - IV*. The Philosophy Department offers *Philosophy of Religion*. In a semester there are usually 100 to 125 students enrolled in six to seven Religious Studies

courses. In the summer semester the two Testament courses are offered, with an enrollment of around 35 students. Regular semester offerings are *Introduction to Religious Studies*; *Religions of the World: Eastern and Western Traditions*, alternating fall and spring; *Old and New Testaments*, alternating day and night, and fall and spring; *Religion in America*; *Christian Ethics and Social Thought*, fall; *Religion in Film*, spring. *Religion and Society* and *Philosophy of Religion* are offered in the spring semester on alternating years. The language courses have small but steady enrollments. In the fall of 2001 there were 11 students in *Advanced Biblical Greek* and 6 students in *Biblical Hebrew*.

The experience at TCC has been that it was not until there were several course offerings per semester that students began to perceive of Religious Studies as an option. Obviously, most of the students who take Religious Studies courses are not majors, but simply fulfilling a general education distribution requirement. Somehow, a meager course offering, such as the case in the early years of our program, did not encourage students to enroll. But once there was a larger number of courses offered regularly and a certain critical mass of students who had successfully completed them, the numbers of enrollments began to grow. After all, the best marketing consists in courses well-taught and satisfied students. Many students who take one Religious Studies course will enroll in another Religious Studies course.

The Tulsa Community College Religious Studies program has hit a growth plateau over the last few years, so the present challenge is to reinvigorate the program and to stimulate its growth. The major difficulty the program faces is that Tulsa Community College is the only public institution of higher education in the state of Oklahoma that offers a Religious Studies degree. There is no public senior institution to which its majors can transfer and continue their Religious Studies interests through to a Bachelor of Arts degree. The state's major research institutions no longer have Religious Studies programs. There are some excellent denominational universities in the state, but they tend to be out of the price range of most community college graduates.

It has been a pleasure and a challenge to develop the Religious Studies program at Tulsa Community College over the last ten years. The initial inertia has been overcome and there are interesting courses and sufficient students to keep a modest program going. It is tempting to simply relax and enjoy the status quo. However, professional integrity demands that we push, prod, and pull an already good program to even higher levels of development. Perhaps that will be the story of the next ten years. ✪

IT HAS TAKEN more than ten years to develop the Religious Studies program at Tulsa Community College. Some of the original difficulties were the result of the inertia of the new, unfamiliar nomenclature, and the need to actively market the program to prospective students. At all the steps along the way the administration was unfailingly supportive and flexible.

Tulsa Community College is an urban, multi-campus, two-year institution serving 20,000 students. The Religious Studies program is located on the Metro Campus, which serves approximately 6500 students in downtown Tulsa. The program has one full-time faculty member and two crossover faculty members, one from History and one from Philosophy. It also employs a cadre of adjuncts.

In 1989-90, the college developed a pattern of courses for students who wished to major in Religious Studies and printed it in the college catalogue. Semester after semester, we would put a course or two on the schedule, and semester after semester, no students would enroll. It took until the spring semester of 1991 for my first Religious Studies course "to make." *Introduction to Religious Studies*

Teaching Biblical Languages and Biblical Archaeology in the Community College

M. Douglas Nelson
Northwest College



M. Douglas Nelson is Professor of Anthropology, History, Ancient Languages, and Literatures, at Northwest College, in Powell, Wyoming, where he has been since 1983. Prior to that, he was an Instructor in Anthropology & Greek, at Mohave Community College, in Kingman, Arizona. He received his Ph.D in the Department of Near Eastern Languages & Cultures, at UCLA.

THERE ARE SOME advantages to teaching in very remote places like rural Wyoming. One is that the people are willing to take on a new opportunity whenever it presents itself — such as looking into the course schedule of a small-town community college catalog and discovering that Biblical Greek, Biblical Hebrew, and Biblical Archaeology are offered on a regular basis. I have found that people in the so-called "remote areas distant from the centers of learning" make good students and have skills equal to anyone I have taught in other contexts.

Another advantage to teaching in the remote areas is that these same rural people have been waiting a long time for such courses to be available. In over fifteen years, these classes have never failed to fill with enthusiastic students. For example, in fall semester 2000 we had twenty-four students in Biblical Hebrew! Not all of them survived, of course, but it was a very good beginning and eleven students completed two semesters.

The Biblical Archaeology course generally has a larger attendance than the languages, though not much larger. Archaeology is usually taught in the day-time schedule and thus draws a more traditional-aged group of students while the Greek and Hebrew classes are taught in the evenings to accommodate commuters from other nearby small towns. Archaeology also has the option of a summer field school experience in Israel or learning some excavation techniques in summer digs in Wyoming in our anthropology program.

tion techniques in summer digs in Wyoming in our anthropology program.

Biblical Greek Courses

In 1984-1985, first and second year Greek were added to the language department curriculum and housed in the Humanities Division. Classical Greek was the period of choice since it was not clear how Biblical Greek would be accepted by the college and community. Part of the mission of the college is, of course, to serve the needs and interests of the community. As it turned out, the interest was very strong in Biblical languages, and as a consequence, Classical Greek was replaced by a two-year sequence in Biblical Greek:

Greek 1015, 1025 Elementary Biblical Greek, I and II (4 credits each)

I've used various textbooks and have had about the same success rate with each:

- Machen, J. Gresham, *New Testament Greek for Beginners*. Macmillan, 1923.
- Adam, A.K.M., *A Grammar for New Testament Greek*. Abingdon, 1999.
- Summers, Ray and T. Sawyer, *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Broadman & Holman, 1995.
- Aland, Black, Martini, et al., *The Greek New Testament*. United Bible Societies, current edition.

Greek 2035 Intermediate Biblical Greek (4 credits) for those who need four more credits to complete a college language requirement, or Greek 2150 (1 credit) for those who want to keep building reading skills.

- Aland, Black, Martini, et al., *The Greek New Testament*, United Bible Societies, current edition.
- Black, David, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*. Baker, 1995.

Biblical Greek Enrollments		
Year	Class	Students
1984-85	Classical Greek	9 students
1985-86	Elementary Biblical Greek	10 students
Fall 1986	Advanced	5 students
Fall 1987	Advanced	3 students
1991-92	Elementary	6 students
Fall 1992	Advanced	6 students
1994-95	Elementary	16 students
Fall 1995	Advanced	1 student
1998-99	Elementary	12 students
Fall 1999	Advanced	4 students
2001-02	Elementary	19 students

Biblical Hebrew Courses

The Hebrew and Greek classes meet once a week on Tuesday evenings for three hours and fifteen minutes (!). Thus, I must use textbooks that are very user-friendly and that have workbooks and cassettes. I make my own worksheets and cassettes if they are not available with the textbooks. I have found Mansoor's books quite useful so long as there are other available texts for consultation by students, such as C. Leong Seow's grammar.

Hebrew 1010, 1020 First Year Hebrew I, First Year Hebrew II (4 credits each)

- Mansoor, Menahem, *Biblical Hebrew, Step by Step*, vol 1, with cassette and key. Baker, 1980.
- Mansoor, Menahem, *Biblical Hebrew, Step by Step*, vol 2, with cassette and key, chapters 1-6 . Baker, 1984.
- Seow, C. Leong, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. Abingdon, revised edition, 1995.

Hebrew 2030 (4 credits)

This is a four-credit course for those who are using Hebrew for their twelve-credit foreign language requirement for the B.A. degree when they transfer. We read Biblical texts from the Mansoor volume which has helpful notes and also from the BHS so students can get some experience with the critical apparatus and masora.

- Mansoor, Menahem, *Biblical Hebrew, Step by Step*, vol. 2, with cassette and key, chapters 7-24. Baker, 1984.
- *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*

Hebrew 2150 Selected Readings in Hebrew (1 credit)

This is a similar course to Hebrew 2030 but for one credit only. It is designed for those students who wish to continue reading Hebrew as it fits their needs.

- *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
- Greenspahn, Frederick, *An Introduction to Aramaic*, Scholars Press, 1999. Occasionally I have the students read Ezra or Daniel for experience in both Hebrew and Aramaic.
- Wurthwein, Ernst, *The Text of the Old Testament*, Eerdmans, 1979.

Biblical Hebrew Enrollments		
Year	Class	Students
1986-87	Elementary Biblical Hebrew	12 students
Fall 1987	Advanced	7 students
Fall 1988	Advanced	6 students
1989-90	Elementary	13 students
Fall 1990	Advanced	12 students
1992-93	Elementary	13 students
Fall 1993	Advanced	8 students
1996-97	Elementary	27 students
Fall 1997	Advanced	5 students
2000-01	Elementary	24 students
Fall 2001	Advanced	4 students

Biblical Archaeology Courses

Anthropology 2350, Biblical Archaeology

This is a general survey of the archaeology of Palestine from the stone ages to Islamic periods. I call the course "Biblical Archaeology" for advertising purposes. This seems to work well, though I sometimes get complaints when I spend too much time on the stone ages and not enough on

Biblical periods ("false advertising"). Walter Rast's book is perfect for this course. In the spring of 2002, I am going to experiment with teaching the textbook backwards, starting with the Islamic phases and backing up into the stone ages, as if one were digging a site. This approach may also avert the criticism of not enough time on the Biblical periods.

- Rast, Walter, *Through the Ages in Palestinian Archaeology*. Trinity, 1992.
- Currid, John, *Doing Archaeology in the Land of the Bible*. Baker, 1999.

Additional reading from:

- Mazar, Amihai, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*. Doubleday, 1992.
- McRay, John, *Archaeology of the New Testament*. Baker, 1991.
- Stern, Ephraim, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, II*. Doubleday, 2001.

Anthropology 2310, Archaeology Field Methods: Israel

- Hester, Thomas, et. al., *Field Methods in Archaeology*. Mayfield, 1997.

In the summer of 1990, while taking a course at the Rothberg School of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus campus, I met Jodi Magness who had just completed a season of excavating at Caesarea. She encouraged me to bring students for excavation experience in Israel. I had worked on a few digs myself, in Israel and in the United States, but had not yet taken students to Israel. With help from Professor Magness I brought five students for the 1995 excavations at Masada in the Roman camps and on the siege ramp (see my forthcoming report on the ramp excavation in the on-line journal from Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, Wyoming: <http://www.bibleinterp.com>).

At Masada I met Haim Goldfus of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev Desert, and Benny Arubas of the Israel Antiquities Authority. With their help and kindness to my students, we have excavated at Halutza (1997 and 1998) and at Beth She'an (1999). We are now planning a 2002 field season.

Biblical Archaeology Enrollments		
Years	Class	Students
Spring 1987	Biblical Archaeology	33 students
Spring 1989	Biblical Archaeology	26 students
Fall 1990	Biblical Archaeology	25 students
Summer 1992	Archaeology of Dead Sea Scrolls	14 students
Fall 1993	Biblical Archaeology	21 students
Spring 1995	Biblical Archaeology	24 students
Spring 1997	Biblical Archaeology	20 students
Spring 1999	Biblical Archaeology	27 students
Spring 2001	Biblical Archaeology	15 students

Comparative Religion from on Ground to Online: Design to Implementation

Paula A. Drewek
Macomb Community College



Paula Drewek is Professor of Humanities at Macomb Community College in Warren, Michigan where she has taught courses in arts and ideas and comparative religion for over 30 years. Her Ph.D. in the Sociology of Religion was a cross-cultural study of two communities of Baha'is — in Canada and India — using the faith development model of James W. Fowler.

She recently published the text and workbook for a 12 religion poster series published by Teachers Discovery, and participates in a weekly Interfaith dialogue TV series taped locally and aired on PBS in Detroit.

THIS PAPER will describe the various stages in the process of converting a traditional Comparative Religion course to an online offering. The preparation of the instructor for the concepts and format of online instruction, together with the institutional decisions which shape distance education programs will constitute the first, preparatory phase. The next stage will focus on the course organization, specific course objectives and the learning activities designed to accomplish these. The implementation of the course with its attendant challenges, successes and failures will constitute the last stage. The reader presently teaching online or contemplating the development of an online course may choose to benefit from the experiences of this author.

Two primary incentives encouraged the refitting of a successful Comparative Religion course to an online offering by this veteran classroom teacher. Macomb Community College was eager to launch a series of online courses in diverse disciplines, and, to that end, offered free training in the necessities for teaching online. Additionally, my 30+ years in the classroom had me begging for new challenges in course delivery. I wanted to tighten up and condense the essentials for teaching the 7 religions I currently teach in Macomb Community College's 16-week semester. I also wanted to develop assignments and techniques to more thoroughly engage students in the material to be learned. These challenges, and the availability of training, began my journey. It has been sustained for the past four years by several benefits unanticipated during the initial phases of course development. I will share these in my evaluation of the course.

College Support

A six-week training course (online, naturally) was offered to interested faculty. There were about 12 of us at this stage. The course, offered through the Convene learning platform in California, used a textbook written by the Bedores (Gerry, Marlene, and Gerry, Jr.) called *Online Education: The Future is Now*.¹ The training accomplished two things. First, it familiarized the learner with the mechanical/technical operations of online instruction and interaction; secondly, it promoted a rethinking of one's discipline to coincide with a modular format using several kinds of instructional models.² Hence, both practical skills and theoretical frameworks were integrated into the weekly assignments. The course culminated with each teacher developing a rudimentary syllabus for an online course in his or her discipline and conducting one week of the course with associates as "the class." I felt ill-prepared at the close of the training for the actual management of an online course. The old adage, "experience is the best teacher" emerged gradually as the stages from conception to implementation unfolded. My colleagues and I had many reservations and questions which were addressed in a series of seminars with the Convene staff. The next stage was a stipend of \$1200 to support development of an online course which I tackled during a summer without teaching responsibilities. It was ready by the beginning of Fall term 1999.

The college continued to offer support in myriad ways by appointing a full-time director of online learning to manage the

details of starting and developing new online courses. A faculty committee of more seasoned online teachers was available for whatever needs and questions we had in the initial stages of development or teaching online. An online "faculty lounge" was and is available to share concerns and solutions. Support was further buttressed by a full time technical person to serve both faculty and students. As online offerings have grown additional technical support persons have been added.³

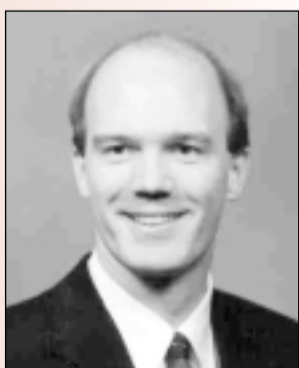
Particularities of Community College Teaching

The fact that two-year community colleges offer only the beginnings of study in any discipline restricts possible course offerings to introductory-level courses which offer a broad exposure to a wealth of material in one or two semesters. In religious studies we are teaching courses which are the students' first exposure to the content areas of our discipline. One challenge this situation poses ensuring the instructor's enthusiasm, engagement and flexibility throughout a career of teaching basically the same course. Professors do not have the opportunities available to our university counterparts to pursue interests in the areas of our graduate work. Yet another challenge is to continually increase student engagement in the learning process so that objectives can be met more effectively. The first challenge relates to personal/professional growth, while the

See **DREWEK** p.viii

The Pragmatic Dimension of the Community College and its Impact on Religious Studies

Peter D. Jauhiainen
Kirkwood Community College



Peter D. Jauhiainen is Assistant Professor of Religion and Humanities at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. His area of speciality is American Religious History. He received his Ph.D. in 1997 from the University of Iowa, concentrating in the History of Religion and Religious Thought in the West.

IN THIS BRIEF ARTICLE I would like to explore several issues concerning the teaching of religion in community colleges. They all focus on some aspect of what I would call the "pragmatic dimension" of the community college itself and its impact on religious studies. By this I mean that the mission of the community college is oriented toward the "useful" or the "practical" in a manner that is somewhat different than four-year colleges and universities.

First, the community college is designed to be a comprehensive institution that responds to the needs of the local community. This has been part of its mission since the 1930s when the federal government allocated funds to establish emergency junior colleges in order to retrain people who had lost their jobs during the Great Depression. The community college movement was further fueled by

returning World War II veterans who took advantage of the GI Bill to gain access to higher education. In 1947, the Truman Commission advised that junior colleges think of themselves as "community colleges" and offer not simply the "first half of a four-year degree" but a wide variety of programs to meet the needs of local citizens of diverse ages and social backgrounds. Today the community college provides not only two-year transfer degrees but vocational and technical training, programs for retraining of workers, developmental education, high school completion, and various community services.

Because of this broad mission, religion offerings are typically limited to survey courses that are easily transferable to four-year schools and that appeal to a wide range of students. *Transferability* and *marketability* are essential factors of whether or not a course will succeed. Thus there is little opportunity to teach specialized courses in the area of one's expertise. At Kirkwood Community College, which has an enrollment of over 11,000 students, I teach three introductory religion courses semester after semester—*Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Introduction to Religions of the East, and Religion in the United States*. In past summers I have also taught *Introduction to Religions of the World*. Furthermore, there

are typically no religion majors and professors are fortunate if they have some of the same students for more than two courses. This makes it difficult to develop the kind of rapport with students that one might have at four-year institutions, especially liberal arts colleges.

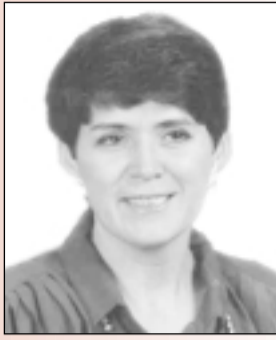
At the community college, pragmatic considerations serve another and perhaps more foundational one — money. Since at my institution, at least, tuition dollars account for around fifty per cent of the general operating budget due to current state budget restraints and a twenty-year pattern of neglect of the community colleges by the state legislature, an overriding concern of the administration is to ensure that certain arts and sciences courses maintain high student enrollments. In effect, they have become the "cash cows" of the college. Since students pay the same tuition rates no matter what courses they take, and since many courses like religion, philosophy, and history can be taught through the medium of large lectures, they help to finance smaller, more expensive courses in the vocational and technical programs where high-tech classrooms and laboratories give students much-needed hands on training. Of course, implied in this understanding is the

See **JAUHIAINEN** p. xi

Teaching Religion in Community Colleges

Mary Karen Solomon

Colorado Northwestern Community College



Mary Karen Solomon is Humanities/Social Science Division Chair at Colorado Northwestern Community College in Colorado's beautiful and rural high plains, teaching humanities, philosophy, literature, and English composition. Her particular interests are the religion, philosophy and literature of both Russia and China; she is a student of Zoroastrianism, Sufism, Confucianism, and Daoism, and is working on an anthology of essays and poetry concerning religion.

THE MISSION of a community college is quite different from that of a four-year college or a university. According to President Joe May of the Colorado Community College and Occupational Educational Services, "Our mission is to help our state realize its human resource potential and enhance its robust economy. Our vision is to be the leading provider of vibrant, high performance learning, for anyone, anytime, anywhere." (CCCOES, <cterc.ccco.es.edu>) This cannot be accomplished without opening wide the doors and services to the public, so community colleges have open enrollment, or policies very close to it: all students (or almost all) students who apply are admitted. The object is to educate all the people of the community, whether traditional-aged students or older students with non-traditional needs, to meet their educational goals. Such a goal may be obtaining a four-year degree at a university, which means teaching the student general education transfer courses, effective study habits, and the necessary academic rigor and methodology to be successful in the baccalaureate course. Another common goal is to guide the student into the correct vocation for his or her talents and abilities, and to train him successfully in its skills, in the process giving the student the best-rounded education possible for his vocation. Another frequent goal is to re-educate people: to help those who through health challenges or changing circumstances need to adapt their skills or even change careers to do so successfully, to offer guidance, support and the necessary skills and education. The community college also serves the needs of its community in a broader manner. Particularly in small, rural, and/or isolated communities (such as mine), the community college plays an important cultural role. From guest speakers and multi cultural film festivals to musical entertainers to museum, drama, or even overseas trips, the community college should offer cultural enrichment to its residents.

Because the community college is a state institution, it is required to respect the separation of state and religion: this emphasizes the importance of a sensitive and equal presentation of all religions in the Comparative Religions class. Bias and

favoritism have no place in the classroom: the less familiar a religion is to the students, the more important it is that it be taught with respect and equal handedness.

Practically speaking, the above characteristics of the community college and its mission mean that when teaching religion in a community college, the instructor needs to be sensitive to the various needs and abilities of class members, present the subject in a way that will help all members to meet their various educational goals, and encourage students to keep their minds open and endeavor to understand sympathetically that which may seem very alien to their way of life.

My most basic objective in my Comparative Religion course is to help the students gain understanding of the role religion plays in thought and civilization; in this course we study world religions, or, as Huston Smith expresses it, the great wisdom traditions, which sum up a culture's unique insights, values and development. Secondly, students must gain and express knowledge of the various religions and their influences upon mankind; third, they need to better understand the forms and development of religions in both primitive and sophisticated civilizations. Of course, they do these mainly through reading, research, and writing, though both lecture and class discussion play an important part in understanding the various religions.

There are various approaches to teaching religion, but they seem to coalesce into two main camps: the historical approach and the phenomenological approach. The historical approach places each religion in its context, temporal and spatial, and traces its development throughout cultural history. The phenomenological approach treats religion as a system of values, cultural phenomena, in a sense: traditions of wisdom arising from the depths of cultures. It attempts to explain religion from within, to clarify for the student the particular wisdom, insights, and spiritual developments of these traditions. The first choice for the community college religion teacher is to select which approach will work best in his or her situation.

Various texts have various approaches: Niels C. Nielsen, Jr. in Bedford's *Religions of the World* describes his approach:

The study of the religions of the world is a subject of enormous scope and depth, covering the full range of history and reaching from the most mundane aspects of people's lives to their most sublime thoughts and aspirations. This volume...describes in clear terms the principal doctrines, issues, and motifs of each religion and shows how the traditions have responded to their social, cultural, and geographic contexts...

We believe that even though the stories and concerns of the few—emperors and other rulers—have played an important role... far more important for the history of religions have been the broad cultural changes affecting adherents' lives—events such as foreign conquests, large-scale emigration from rural to urban settings, or the spread of literacy. This new edition highlights such broad changes and shows how religions have responded to them.

Another proponent of the historical

approach (whose work I admire greatly) is S. A. Nigosian, who writes of his *World Religions: A Historical Approach*,

"Historians of religion study religious behavior through the sequences of events or series of transformations that characterize the evolution of various religious traditions into their current forms or up to the points at which they vanished. Historians consider religions as specific traditions that encompass fundamental beliefs, important practices, and institutionalized systems, all of which have gone through complex courses of development and transformations....Because of the profound impact of religion on the course of human civilization, we use the historical model in this text. (p.4)

In developing his account of the great world religions, Nigosian analyses the origin of religious tradition, the growth and spread of the religion, its sacred texts or literature; the central concepts and philosophical views, and the important practices and ceremonies of each religion, pointing out that one of his main goals in to help the reader understand the values that individual religions transmit to their followers. How people in different times, different cultures and under different circumstances thought, felt, and acted is inherent in these values.

My difficulty with the historical approach has two components: first of all, where does one stop? Events and their effects, religious figures and their influences, multiply endlessly until the student loses his way in a mire of historical data. Particularly in a survey course, attempting to introduce the student to all the great religions of history, this can be a problem, as there is so much to cover. Students get culture shock: one religion's complex history blurs into another's. Secondly, it seems to me that the historical approach can defeat the course's most important objective, to help the student gain understanding of the religion's role in developing a culture's thought and values. The student can lose the forest for the trees; anxious over memorizing the names and histories of various Hindu deities and their avatars and the dates of scriptures and important events, she can lose sight of what Hinduism means. Studying eight to ten of these traditions in such a manner can leave the student exhausted and confused.

The approach that looks at religion as a system of thought and behavior, a wisdom tradition providing a culture's most innermost and particular inspirations and insights, seems to better accomplish what I want to do. An excellent example of this approach can be seen in Huston Smith's *The Illustrated World Religions* (the text that, after some trial and experimentation, I have settled on using):

Traditionally, when people wanted answers to life's ultimate questions – Where are we? Why are we here? What does it all mean? What, if anything, are we supposed to do? – they looked to their revealed texts; or to their ancestral myths if they were oral peoples...

This is not a book about religious history. This explains the dearth of names, dates, and social influences in its pages. Historical facts are kept to the minimum that are needed to situate in time and space the ideas the book deals with...

This book is not a balanced account of its subject. The full story of religion is not

rose-colored – often it is crude and barbaric. Wisdom and charity are intermittent, and the net result is profoundly ambiguous. A balanced account of religion would include witch-hunt and inquisitions, pogroms and persecution, the Christian Crusades and the Holy Wars of Islam. The catalogue would have no end.

Why then do I only mention these things?... This is a book about values. Probably as much bad art as good has been chiseled and painted, but no one would expect it to appear in these pages....

Having targeted my subject as the enduring religions at their best, let me say what I take that best to be. Their theological and metaphysical truths are, I am prepared to argue, inspired. Institutions – religious institutions included – are another story. Constituted as they are of uneven people (partly good, partly bad), institutions are built of vices as well as virtues... This book skims the cream from religion's churning history by confining itself to its theological claims. When we limit ourselves to these, a cleaner side of the religions emerges. They begin to look like the world's wisdom traditions. ('Where is the knowledge that is lost in information? Where is the wisdom that is lost in knowledge?' – T. S. Eliot) ...

Religion alive confronts the individual with the most momentous option life can present. It calls the soul to the highest adventure it can undertake, a projected journey across the jungles, peaks and deserts of the human spirit. The call is to confront reality, to master the self. Those who dare to hear and follow that secret call soon learn the dangers and difficulties of its lonely journey..." (Prologue, *The Illustrated World's Religions*, Huston Smith)

I like this understanding of religion as inner truth and cultural accumulations of wisdom, as opposed to institutionalized systems answerable for much evil. As Joseph Campbell pointed out in *The Power of Myth*, paraphrasing Carl Jung, religion is the great defense against truly religious ideas.

Structure of the Course: The course covers the great religions of the world, still in existence. This means we study Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in that order. I begin the course with a unit on primitive religion, examining characteristics of early religion such as the numinous experience, prayer, divination, use of magic, the role of shamans and fetishes, animism, taboos, and totems. We also study the several functions of ritual: ritual as fulfillment of expectation, ritual as expression of anxiety, and ritual's association with mythology. We discuss the function of these characteristics in native religions in Africa and the Americas. On the second day, after our initial discussion, we watch "The Storytellers," from *The Power of Myth*, with Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers. They discuss in particular primitive and early religion's covenant between prey animals and the hunter, how myth, and ritual reinforce the value of the animal, the understanding that the animal gives itself to the humans, with the reservation that it be valued and not wasted. Students are always responsive to the native American tradition, probably because it is nearer to us and more familiar. They like the story of the Buffalo's Wife, which Campbell

See SOLOMON p.xi

Weekend Warrior: Adventures in the Teaching Trade

Jan Briel
Red Rocks Community College



Jan Briel holds an M.A. in Religious Studies, with an emphasis on Native American Mythology, from the University of Denver, and an M.A. in Guidance Counseling from the University of Northern Colorado. She has taught religion in grades 6-12, and has served as a high school counselor. She now, blessedly, finds herself working as an adjunct instructor at Red Rocks Community College in Lakewood, Colorado. The classes that she has been privileged to teach include Comparative Religion, Religion and Film, Psychology of Religion, and Religion and American Culture.

LOVE MY TEACHING JOB. Because of it, I am able to attend appearances by the Dalai Lama, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Elie Wiesel, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. I have seen priestly ordinations, demonstrations of Navajo sand painting, and Sufis in ecstatic trance. I have toured temples dedicated to Hindu gods, Jewish synagogues, and Roman Catholic cathedrals.

I am an adjunct instructor at a local community college, in the Philosophy department; my area of expertise is Religious Studies. My particular classes are scheduled in what is called the "weekend-college" format. In a practical sense, this means that my classes take place during the time in which people usually "recreate" (or in some cases, worship), i.e. Friday evening, all day Saturday and all day Sunday. Forty hours of instruction: a complete semester telescoped into 6 class sessions over three weekends.

Demographic

The weekend format has characteristics and needs that differ markedly from a "traditional" class. Class sizes range from 10 to 20 students. 60-70% of these students are women, in ages from mid-20's to mid-40's. Many of these women already have a Bachelor's degree, and are returning to school to enter a new field or to revamp an existing career. Some of them are entering college for the first time, having delayed their education to marry and raise children. Their reasons for pursuing an education vary; a few are fulfilling a personal dream, more are looking for financial independence or security.

The male students tend to cluster in two age groups: most are early to mid-30's, intending to complete their Bachelor's at a University; some are late teens to early 20's, more recent high school graduates, a very few are older and changing careers.

The majority of the students are juggling the demands of family, career, and continuing education, leaving work on Friday afternoon to spend the week-end in class. These students are hard-working, high-achieving, and intellectually curious, with backgrounds as diverse as would be expected in a large city.

Because of the differences in age and education, there will be little commonality in class experience. The teacher needs to accept each student for where they are in their life, and strive to move them forward. How far forward is their personal issue. They are about to be hit by an explosion of information and sensory input. And if the aim is true, some insight will result. Remember the Golden Rule; teach as you would wish to be taught. A good class will be as stimulating, challenging and painless as possible for everyone involved. And a good teacher will set up the class for the students' maximum success.

Text

To design a week-end format class, the realities of the demographic and the time factor will determine most of the instructor's choices. In choosing a text, it is advisable to look for the most approachable and concise presentation of the material available. Textual material that can be supplemented with illuminating lecture will allow the most effective use of the students out-of-class study time. A text that the students don't ever need to refer to is a waste of their money. If all of the pertinent lectures may be given without corroborating text, why ask them to buy the book? Luckily, Religious Studies is "trendy" in the publishing world at the moment and there has been a great deal of research and writing recently, making the options in texts abundant. The real choice is between most effective text and cost. College textbooks are notoriously pricey, and a book should be the main resource for the class. If a text's price is high, it should be vital to the mastery of the material, not merely supplemental to the course itself.

By the same token, if all of the material comes exclusively from the text, why should the student bother to attend class? Which raises the issue of attendance. It is most fair to count attendance and participation as major percentages of the grade, and to encourage students that will have attendance issues to take the class when they actually have the time; human beings tend to overestimate what they are able to accomplish in finite space and time.

Assignments

The next decision that the instructor must make involves the amount, length and depth of the assignments that are required of the students. One of the realities of the week-end college is how little time occurs between the first session and the last: two weeks. This is not long enough to allow

for a full semester's worth of written work, or extended research. The opportunities for rumination are few, and short. The rule that "human beings tend to overestimate..." applies to the instructor as well. Indeed, much of the processing that the students will do with regard to the class material will take place, a little at a time, after the class is over.

Factoring in the students' need to have information on their academic progress before the class ends, it is wise to give some type of "mid-term" (test, paper, presentation) that the instructor will be able to grade and return to the students before they begin work on their final assignment. A final assignment is useful in keeping the students on track for the full three weekends. Giving the students all of the assignment, and their deadlines, at the first session, allows them to schedule their time most effectively.

Experience has shown that writing is better when required in smaller increments rather than a long research paper. For instance, the text used for *Religion in American Culture* consists of selected essays on the development of different American religious traditions. It is very effective to lecture on the historical background while asking the students to write four short papers (2-3 pages) reacting to the text. These papers served as an on-going source of feedback for the student, and allowed an objective final to be given based on the lecture, supplemented by the outside reading.

It is also helpful if the assignments can be made personally relevant to the student. One of the benefits of teaching Religious Studies is the possible opportunity for self-reflection and personal growth on the part of the student. It is an implied responsibility on the part of the teacher to create access to this opportunity, should the student be interested. In *Psychology of Religion*, a very successful assignment has been to ask the students to write a religious autobiography as a final, instructing them to apply some of the research that they had studied to their own background.

Another technique that has been found to be useful is to assign the students to make presentations of research to the class. For *Religion and Film*, the students each choose a single director, and prepare a 30 minute presentation on that director's work, using at least three film clips, with emphasis on the religious and mythic symbolism found in the films. This enables the class to cover a wider scope of material than any student could accomplish alone, and gives the students excellent discussion possibilities, as each of the presentations is open to response.

Above all, show reasonable compassion. Don't make the work too easy; that will insult the students and defeat any good purpose. But don't pile on the work with some mistaken notion that quantity equals or surpasses quality.

What does matter is that the students leave each class with an increased respect for, and understanding of, the depth and beauty of religion as a field of study.

Lecture and activities

The pacing of a weekend class is the real art. The key is to keep track of the time, and to break it down into workable increments: 60 to 90 minutes are the outer edges of complete concentration. When the average attention span of teen-ager is fifteen minutes, don't expect adults to sit still for eight hours at a time. The occasional exception? Showing a two hour movie; half the class will need to leave during the film, half won't. One rule of thumb is to keep the students moving.

One of the most enriching activities is a field experience. Luckily, teaching in a large metropolitan area offers a genuine diversity of religious denominations. Classes have attended a Roman Catholic high Mass, services at the Synagogue, chanting sessions at the Buddhist Temple, vegetarian lunch at the Hare Krishna temple, and a tour of a Latter Day Saints Temple before consecration. Recently, a connection was made to attend a discussion group at a Ba'Hai meeting, and the option has presented itself of contacting a practitioner of Santeria. Response to these field experiences has been overwhelmingly positive; it seems that students have an empathetic breakthrough by physically taking part in new form of religious expression, reacting spontaneously and immediately to an increased understanding of a different perspective.

The second activity that works well is the presentation. It is best that these be assigned either to individuals or, at most, pairs. Generally, the students don't have similar schedules, and to assemble a group of them would be very difficult. These presentations may cover portions of the text that need emphasis, or outside research on topics suggested by the reading, or supplemental information that will enhance the students' comprehension of the material.

Thirdly, there are several well-done film series, with topics ranging from exegesis of the Book of Genesis to travelogues of Buddhist temples, that have become available to a widespread audience. In addition, the great number of mainstream (read: Hollywood) films that are concerned with religious themes or issues are now readily available on video/DVD. Drama evolved from ancient, ritualized, expressions of mythology. The creative joining of word and image may reveal the profound, even today.

Students tell me that, without instructor contact, Religion and Philosophy classes are very difficult. Many have a limited background in these studies, and choose not to take the self-paced or online classes specifically in order to someone to explicate the material. Consequently, some investigation of their understanding of the text is necessary. That can take many forms; instructor lecture with open question and answer, discussion questions based on previous reading, group-work in class. The forms of instruction should attempt to accommodate as many learning styles as possible. To rely exclusively on lecture is to overlook

See **BRIEL** p.xii

DREWEK, from p.v

second relates to student success. I have found the development of an online course to offer opportunities for both.

Typically, the primary focus of community colleges is on teaching and learning. Much of one's attention as a teacher is student-centered rather than discipline-centered. This situation presents a positive opportunity for instructors interested in maintaining the "joy of teaching." The potential for instructor involvement in the processes of student learning is enhanced in the online environment since the contact between instructor and student is more frequent and intensive. The student-centered focus of online instruction emphasizes such processes as the development of individual student skills (analysis, synthesis, comparison, interpretation and evaluation); demonstrating relationships between concepts and their applications; connecting abstract ideas across disciplines; overcoming student deficiencies in reading, writing, vocabulary mastery, and test taking; connecting course content to student experiences outside the course.

Yet another opportunity for effective teaching and learning at the community college is the establishment of a more personalized "community of learners." The online environment increases the degree of interaction among class members through the discussion boards developed to share and process student assignments. Each student has access to the submissions of the others on the week's assignments and projects. Students naturally share their experiences, difficulties, solutions, often personal, which touch upon the assignments and offer suggestions and support to one another. Clearly, the volume of student-student and student-teacher interchange is much greater online than in on ground classes offering the potential for synergy which plays a vital role in online learning.⁴

Course Design

Pitfalls and possibilities

As White notes,⁵ one of the first pitfalls of online instruction is "that teachers are using digital technologies to supplement or imitate "talking heads" in the classroom." When teachers use new technological tools to fit old pedagogical habits, it doesn't work. Some adaptation of content and learning strategy is necessary to refit an existing course into an online format. The instructor newly developing a course will have some "givens" in the instructional model based upon institutional decisions: the length of the course; credits offered; the learning platform; and what kinds of interactions will be possible with institutional technology; requirements for student entry; and whether the learning platform is synchronous or asynchronous. The instructor also needs to consider capacities of the students' computer equipment.

Parameters

The author began with the following parameters based upon the above: a 3-credit hour 8-week course, which is the equivalent of 16 weeks of classroom instruction with a 20 student ceiling on enrollment. We were partnered to the Convene Learning Platform in California, which used an asynchronous course delivery with two possible hook-up modes: logging onto the WWW or a modem dial-up with a download of all messages followed by exiting to working offline.⁶ We had no opportunities to play movies or recordings in our virtual classroom; furthermore many computers (my own included) could not support the hard drive memory required

for those operations. So, this was to be a print-based virtual classroom without multi-media enhancements unless students individually wanted to access them on the web. Gone were several of my stock-in-trade classroom tools for enriching the learning environment — slides, films, recordings. I would have to come up with other ways to provide variety and tap the imaginative mode.⁷

Another challenge was to maintain and accomplish the same objectives in 8 weeks as in the 16-week on ground classes since they were equivalent in course credits. The pre-existing class had 7 major course objectives (see appendix). I modified only one — the required field trip or religious experiences component of the 16 week course. Instead, I added: "To demonstrate an awareness of cultural contexts of geography, history, art, and important persons and events as they relate to the religions studied." I reasoned that students taking a course online were possibly doing so because of time and place restrictions that would make the 3 required field trips unreasonable and impossible.

Choice of models

Based upon the 5 design models described in Bedore 71 chose the "bounded interactive" model that was suited to both class size and the level of dialogue I anticipated. Our online classes were restricted to 20 students initially (recent union contract raised that to 23). The "bounded interactive model" is suggested for 15-25 students per class and is designed to keep the classroom dialogue at a manageable level and not overload students or instructor. The highly interactive model is intended for only 10-15 students. Bounded interactive anticipates 5-8 messages per student each week. "When the message rate exceeds 200 messages per workshop (weekly), we are reaching the limit at which students and facilitators can be expected to function comfortably."⁸

The instructor manages the dialogue levels by the number of assignments and forums s/he creates for student interchange in the virtual classroom — the public forum of the class. Shifting assignments away from the virtual classroom through group or independent study reduces the discussion that takes place without sacrificing course content. However, effective classroom dialogue is not simply a matter of quantity, but also of quality. The quality issue will be addressed under implementation.

Among the tools available for course design, I relied most on study questions; seminars on common texts; group work; and creative story applications/situations involving course concepts. These will be illustrated in the following sections. My experience in various modes of classroom instruction served me well by providing a variety of verbal activities to engage students in the learning process.

Defining course objectives and structure

My first task was to adapt course objectives to weekly objectives. This process was really curriculum review. Weekly objectives need to be "outcomes" stated in terms of specific behaviors. The first week's outcomes may serve to illustrate this adaptation.

1. Describe how studying religions differs from the practice of religion
2. Use concepts for the study of religion in chapter 1 in a paragraph you write about your study of religion

3. Distinguish between different approaches to studying religions: theological, historical, sociological, philosophical, psychological and humanistic.
4. Describe and illustrate 6 dimensions as a framework for comparing religions
5. Describe interactions between religion and science, religion and selected social issues.

Following the first week's introduction to course concepts, methods, one another, and the diversity of religions, I chose to do one religion per week, leaving the last week free for projects and a final exam. The compression of subject matter into 8 weeks forced me to omit religions and issues included in the 16 week course. While the organizational format appeared sound and balanced I have continued to revise objectives and assignments with each new term of teaching.

From Objectives to Learning Activities

One of the premises of online instruction is that students don't learn simply by reading or hearing but by "doing" something with what they're learning. What kind of doing is possible while sitting at a computer? In developing assignments and activities a variety of tools are available. The application and combination of tools prescribed by the curriculum design drive the learning process to the desired conclusions.⁹

The objectives provided the platform for the assignments or learning tools. The freedom to devise assignments, exercises and the like to implement the objectives was the fun part of the course design. Some learning activities could be moved directly from the classroom to the online format. One of these was the Socratic seminar as taught by Dennis Gray of San Diego, Ca. Socratic seminars are open-ended dialogues using a common text. They encourage critical reading and thinking skills, social discourse and team-building guided by a facilitator. Rather than conveying information, dialogues are an effective way to accomplish a number of skill objectives as well as in-depth examination of issues and concepts through a text.¹⁰ Some modification was made in the presentation of the dialogue process for online students. Instead of beginning with student questions, I supplied 3-4 initial questions to begin the dialogue. Because of the asynchronous format, I limited dialogues to a 24-hour period. Students submitted responses to the initial questions to the discussion forum created for the dialogue. Earlier submissions usually generated more student interchange than later ones. After the initial postings it was the responsibility of students to question and comment on one another's work to generate dialogue. The role of facilitator is especially important at this juncture to probe responses for clarification, assumptions and further questions and to steer the direction of dialogue to a few focus areas. Early dialogues are often very diffused, with topics veering off in many directions often unrelated to the shared text. For this reason it is necessary for the instructor to log-onto the learning platform frequently to track and guide the exchange. Socratic seminars always focus in the direction of the text rather than away from it.

Last summer I experimented with moving the dialogue to a synchronous chat room format during an agreed-upon hour when many students would be online.¹¹ After two attempts, I eliminated this format since so much of the time was simply taken up

in greeting one another, saying goodbye and in opinion-focused rather than text-specific discussion. In short, the discussion was rather superficial.

New Assignments developed for the online format

Three assignments which were innovations of the online formatting of the course involved different skills. One of these was an analysis of the Hopi Emergence Myth to develop student reading ability in connotative meanings as well as to introduce the importance of cosmogonic myths in developing worldviews. Questions were posed after a reading of the myth that probed religious issues implicit in cosmogonic myths: What is the nature of sacred powers? — of humans? What is the relationship established between humans and sacred powers? Are there intermediaries? If so, what are they like? How are good and evil understood? What are human relationships with other creatures and groups? Are there unique features of tribal identity implied?

This assignment proved to be important for developing reading skills as well as the ability to define and support issues adequately with reference to the text of the reading. Several students had difficulty with the assignment which allowed me to assist them individually through responses to their work. I then repeated a similar assignment using Hindu myths of creation and asked for a comparison of the two myths in terms of the basic questions posed. This exercise established continuity in course format, and the continuing development of skills and concepts addressed in religious studies.

A second new assignment focused on the student's ability to connect learning about religions with their own experiences and personality. I developed these for the unit on Hinduism since it is often the most difficult religion for students to grasp. Students were to choose one of the following.

Assignment 1: Compare three of the various yogas as means to *moksha*. Find features for comparison. Which would you choose and why?

Assignment 2: Compare worship practices of Hinduism with those of another faith (your choice). What impact does worship of the Great Goddess have in Hinduism? Briefly explain two of her forms and attributes. Does she have a parallel in the worship practices of the contrast faith you have chosen?

Both assignments were responded to in discussion forums for the entire class.

A third new assignment for the online course required students to use their imaginative faculties, and served to vary the kinds of assignments students were completing. I developed these for the Judaism unit, and later translated a similar assignment into the unit on Islam. After reading a lecture on the mitzvot, students were asked to:

1. Create a Jewish character (male, female, Orthodox, Conservative or Reform) in the contemporary world or choose one from film (several films were suggested). Describe daily events in the life of this character that would be influenced by the mitzvot. End with the celebration of Sabbath: describe preparation for, experiences of and meaningfulness for Jews.
2. OR Create your character and follow

this character through the stages of life rituals: bris, bar/bat mitzvah, marriage, funeral and shiva.

Formatting Course Delivery for Consistency and Continuity

Based upon what we had learned in the training course, students need a detailed overview of each unit or week outlining the following: See Appendix B for a sample unit.

1. Week's objectives, including key vocabulary terms
2. Reading assignments
3. Written assignments: when due and in what forum, preparation needed, approximate time needed for completion, and points offered
4. Tests or quizzes

The sample unit should illustrate how objective #3 is accomplished through assignment #2. To regulate the quantity of dialogue in the virtual classroom, some assignments are sent to my personal mailbox for grading, especially if they involve a high level of skill development (the Hopi myth assignment). Most finished assignments are posted to the discussion forums for all to read and respond to (Chief Seattle's speech dialogue). This feature creates an open classroom where students learn from each other. It is a major asset of the practice in active learning offered by the online classroom.

Lectures

Online learning does not emphasize the lecture as an important part of the process of student learning. As White notes in his review of key learning principles,¹² "People learn by doing... Even if the lectures are inspiring, inspiring words alone will not help learners to internalize knowledge and skills. Learners need to be actively engaged." Nevertheless, my course incorporated two lectures each week in addition to the textbook and supplementary readings. I reasoned, since this was to be students' first exposure to the concepts and methods of Comparative Religion, lectures provided focus and application of concepts stated in the week's objectives. Lectures also served to synthesize, integrate, and apply key vocabulary terms. The first lecture each week was devoted to major beliefs, figures and worldview of each religion, while the second focused on practice or application of basic beliefs and concepts. The lecture-writing process draws on one of the major skills of community college teachers — the ability to synthesize and condense material so as to be accessible to students with little or no background in the subject area and, often, poor learning skills. Given the online emphasis on doing, not merely reading, two lectures per week seemed optimum.

Small Group Projects

One tool for regulating the quantity of dialogue in the virtual classroom is the creation of small groups focused on specific projects or topics. They divert dialogue from the main forums of the classroom to individual forums created for the group members. I have used the small group format in two ways. Within the weekly religion units, small focus groups were used to respond to a variety of questions on Christianity (one could use any faith group). Each group focused on a specific

arena of questions/issues: scriptures, history, biography, theology, groups and denominations, etc. I created small groups to manage the quantity of information/issues incorporated into the unit in both text and lectures. The Blackboard platform has made the creation of small groups much easier as it establishes several forms of communication among participants: small group forum, email and chat room.

Each group of 3-4 persons is named to correspond to one of the centers of early Christianity: Rome, Antioch, Constantinople, etc. Each group is responsible for answering about 10-12 questions during the first part of the week. Then, in a forum for the entire class I submit a quiz, focusing on select questions per group to which the groups post their answers through a group facilitator. The small group assignment helps prepare the entire class for the test that follows the week. It also generates a good deal of dialogue on the unit concepts and objectives.

The second small group assignment involves a course project. Each student has the choice of an individual project on a religious issue or theme of their choice (several are suggested) or a group "ritual project." Students make their selection of projects the 2nd week of class. The ritual pilgrimage project is included in Appendix C.

Completed projects are posted in the discussion forum the last week of class and offer all students access to either the pilgrimages of the various groups or the topic research of those choosing the individual project. This feature of course development has proved very effective for broadening the scope of religions and issues studied and for increasing the synergy of classroom dialogue.

Testing

The kinds of tests, where administered and how, the value given to them in the final grade, and whether to use them at all are issues which the online teacher addresses in course design. To maintain consonance with my on ground classes, I decided to administer tests and to do so online. To keep my grading and feedback of test results at a manageable level, I decided to test every two weeks. Each test incorporates objectives from two religions: the first would include the introductory week and the Native Americans; then Hinduism and Buddhism; Judaism and Christianity; and, finally, a test on Islam alone at the end of week 7. The format of each test involves more written work in description and application of key terms and concepts than those for on ground students. I acknowledged that students would have access to written materials of the class for their tests, but the tests were geared to the integration and understanding of unit concepts more than simple recall of information. Students were allowed 24 hours to read and respond to the tests and send them to my personal mailbox.¹³ During the 24 hours of testing, I offered my home phone number to students for any questions they may have during a designated two hours the evening the test was due. After two weeks or more reading individual responses to the assignments, I already had a good knowledge of each student's abilities, mastery of material, writing style and learning difficulties. I was not overly concerned about the authenticity of test responses submitted.

The unit tests were followed by a final exam the last week in which I assigned each student 3 of the 12 final exam questions. The exam questions were similar to those of the on ground finals-- essay questions involving the comparison of religions. For

example: "Compare the five pillars of faith in Islam to the Mitzvot of Judaism;" "Most religions we study have these common elements. Describe 5 with examples from 5 different faiths;" "Name and explain one symbol each of four different faiths."

Assessment

The balance of assessment components shifted the emphases from the on ground to the online class. Normally, my student's final grade reflects 60% tests, 15% class discussion, 15% final project and 10% field trips. In the online class, assignments and dialogue in the discussion forums were the bulk of evaluative material. More weight was therefore given to assignments (35%) and less to tests (50%) with the remainder for final projects (15%).

My first two online classes used both a qualitative and quantitative numerical grade for each week's general discussion — responses/questions to others' work or clarifications and additions to one's own. Assigning point values to discussion reinforced the course "attendance" requirement of being online 5 out of 7 days per week. This standard was suggested for all of Macomb's online classes to encourage student responsibility. However, it encouraged a lot of innocuous chat simply to hike up one's grade. It also made extraordinary demands on the teacher to monitor the qualitative and quantitative contributions of each student in addition to grading 3 assignments per student each week. I dropped the separate assessment in favor of a single 5 points per week for discussion. The present weighting of assessment components has worked well.

At the close of the design phase, the teacher should have on disk all the above course components "ready to roll." It is not feasible to reconstruct objectives, assignments, supplementary readings, tests, lectures and projects once a course has started. The pace is too fast, the demands of students too pressing, and the grading too time consuming to seriously devote any time to the curriculum itself once the course has begun. Modifications must be made following the course before its next offering.

Implementation

Developing synergy in the 1st week

The amount of dialogue generated in the public forum of the class determines synergy. High synergy formats lean towards the socratic end of learning models while lower synergy exists with more independent study. "Higher levels of dialogue are associated with individual discussion questions and open discussion assignments. Lower dialogue levels result from assignments that focus on individual efforts such as reading and submitting papers."¹⁴ Since the Comparative Religion course was most likely students' first exposure to the content of the discipline, I chose to encourage a high level of dialogue to increase synergy. The outcomes of such dialogue benefit all as a community of learners, but are especially important in exposing the less able or less experienced students to the thoughts and responses of others. To this end, a lively interchange the first week is begun by having each student submit a spiritual or religious autobiography as a means to introduce one another within the content concerns of comparative religions. The autobiographies help establish a community of learning by identifying individual experiences. Instructor interaction is not high at this point. Remaining assignments maintain the dialogue with one another generated in assignment 1 (see Appendix D). While dialogue is a major source of

learning in a virtual classroom, course design must consider realistically the ability of students and instructor to maintain the expected level of activity.

Managing the course

Both new and experienced online students will have many questions about assignments, grades, technical difficulties and the like. The Blackboard platform has allowed the creation of a forum specifically to handle **course-related questions**. This forum is used for clarifications about assignments and other issues needing an immediate response. Once I was two hours late posting a test. By the time I got online to do so, there were twelve messages asking where the test was. So this forum is also a place for blowing off some steam which is a good outlet for student frustrations. Better they should be public and addressed than hidden and perhaps ignored. The course related forum keeps an instructor constantly in touch with students, and there are always some who require more attention than others. I am regularly reminded that community college teaching is a "service oriented" profession, and that characterization is magnified in an online class.

Regulating the quality and quantity of dialogue

As with any on ground class, some students will participate often in the virtual classroom forums and others will submit only their assignments with the odd comment here and there. It is the instructor's task to try to balance the dialogue so that diverse points of view are shared and responded to. Frequent logging into the course platform (usually daily) is necessary to do this. It involves probing and directing the dialogue through questions, encouraging responses or corrections. Often the instructor's experience of religions is appropriate to give a context to the issues under discussion and send the dialogue to a more realistic level. When a student has been "absent" for several days it is necessary to personally e-mail the student to find out what is going on.

Another challenge to the instructor is noted by Jon Spayde in his article "College at Home" — the "spirit of chat." This disease refers to a level of dialogue which does not move beyond the surface of issues, opinions and feelings. It is deadly to the synergy of online learning because it skirts the course objectives and attendant processes of critical thinking in favor of "feel good" responses. It can also bore students who have a genuine interest in course content.¹⁵ Every online class I have taught has had students predisposed to the "spirit of chat." It is the instructor's responsibility to guide the level of dialogue by personally contacting students about the quality of their work with specific suggestions to improve. It has been my experience in online instruction that students really desire to do well. They usually just need enough guidance to point out how.

Evaluation

Since evaluation is necessary to determine whether the course is meeting student and instructor expectations, I offer two forms of evaluation here: student evaluation and teacher evaluation. The form I developed for student evaluation was simple and short, using a 4-point scale (4 being high) to rate all aspects of the course: syllabus, assignments, readings/seminars, tests, text, lectures, administration, projects, student and instructor interaction and most and least favorite aspects of the course. Here are some things I learned in each of two classes.

DREWEK, from p.ix

Group 1

- Strong points (3.5 and higher) were assignments, readings/seminars, lectures;
- Close seconds were syllabus and projects
- Weakest area was course administration (grading, forums, amount of material covered in assignments), 2.8

Several students faulted me for not clarifying expectations of participation in the VC and optional assignments. This was soon remedied in group 2.

- Favorite aspects: all; interaction with students; Islam; religious dimensions; Buddhism; Projects; Judaism; Christianity
- Least favorites: too much material; team project; fewer test questions; website; need test each week.

Group 2 Higher overall evaluations with the following highlights

- Strong points (3.5 and higher) were syllabus, readings/seminars, textbook, lectures, projects, student interaction
- Close seconds were assignments
- Tests, administration and instructor interaction were all 3.2
- Favorite aspects: Islam, Judaism, Native American, projects, Christianity, Buddhism
- Least favorite: Hindu; assignments; Judaism, Islam; too many assignments

The second group had no ratings below 3.0 (good) but both classes felt the amount of material covered was too much. Students found the 3 rather challenging assignments per week to be too time-consuming and difficult. Some students indicated they would like verbal feedback on each of their assignments.

Instructor evaluation

- **Assignments:** The demand of grading 60+ assignments per week is excessive. In future, I would change this to 2 graded assignments with other topics posted for general discussion.

Other learning tools such as pairs sharing or small groups would simplify the required work but not sacrifice learning objectives.

Another tool to simplify the grading of assignments would be a list of frequent weaknesses or comments (similar to banks of FAQ) which could be cut, pasted and mailed in response to each student's weekly work.

A third tool already used was the ability to grade student work from the computer screen instead of printing it first. In earlier classes, I felt uncomfortable grading work on screen since I was accustomed to comment on portions of the assignment as I reviewed it.

- **Classroom dialogue:** The 3-4 forums each week have encouraged very high levels of dialogue and good synergy, resulting in an exciting class according to many of the respondents as well as instructor. The insight gained is invaluable to my clearer understanding of the processes of student learning. Additionally, the joys and progress of student learning also become more visible, thus encouraging to both students and teacher.

- **Insight into the learning process:** Much of what remains hidden in a classroom of 35 students becomes exposed in the virtual classroom. The initial world views of students, how they process and assimilate new ideas, their ability to relate those to the experiences of their daily life are a few of the areas exposed in an online class. I am convinced that it keeps me in touch with the learning processes of my students, enabling me to be a more effective teacher.

- **Course administration (management):** This feature continues to be the most challenging aspect of online teaching for this instructor. It requires frequent logging into the course platform, clear and helpful feedback to students and steering the dialogue in the direction of course objectives while meeting individual student needs and concerns. All of this must be accomplished in a timely manner which places many demands on the instructor. For this reason, I have chosen not to offer the online course each semester even though demand has been high. Course registration usually closes after 2 or 3 days of offering the class.

- **Carry over:** Developing and teaching the online class has transformed the way I teach in my traditional classroom in many ways. Adapting course objectives to weekly outcomes has helped make my expectations of students expressed in the objectives much clearer. Online teaching has also provided the incremental steps necessary to achieve course objectives through learning exercises and activities which engage students in the process of their own learning. With time and use the instructor is able to gauge which assignments are accomplishing their desired purpose and which are not. It has made the class fun — both for me and the students — due to the activity-based assignments.

Gateway and Retention

Retention policies and practices are a major focus of community colleges today. The "revolving door" of 10-20 years ago is no longer acceptable in the face of increased competition for students from many post-secondary institutions. Retention is closely connected to student preparation for the course, and the requirements for entry are established by institutional policies. Those requirements at Macomb include a self-test of attributes needed for online student success before student enrollment. If the student deems him/herself qualified, they are allowed to enroll. Prior to the start of classes new students are given Blackboard entry and password and complete an orientation in the use the platform technology. The orientation is mandatory and comple-

tion or testing out with at least 80% is necessary to be added to the course roster.

Most students who complete the first 2 weeks of a course will finish successfully with a "C" or better. Students who fall behind and cannot manage the course requirements for this initial period will usually drop or disappear. Retention rates have been higher in my online courses than in on ground courses with higher grades. Of 22 enrolled students in last Fall's class, there were 2 withdrawals after week 2 and 2 who disappeared before week 4. Of the remaining students, there were 6 A's, 11 B's and 1 C. The engaged learning environment, the fast pace of the units, and shorter time span of the course leave little room for drifting away or inattention more common in the traditional classroom. The higher retention and grades may be due to the more mature, self-motivating student enrollment in online classes.

Future directions

Since this paper has described the specific processes and decisions of refitting an existing Comparative Religion class to an online environment, I have not focused on the theoretical learning principles and their incorporation. I would like to include these as checkpoints for those who may wish to enter the online teaching arena and as guides to my further revisions and goals and those of my readers.

The learning environment is:

- fun,
- engaging
- experiential
- interactive
- set in a meaningful context
- activity-based.¹⁶

Arenas targeted for future implementation are the incorporation of quick time movies, pictures and audio recordings to the online class. In particular, the Detroit area Harvard Pluralism Project with which I am associated has developed a photo exhibit of area religious communities and is in the process of recording audio portraits of communities in action. I would like to make these materials available to online students as well to supplement their experience in the religious communities in our Metro Detroit area. ☛

¹ Bedore, Drs. Gerry and Marlene, with Gerry Jr. *Online Education: The Future is Now*. The Socrates Distance Learning Technologies Group: Phoenix, AZ, 1998.

² The 5 models offered by the Bedores are relative to levels of interactivity in the online classroom. The interactive model is designed for fewer students, while the less interactive for up to 60 students.

³ Macomb Community College currently has online registration, an articulation arrangement for course transfer with the Michigan Virtual Learning Collaborative, Franklin University, Walsh College and U. of Michigan, Dearborn to absorb all student online credits into their baccalaureate programs. The online student body has grown from 80 to 1600 in the two years from 1998 to Fall, 2001 in 81 sections.

⁴ Bedore, 51.

⁵ Frank White. "A Review of the Learning Principles that Underlie Virtual Learning Environments." October, 1999. Unpublished manuscript.

⁶ Macomb switched its learning platform from Convene to Blackboard beginning in 2000, as did the Michigan Virtual Learning Cooperative. This move to a web-based platform required only a brief introductory orientation for both students and faculty to become proficient in its use. The Blackboard program has avoided many of the server problems we faced with Convene.

⁷ To add audio and visual enrichment to my Comparative Religion classes, I had purchased several copies of Diana Eck's *On Common Ground* CD Rom as a library resource. However, online students prefer accessing library materials from their computers.

^{7a} The models, noted briefly in footnote 2 are: Interactive, bounded interactive, consultative/interactive, independent/consultative, special configuration. These progress from highly interactive to low interactivity consonant with number of students per class and design dialogue levels per student.

⁸ Bedore, 100.

⁹ Bedore, 109-110. He then offers over 40 such tools.

¹⁰ Dialogue texts chosen for the online students change periodically, but this year have included: Chief Seattle's Speech to Governor Stevens in 1854; a Zen story; two newspaper articles on Judaism in contemporary life; an excerpt from Anne Tyler's *Saint Maybe* on atonement for the Christianity unit; and a newspaper article on Islam entitled "Muslims Try to Correct Wrong Beliefs about Islam."

¹¹ Synchronous forums must be timed so that students are "present" during agreed-upon hours. Asynchronous forums are available whenever individuals choose to access them. The Blackboard platform adopted in 2000 allows both.

¹² *Ibid*, 5.

¹³ The Blackboard platform has a Digital Drop Box for student work which can be accessed only by the instructor but which permits comments on the material submitted.

¹⁴ Bedore, 115.

¹⁵ Frank White reflects on this and other issues which disillusion an interested student in his unpublished paper, "Computer-Mediated Distance Learning: Critical Reflections on a Personal Experience." December, 1999.

¹⁶ White, "A Review of the Learning Principles that Underlie Virtual Learning Environments.", 7.

SOLOMON, from p.vi

retells, about how a buffalo herd covenants with the Blackfoot tribe to allow themselves to be hunted and eaten, as long as they are hunted in the right spirit, with reverence, without waste, and with the proper attention to the dancing and rituals that will allow the herd to be constantly renewed. We contrast the "I-Thou" attitude of the Native American towards the buffalo with the colonial white "I-It" attitude, hunting the buffalo to extinction for trophies and robes, without needing or valuing the meat.

Because Craig is provincial and isolated, there are no temples, synagogues or mosques to visit. As we continue to study the world religions, we must create our own introductory experiences. Studying Buddhism, when covering Diamond-Way Buddhism in Tibet, we discuss the Dalai Lama's story as well as the religious differences. We watch *Kundun*, and research the sufferings of Tibet; I offer the option of sending letters of support and/or money to the Help Tibet Campaign, and most participate. When we study Daoism, I have homegrown yarrow sticks from my father's orchard (lots of good *chi* there) that we use to do an I-ching reading in class. We also burn incense and pass around hell-notes, discussing their function. When discussing Islam, I bring my Iranian chador and let the students alternate wearing it; carrying things, passing out papers, moving books across the class all become a new challenge that gives them insight into the restrictions on women.

If I could have my way with the state system, I would blend Phi 115, *Comparative Religions*, with Lit 201, *Masterpieces of World*

Literature I, for one 4-credit combined course: *World Religion and Literature*. In Lit 201, we read *Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun*, large portions of Genesis and the stories of Joseph and his brothers, Jonah, Cain and Abel, and Noah and the Ark from the old Testament. We also read *Gilgamesh*, which makes a fascinating comparison with the Noah stories. There are selections from those most exciting Hindu scriptural stories, the Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita, and Mahabharata. We read selections from the Chinese Book of Songs and Confucius's *Analects*. Then we read Socrates *Apology* and *Phaedo* by Plato; we read Luke's birth story of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount and Matthew's Passion of Jesus, followed by the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. We then turn to Islam, and read suras from the *Qur'an*, selections from *The Biography of the Prophet* by Ibn Ishaq, two stories from *The Conference of Birds*, by Farid al-din Attar, the mystic and sufi, followed by the ecstatic sufi poetry of Rumi and Sa'di. And for a chaser, there are the delightful satires of religious figures in *The Canterbury Tales* and a final accounting of sin and virtue, Dante's *Inferno* with selections from *Purgatorio and Paradiso*, by Dante. We even have a highly entertaining Buddhist fable, "Monkey" (an abridgement, translated by Arthur Waley, of the four-volume *Journey to the West*, a fantastic account of the historical journey of a 9th century monk to bring the Mahayana Buddhist scriptures to China). As a course in primary texts of world religions, it would be outstanding.

At the close of the section on Islam, (at least, those times when we have been disciplined and stuck closely enough to our syllabus that enough time remains) we close with a unit on mystical thought in Islam. I point out the similarities between the experience

of Christian mystics such as St. Teresa of Avila, or St. John of the Cross, with the Hindu mystic experience, and the Islamic Sufi experience. It is amazing that such diverse traditions come together so similarly, almost as though the weather below may be varied and cloudy in religious experience, but when one transcends these differences, the mystical light above is concentrated, clear and unified.

One of the best definitions of the stages of the mystic experience, common both to the experience of St. John of the Cross and to the path of Raja Yoga in Hinduism, is given by Farid al-din Attar in "*Conference of the Birds*."

1. *Talab*: yearning for union with God. Renunciation of worldly things.
2. *Ishq*: an overwhelming love for the goal.
3. *Marfat*: enlightenment, seeing God in every particle of creation.
4. *Istraghrak or fana*: Absorption into the beloved, involving the annihilation of the ego; dark night of the soul.
5. *Tawhid*: Unity consciousness. God is experienced as timeless, and as a permeating unity amid worldly multiplicity. "Till duality and consciousness of the world is lost, this stage is not reached, and when it is reached, He alone is left. I am obliterated." Attar.
6. *Hairat*: amazement. The seeker is struck dumb by the glorious perception of the divine.
7. *Fuqr Wa Fana*: Annihilation: a raptur-

ous, ecstatic state; a permanent absorption into the divine, a rebirth.

The sufis themselves describe a twofold approach to God. Hujwiri (d. ca. 1071) claims, "There is a difference between one who is burned by His Majesty in the fire of love and one who is illuminated by His Beauty in the light of contemplation."

Jami distinguishes between two types of advanced Sufis, one type "to whom the Primordial Grace and Lovingkindness has granted salvation after their being submerged in complete union and in the wave of *tawhid* (unification)...." The second type "are those who are completely submerged in the ocean of Unity and have been so completely naughted in the belly of the fish "annihilation" that never a news or trace comes to the shore of separation and the direction of subsistence... and the sanctity of perfecting others is not entrusted to them." (Anne-Marie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1975, 7)

I enjoy closing the course by discussing the common characteristics of the mystical experience in these different religions. It is as though we have distilled the essence of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, clarified and purified from the muddy, imperfect, and very human domains of history. It gives me hope that below our layers of cultural accretion, the prejudice, weight of experience, sorrows and injustices of history, we can find a common spirit of love, unity and agreement. And to me that is what religion should be about. ♣

JAUHIAINEN, from p.v

idea that we in the liberal arts, for example, can adequately improve and measure students' skills and learning when we are assigned 150-190 students per semester. The large student volume restricts one's choice of assignments and the amount of constructive feedback one provides on papers and exam essays, and indeed tempts one to resort to much multiple choice testing in order to reduce the time spent grading.

In responding to community needs, community colleges have been concerned to provide quality programs at low cost. One way of reducing costs is not only to have some faculty teach large classes, but to have them teach more classes than they would in a liberal arts college or university setting. At Kirkwood, the standard load is five classes per semester. Needless to say, there is little time for research. At the community college, faculty are primarily teachers. They are not expected to publish. Thus they are relieved of the pressure of having to churn out articles and books in order to receive ongoing employment. Yet this can be frustrating for faculty who would like to make contributions to the larger scholarly community, or who fear intellectual stagnation if time prohibits them from keeping up to date with the latest scholarship in their disciplines.

Another way of keeping costs down is to employ large numbers of part-time, adjunct instructors. Community colleges generally use a higher percentage of adjunct instructors than four-year colleges and universities. This not only keeps tuition costs lower, it

allows them to be more flexible in their programming. Since religious studies is often seen as tangential to other "core" disciplines, courses are frequently taught by professors trained in other areas like philosophy or literature or by members of the clergy.

This presents two obvious concerns. One, there are a lot of instructors teaching religion at community colleges who are not adequately trained in the academic study of religion, let alone the particular subject being taught. I don't have any statistics to back this up, but a casual check of community college course catalogs or web pages bears this out. This perhaps promotes the perception that religion is not a rigorous academic discipline in its own right that deserves to be placed alongside history, philosophy, literature, and so on.

Second, I suspect that some ministers who serve as adjunct instructors are tempted to use the classroom as a pulpit for promoting their own religious faith. This raises serious church/state issues that might further confirm the reluctance of some community colleges to offer religion courses. Not only do state supported, secular institutions need to be convinced of the importance of religious studies, but they must be convinced of the importance of hiring qualified religious academicians to teach the subjects in this area.

A final issue relates to the pragmatic dimension in a different way. The community college is characterized by a "consumer approach" to education where the overriding concern is the economic and social util-

ity of its courses. Its primary concern is to prepare students for jobs — to connect newly acquired skills to the job market, thereby promoting students' economic and social progress. This emphasis on practical usefulness represents a somewhat different ideal than the traditional college or university, where a strong commitment to the liberal arts reveals an underlying concern to develop well-rounded, educated persons who are prepared to encounter life in all its variety.

What kinds of implications does this "consumerist culture" have for religious studies, or more specifically, for the promotion of religious studies at community colleges? I still think there is a place to argue for the validity of religious studies by appealing to the value of developing full human beings who might be intellectually, morally, and spiritually enriched or challenged by studying the religious dimensions of different cultures. Yet in a context where vast numbers of students never go beyond one or two years of course work, but instead are concerned to get just enough education to improve their job prospects, we need to articulate how the study of religion is applicable to the work place. I would like to suggest a couple of ways how this can be done.

One thing we hear increasingly from employers is the desire for prospective job seekers to be not only technically proficient but to be thoroughly trained in the so-called "soft skills." These include critical or logical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, and the ability to work in small groups. We should stress

how the study of religion can promote some of these skills, through the interpretation of texts, the writing of papers, and the critical analysis of ideas, practices and institutions of human cultures. Community college administrators need to be shown how religious studies give students important analytical tools that will serve them well in the work place and other facets of life.

Another way is to stress the importance of preparing students for constructive engagement in a multicultural workplace and society, and for understanding the complex reactions of world communities to the ubiquitous forces of globalization. They will be working with and living among people of diverse religious beliefs, values, and practices. The academic study of religion can promote a healthy understanding of and appreciation for diversity, thereby encouraging cooperation and mutual respect among workers or citizens. It can also encourage a more nuanced awareness of the divergent expressions of religious conviction within each of the world's religions, thereby preventing rash and indiscriminate judgments that perpetuate cycles of prejudicial thoughts and actions toward the individual members of different religious communities. This goal has perhaps been never more urgent than in the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, as Americans of all faiths work to understand each other better and assess the social, political, and religious factors that breed hatred and violence, both within our country and the world at large. ♣

NELSON, from p.iv

Religious Studies Specialization

A Religious Studies Specialization was approved in the spring of 2001 by the Northwest College Curriculum Committee and entered the class schedule in the fall of 2001. No new courses have been introduced since the college is not in an expansionist mode just now, but hopefully some expansion of the curriculum will take place in time. Below is the description of the Religious Studies Specialization ("Specialization" is our word for "major"). I welcome any comments or suggestions from readers.

Associate of Arts with specialization in Religious Studies

Religious Studies is the interdisciplinary study of the subject of religion. Courses are available from Anthropology, English, Philosophy, Humanities, Ancient Languages, and History. The purpose of religious studies is intellectual and is not intended to teach any particular religious faith. It is the study of religion from comparative, cultural, and historical perspectives.

Religious Studies includes three tracks. Students may choose to focus on Anthropological and Linguistic studies, or Humanities and Philosophical studies, or Historical approaches.

General Education Requirements

Students should refer to the Graduation Requirements regarding general education requirements. Your advisor may have suggestions about courses that would be particularly useful for you.

For the 2001-2002 catalog these total 36 - 39 credits

Required Core Courses

Three courses (9 credits)

Number and Title	Credits
ANTH 2350, Biblical Archaeology	3
or	
ENGL 2170, Bible as Literature	3
PHIL 2311, Philosophy of Religion	3
or	
Engl 2280, Introduction to Mythology	3

(courses not chosen above may be used as electives below)

BRIEL, from p.vii

half of the people in the room. Many good students have to talk about material to fully understand it, others have a need to experience, or interact, with the material to appreciate it.

Conclusion

Teaching is a craft. Once the basics of the craft are mastered, usually through years of practice, matching the subject matter and teaching approach to the maturity level of the students is the only variable. I've had the great good fortune to teach the subject of Religion across a wide age span — from 6th-graders to junior college students — and in a variety of parochial and non-denominational settings.

The student must complete a capstone experience of 1-3 credits. We recommend Social Sciences (SOSC 2395) or Humanities (HUMN 2440)1-3

Core Electives Required for the Specialization

Students must complete four courses (12-16 credits) from the following list of approved of approved courses, at least one from each track.

Track I – Anthropological and Linguistic Number and Title Credits

Anth 2200 – World Ethnography: Topics vary by semester	3
Anth 2310 – Archaeological Field Methods: Israel	1-6
Anth 2350 – Biblical Archaeology	3
Greek 1015 – Elementary Biblical Greek I	4
Greek 1025 – Elementary Biblical Greek II	4
Greek 2035 – Intermediate Biblical Greek	4
Greek 2150 – Selected Readings in Biblical Greek	1
Hebrew 1010 – First Year Hebrew I	4
Hebrew 1020 – First Year Hebrew II	4
Hebrew 2030 – Second Year Hebrew	4
Hebrew 2150 – Selected Readings in Hebrew	1

Track II – Humanities and Philosophical Approaches

Engl 2170 – Bible as Literature	3
Engl 2280 – Intro. to Mythology	3
Engl 2400/HUMN 2030 – Intro. to Folklore	3
Engl 2410 – Literary Genres	3
Humn 2440 – Dialogues in the Humanities	3
Phil 1000 – Introduction to Philosophy	3
Phil 2200 – Social and Political Philosophy	3
Phil 2311 – Philosophy of Religion	3

Track III – Historical Approaches

Hist 1110 – Western Civilization I	3
Hist 1120 – Western Civilization II	3
Hist 2120 – Ancient Greece	3
Hist 2130 – Ancient Rome	3
Hist 2140 – Ancient Near East	3
General Electives	0-9
Minimum credits for the degree	64

By far, the most satisfying classes that I've worked with are the weekend students at the community college. The classes are the perfect combination of subject matter and student maturity. I am privileged to discuss the most challenging and profound ideas with the most open and diverse selection of students possible. Often, they are at a point in life where they are most able to make use of the course content. These people lead me to think in new ways, and to analyze the material more deeply, because that's what they are doing. They have the interest and the courage to look at their own backgrounds, expectations, fears and needs.

As I said, I love my teaching job. ♪

The reasons students are enrolled in Biblical Languages and Biblical Archaeology

1. Students completing language requirements for the University of Wyoming or other BA and BS transfer programs. Students must complete twelve credits in one language for the BA or eight credits in one language for the BS.
2. Students taking language courses to meet humanities and/or multicultural general education requirements.
3. Students taking language courses in Track I of the Religious Studies Specialization.
4. Non-traditional students taking languages for personal reasons apart from degree seeking. These students have been the largest and most stable component in enrollments.
5. Students planning to attend seminary or transfer to a Bible-related college.

Types of students enrolled in Biblical Languages and Biblical Archaeology

We have had a range of students take Greek and/or Hebrew over the years, including, welders, ministers, ranchers (cattle and sheep), outfitters (hunting and fishing guides), military personnel, senior citizens and retirees, business people, housewives and mothers, engineers, geologists, a few high school students, artists, and traditional degree-seeking students.

A personal and illustrative story

Some years ago I was often seen in a classroom with one student. Little did I know this was stirring up some controversy in another department over the Dean of Instruction, a humanities-oriented scholar, approving an exotic course, Biblical Greek, with only one student in it. That particular semester I was teaching five classes which is our usual load and had 154 students. Clearly I was doing my duty for the college. That semester one of my courses was

Biblical Greek with an enrollment of sixteen. Who, then, was that one student seen on a daily basis with me in a classroom? He was an older retired man crippled with arthritis and able to see the Greek text only while holding a large lens. He was not able to attend the Greek course under normal arrangements so I repeated the course one-on-one for him. It was a blessing for both of us. He was a wonderful person with a sharp mind and great passion for learning Greek. We had a great semester.

I suppose there will always be some criticism in the community college of the so-called "exotic humanities curriculum," but the answer, of course, lies in the enrollments. So far, in the sixteen years we have had Greek and Hebrew in the curriculum, the courses have never failed to fill. As I said earlier, I am working in an area of this country where there is a great desire for this kind of learning and hopefully the enrollments in Biblical languages and Biblical archaeology, will continue to be strong.

A Student Testimonial

"What's a forty-six-year-old homemaker, mother of seven children, resident of rural Wyoming, doing in Hebrew and Greek classes? Having the time of her life! I have waited many years for my children to be old enough to enable me to take these classes. My friends gasp when they hear of it and ask why on earth I would want to do such a thing. I just know that it has been a burning desire for as long as I can remember. I love the Scriptures and have always wanted to be able to read them in the original languages. I find there are many benefits to taking these classes. I believe my overall memory has improved in every way. I have taught religion classes in my church for twenty years and know that others will also be able to benefit in a small second-hand way from my new-found knowledge. Excitement over learning is contagious, and my children are showing a lot of interest in learning another language. We have a lot of fun sharing the little we know with each other. But, most of all, the best reason of all, is that it tastes so delicious to me! I love learning it and I will go to my grave thankful that it was taught, of all places, in a small community college in Wyoming." ♪

LAPP, from p.ii

Forrest Gump, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *The Shawsbenk Redemption*, or another of the ten films Jewett discusses. They study the Pauline text which Jewett identifies and read his discussion about the "interpretive arch" between Paul and the movie. Then they watch the movie and prepare a classroom presentation in which they show a clip of the film and analyze Jewett's "dialogue" between the ancient and modern texts. Students have generally found the activity interesting, and the presentations have at times generated heated debate. I always deliberate about the value of watching films rather than using the time to focus on the ancient text, but I continue to use the activity specifically because of the weekend format. Energies are flagging by this point in the weekend, and the films provide a needed change of pace.

Considering energy and attention-spans raises a final issue regarding the weekend-intensive format. Because of the compact nature of the course, students simply do not have as much time between classes to read and reflect as would be possible in a regular semester class. One cannot do in an eight-hour stretch what is possible in eight class periods spread over three weeks. I have to curtail reading assignments.

Although we have forty hours of class time, we simply cannot deal with as much material as in a full semester. That's the reality. However, that said, students often express amazement at the end of the course about how much they learned in such a short time.

One of the films we sometimes watch is *Babette's Feast*. In the film, a pietistic and ascetic Danish congregation is transformed when a French cook, Babette, offers to prepare a banquet to honor the group's founder. Having renounced all pleasures of the flesh, the congregants watch in horror as Babette prepares a sumptuous spread of truffles, caviar, quail, sea turtles, wine and other dangerous pleasures. They are determined not to enjoy the feast, but the delicious foods and wine work to soften their hearts and heal unspoken quarrels which have divided people for decades. Jewett places the film in conversation with Paul's letter to the Corinthians in which the apostle urges the Christians of Corinth to allow the sharing of the love feast to build community rather than create dissension. In honor of Babette and the Corinthians, we end the class with a potluck brunch on the final Sunday morning, a celebration of the academic community we have created during the three weekends of class. ♪