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, 73% 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...
Teaching Weekend Religion Classes Part-time at Red Rocks Community College

Joy Lapp
Red Rocks Community College

My experience at a community college has been as a part-time faculty member, teaching weekend-intensive classes. 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” 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 and alertness that many students don’t seem 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. I meet eight hours on Saturday, and eight hours on Sunday. 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 four hours on Sunday morning. Spending forty hours together on three successive weekend evenings helps to create a community and camaraderie among the students who engender active participation and enthusiastic 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.

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 weekend evenings helps to create a community and camaraderie among the students who engender active participation and enthusiastic 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.

They are willing to try just about every-thing. Paula Drewsk provides an interest- ing example of this. Community colleges were some of the first schools to experi- ment in online education. In fact, Colorado, has a completely online community college. Paula provides a detailed account of how this attitude of experi- mentation in online education. In fact, Colorado, has a completely online community college. Paula provides a detailed account of how this attitude of experiment in online education.
Dev e lop ing the Religious Studies Program at Tulsa Community College

Cherie Hughes
Tulsa Community College

I n 1990-91, the college developed a pattern of courses for students who wished to major in Religious Studies and print- ed 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 Intro to Religious Studies course “to make.” Introduction to Religious Studies finally made with four students. I called them “The Fab Four.” Because the course was designed to be experiential and discussion based, we suffered might- ily 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 market- ing campaign. It sent letters to all stu- dents 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 my 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 dis- cuss 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, lutes students with cook- ies 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 or courses. The 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 teach 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 fall in the day and during the night in the spring semester.

After several semesters of low enroll- ments in the scripture classes, we discov- ered that many students did not know to what the titles referred. Many expected that Hebrew Scriptures would be taught in Hebrew, not in English. They didn’t realize 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 rec- ognize Christian Scriptures as referring to the New Testament. Obviously the nomenclature, though academically cor- rect, was getting in the way of student understanding.

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 bene- fited. The faculty has two new courses to teach regularly and students are com- fortable signing up for courses where the title describes to them at least the major- ity 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. Because 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 regu- larly send notification of course offerings to the Christian and Jewish congrega- tions that are proximate to our downtown Tulsa location. A few pastors have asked Tulsa Community College to pro- vide courses inoffices at their churches. Their requests have been accommodated every time. The chair- man of the Liberal Arts division and I take part in numerous local ecumenical and inter-collegiate scholarly groups.

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 to attract students. Tulsa Community College is the only public institution of higher education in the state of Oklahoma offering Religious Studies degree. There is no public secondary institution to which its majors can trans- fer and continue their Religious Studies interests through to a Bachelor of Arts degree. The state’s major research insti- tutions 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 gradu- ates.

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 coun- selors to our students and students to our 11 courses. 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. The best is yet to be. October 2002 AAR RSV • iii
Teaching Biblical Languages and Biblical Archaeology in the Community College

M. Douglas Nelson  
Northwest College

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, 1 and II (4 credits each)

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


Greek 2035 Intermediate Biblical Greek (4 credits) for those who need four more credits to complete a college language requirement, or Greek 2510 (1 credit) for those who want to keep building reading skills.


Biblical Archaeology 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 that there are related problems as long as there are other available texts for consultation by students, such as C. Leong Soon’s grammar.

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

Hebrew 2030 (4 credits)

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

- 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
- Greenspan, Frederick, An Introduction to Aramaic, Scholars Press, 1999. Occasionally I have the students read Eura or Daniel for experience in both Hebrew and Aramaic.

Biblical Archaeology Enrollments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Class/Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>Classical Greek 9 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>Elementary Biblical Greek 10 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1986</td>
<td>Advanced 5 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1987</td>
<td>Advanced 3 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1991-92</td>
<td>Elementary 6 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1992</td>
<td>Advanced 6 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1994-95</td>
<td>Elementary 16 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 1995</td>
<td>Advanced 1 student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 1998-99</td>
<td>Elementary 12 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1999</td>
<td>Advanced 4 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>Elementary 19 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biblical Archaeology Enrollments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Class/Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 1987</td>
<td>Advanced 7 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1988</td>
<td>Advanced 6 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1989-90</td>
<td>Elementary 13 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1990</td>
<td>Advanced 12 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1992-93</td>
<td>Elementary 13 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1993</td>
<td>Advanced 8 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1994-95</td>
<td>Elementary 27 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1997</td>
<td>Advanced 5 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>Elementary 24 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2001</td>
<td>Advanced 4 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional reading from:

Anthropology 2310, Archaeology Field Methods: Israel


In the summer of 1999, 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 Laramee County Community College in Cheyenne, Wyoming: http://www.bibleinterp.com). At Masada I met Haim GoldTina of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev Desert, and Benny Arubal of the Israel Antiquities Authority. With their help and kindness to my students, we have excavated at Halilata (1997 and 1998) and at Beth She’arim (1999). We are now planning a 2002 field season.

Biblical Archaeology Enrollments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Class/Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1987</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology 33 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1989</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology 26 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1990</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology 25 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1992</td>
<td>Dead Sea Scrolls 14 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1993</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology 21 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1995</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology 24 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1997</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology 20 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1999</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology 27 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2001</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology 15 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 term might 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 Ras’ 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 back-up ing 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.


See NELSON.p.211
Comparative Religion from on Ground to Online: Design to Implementation

Paula A. Drewek
Macomb Community College

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 refining 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 38+ years in the classroom had me begging for new challenges in course delivery. I wanted to tighten 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 that would allow students 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). It called Online Education: The Future is Now. 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. 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 answered 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 my transition by appointing a full-time director of online learning to manage the details of starting and developing new online courses. A total of two additional incentives for more seasoned online teachers was available for whatever needs and questions we had in the initial stages of development or teaching an online. An online “faculty lounge” was in and available to share course 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.

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 ensures 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 continual income student engagement in the learning process so that objectives can be met more effectively. The first challenge relates to personal/professional growth, while the remaining stages are typically no religion majors and professors are fortunate if they have some of the same students each year rather 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 budget, any increase of operating budget due to current state budget constraints 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.

Peter D. Jauhiainen is Assistant Professor of Religion and Humanities at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. His area of specialization 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.
The course covering a religion is in the student, the more important it is that he 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, one should study religion 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 arise from human needs; it attempts to explain religion from within, to clarify for the student the particular wisdom taught by the religion.

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 Religion of the World describes his approach:

The study of the religions of the world is a subject of enormous scope and depth, covered by a large number of books. Beginning from the most mundane aspects of people’s lives to their most sublime thoughts and aspirations, the student will trace the development of a given religion, or a collective set of beliefs, from the religious figures and their influences to the present. It calls the soul to the highest adventure it can undertake, a projected future. It calls the soul to the highest limits of its lonely journey....” (Prologue, The Illustrated World’s Religions, Huston Smith)

I like this understanding of religion as inner truths and cultural accumulations of wisdom, as opposed to institutionalized systems answerable for man’s evil. As Joseph Campbell pointed out in The Power of Myth, paraphrasing Carl Jung, “A great deal of 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, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in that order. I begin the course with a unit on primitive religion, examining characteristics of early religions such as the luminous experience, pray, 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 three major characteristics in native religions in Africa and the Americas. On the second day, after our initial discussion and not 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 animal’s understanding that the animal gives itself to the humans, with the reservation that it be killed and used. Rituals are always responsive to the native American tradition, probably because it is nearer to us and much like the story of the Buffalo Fish, which Campbell

Mary Karen Solomon is Humanities/Social Science Division Chair at Colorado Northwestern Community College in Routt County, teaching humanities, philosophy, literature, and English compositions. Her particular interests include the philosophy and literature of both Russia and China; she is a student of I. M. Prigogine, Safo, Confucianism, and Daoism, and is working on an anthology of essays and poetry concerning religion.

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Weekend Warrior: Adventures in the Teaching Trade

Jan Briel
Red Rocks Community College

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 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 time. If all of the pertinent lectures may be given without corroborating text, why ask them to buy the book? Luckily, Religious Studies is “readily” in the publish-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 not the main resource of 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? What is the real issue to be addressed? 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 reading are few, and thus the expectation that “human beings tend to oversimplify...” 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” (text, 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 week-ends. Giving the students all of the assignments, 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) according to the text. These papers serve 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 of the assignments 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 deflate any good purpose. But don’t pile on the work with some mistakes 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 for a five- or fifteen minutes, don’t expect adults to sit still for eight hours at a time. The occasional al 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 film 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 Hari 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 ReHa 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 religious practices, reacting spontaneously and immediately to an increased understanding of a different perspective.

The second activity that works well is the presentation. It is best to have these assigned to either 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 religious expression, or 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 about the existence of the Book of Genesis to travels 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 evoked from ancient, ritualized, expressions of mythology. The creative genius of the medium and image may reveal the profound, even today.

Students tell me that, without instructor contact, Religion and Philosophy classes are very difficult. Many quit because they haven’t found a background in these studies, and choose not to take the self-paced or online classes specifically in order to someone to explain 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 format of the instruction should attempt to accommodate as many learning styles as possible. To rely exclusively on lecture is to overlook the potential of the students.
second relates to student success. I have found that 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. Students’ experience, according to the instructor and student is more frequent and intensive. The student-centered focus of online instruction enables 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 difficulties 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 involvement of a more personalized “community of learners.” The online environment offers an opportunity for 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, options, personal, which touch upon the assignments and offer suggestions and support to one another. Clearly, the volume of student-student and instructor-student interaction is much greater online. Online assignments present the potential for synergy which plays a vital role in online learning.

Course Design

Pitfalls and possibilities

As White notes, 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 technologies to fit old pedagogical habits, it doesn’t work. Yet, the development of teaching and learning strategy is necessary to refit an existing course into an online format. The instructor naturally shares their experiences, difficulties, solutions, options, personal, which touch upon the assignments and offer suggestions and support to one another.

The instructor manages the dialogue levels of the course assignments and student participation. Some assignments must have a “given” in the instructional model based upon institutional decisions: the length of the course; the credits offered; the learning platform; and what kinds of interactions will be possible with institutional technology requirements; for student participation; and whether the learning platform is synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous or asynchronous learning is at the heart of “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 for the course online were possibly done before, but because of time and place restrictions that would make the required field trips unreasonable and impossible.

Choice of models

Based upon the 5 design models described in Bedore, 7 I chose the “bounded interactive model” to be applied to both class and the length of dialogue and communication. Our online classes were restricted to 20 students initially (recently union contract raised that to 23). The “bounded interactive model” is suggested for 5-25 students per class and is designed to keep the classroom dialogue at a manageable level and 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 workday (weekly), we are reaching the limit at which students and facilitators can be expected to function comfortably.

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1. Create a Jewish character (male, female, Orthodox, Conservative or Reform) in the contemporary world or a historical period and give the character a name. Describe daily events and routines of the character. What are the character’s occupations and interests? What are the character’s ambitions and eventualities? What are the character’s strengths and weaknesses? How did the character develop these traits? What are the character’s relationships with other characters and groups? Are there unique features of the character? What are the character’s relationships with other characters and groups? Are there unique features of the character?

2. Using the online discussions, develop an analysis of the Hopi Emergence Myth to compare the religious systems of the Hopi and Native Americans. How are good and evil understood in these religious systems? How do Hopi religious beliefs compare with other religious beliefs? How are religious beliefs similar or different from other religious beliefs?

3. Use concepts for the study of religion in the contemporary world. Develop a research project using Hindu myths of creation and development of the world. How do Hindu beliefs compare with other religious beliefs? How are Hindu beliefs similar or different from other religious beliefs?
this character through the stages of life: rituals, birth, bat mitzvah, marriage, funeral and shiva.

**Formatting Course delivery for Consistency and Continuity**

Based upon what we had learned in the training course, student needs 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 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 myths assignment). Most final disposed assignments are posted to the discussion forums for all to read and respond to (Chief Searle’s speech dialogues). 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, “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 weekly reading assignments. Religion, lectures provided focus and application of concepts stated in the week’s objectives. Lectures also served to introduce, 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 all students, for any questions they may have during the quantity of information/issues/assignments, etc. I created small groups to manage the creation of small groups more easily 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 approximately to the centers of early Christianity: Rome, Antioch, Constantinople, etc. Each group is responsible for at least one project 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 posts which their answers through a group facilitator. The small edgent that students should have access to 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 involved a course project. Each student has the choice of an individual project on a religious issue or theme of their choice (several issues are suggested with a group “research 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 pilgrimage 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 due and feedback of test results are stated in the week’s objectives. Instructor interaction is not a single 5 points per week for discussion. I try to balance the dialogue so that diverse points of view are shared and responded to. Frequent logging in and participation (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 religion 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 Spodek 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 learning in a virtual classroom. Each religion, course objectives and attendant processes of critical thinking in favor of “feel good” responses. It cannot only have a negative impact in course content. 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.

**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 feature is used for clarifications about assignments and other issues needing an immediate response. Once I was two times a day during a testing period.

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 as 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.

**Implementing Developing synergy in the 1st week**

The amount of dialogue generated in the first week of the course development is very high. High synergy forms lean towards the scotopic end of learning models while lower energy 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.” Since the Comparative Religion course was most likely students’ first exposure to the content of the discipline, I chose to encourage an initial 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 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 autobiographical writing difficulties as a way 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 this point. Remaining discussions will 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.
Several students faulted me for not clarify-
ing expectations of participation in the VC and optional assignments. This was soon remedied in group 2.

• Favorite aspects: all, interaction with students; Judaism, 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: Judaism, Islam, 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

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 pair sharing or small groups would simplify the required work but not sacrifice learn-
ing objectives.

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.

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 com-

puter 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 viable, thus encouraging both to 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 ex-

periences 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 (manage-

ment): This feature continues to be the most challenging aspect of online teach-

ing for this instructor. It requires fre-

quent logging into the course platform, clear and helpful feedback to students and steering the dialogue in the direc-
tion 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 rea-

son, 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 class-
nroom in many ways. Adapting course objectives to weekly outcomes has

helped make my expectations of stu-
dents expressed in the objectives much clearer. Online teaching has also pro-

vided 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 — as I 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 suc-

cess before student enrollment. If the stu-
dent deems him/herself qualified, they are allowed to enroll. Prior to the start of classes new students are given Blackboard instructor password and complete registration in the use the platform technology.

The orientation is mandatory and comple-
tion or testing out with at least 80% neces-
sary 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 As, 11 B’s and 1 C. The engaged learning environ-

ment, 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 reframing an exist-
ing 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 your readers.

The learning environment is: • fun, • engaging • experiential • interactive • set in a meaningful context • activity-based.14

Areas 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 involved has developed a photo exhibit of area religious communities and is in the process of recording audio and pictures of religious 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.

2 The 5 models offered by the Bedores are relative to levels of interactivity in the online classroom. The interactive model is designed for four stu-
dents, while the least interactive for up to 60 stu-
dents.
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 online student credits into their bac-
culature programs. The online student body has grown from 80 to 1600 in the two years from 1999 to Fall, 2001 in 81 sections.
4 Before, 51.
6 Macomb stretched its learning platform from Convene to Blackboard in 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 class, 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 own sources.
8 The models, noted briefly in footnote 2 are Interactive, bounded interactive, consultative/interactive, independent/consulta-
tive, special configuration. Those programs from highly interactive to low interactivity consonant with number of students per class and design dialogue levels per student.
9 Before, 100.
10 Before, 109-110. He then offers over 40 such tools.
11 Dialogue tests 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 Frank’s, The Diary of a Young Girl (written for the Christianity issue); and a newspaper article on Islam entitled “Muslims Try to Correct Wrong Bush Labeling.”
12 Synchronous forums must be timed so that stu-
dents are “present” during agreed-upon hour.
13 Asynchronous forums are available whenever indi-

viduals choose to access them. The Blackboard platform adopted in 2000 allows both.
14 Ibid, 5.
15 The Blackboard platform has a Digital Drop Box for student work which can be accessed only by the instructor but which permits com-

ments on the material submitted.
16 Before, 115.
spotlight on teaching

Jahuainen, from p.7

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

In responding to community needs, com- munity 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, primary are teachers. They are not expected to publish. Thus they are relieved of the pressure of have 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 stagna- tion. This pressure to publish then is a great threat that will continue to be 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 instruc- tors than four-year colleges and universities. This not only keeps tuition lower, it allows them to be more flexible in their programming. Since religious studies is often seen as tangential to other “core” dis- ciplines, courses are frequently taught by professors trained in other areas like philos- ophy or literature or by members of the clergy.

This presents two obvious concerns. One, there are a lot of instructors teaching reli- gion who are not community college faculty who are 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, phi- losophy, 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 a church/state issues that might further con- firm 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 also be convinced of the importance of hiring qualified religious academicians to teach the subjects in this area.

A final issue relates to the pragmatic question of community college faculty are characterized by a “consumer approach” to education the overrid- ing concern is the economic and social util- ity of its courses. In particular is to prepare students for jobs — to connect newly acquired skills to the job market, thereby promoting students’ economic and social progress. This is especially pertinent to the religious studies at community colleges? I am concerned to get just enough education to in order to improve their job prospects, we need to employ some of these skills, through the interpreta- tion of ideas, practices and insti- tutions that can serve as adjunct instructors.

What kinds of implications does this “con- sumerist 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 study- ing the religious dimensions of different cultures. Yet in a context where of limited 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 approp- riate 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 that 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 practical 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 interpreta- tion of texts, the writing of papers, and the critical analysis of ideas, practices and insti- tutions of human cultures. Community college administrators need to be shown how religious studies give students impor- tant analytic tools that can serve them well in the work place and other facets of life.

Another way is to stress the importance of preparing students for constructive engage- ment in a multicultural workplace and soci- ety, and for understanding the complex re- actions 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 reli- gion 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 reli- gions, thereby preventing rash and indis- criminate judgments that perpetuate cycles of prejudicial thoughts and actions toward the individual members of different reli- gious communities. The is a process of internal growth and learning which has never been more urgent than in the after- math of the tragic events of September 11, as America’s mission was to stand each other better and assess the social, political, and religious factors that play into hatred and violence, both within our country and the world at large.
The student must complete a capstone experience of 1 Credit. We recommend Social Sciences (SOCSC 2395) or Humanities (HUMN 2440) for these courses.

Core Electives Required for the Specialization

Students must complete four courses (12-16 credits) from the following list 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
- Anth 2310 - Archaeological Field Methods: Israel
- Anth 2350 - Biblical Archaeology
- Greek 1015 - Elementary Biblical Greek I
- Greek 1025 - Elementary Biblical Greek II
- Greek 2035 - Intermediate Biblical Greek
- Greek 2150 - Selected Readings in Biblical Greek
- Hebrew 1010 - First Year Hebrew I
- Hebrew 1020 - First Year Hebrew II
- Hebrew 2030 - Second Year Hebrew
- Hebrew 2150 - Selected Readings in Hebrew

**Track II - Humanities and Philosophical Approaches**
- Engl 2170 - Bible as Literature
- Engl 2230 - Intro to Mythology
- Engl 2400/MUHN 2000 - Intro to Folklore
- Engl 2410 - Literary Criticism
- Hums 2440 - Dialogues in the Humanities
- Phil 1000 - Introduction to Philosophy
- Phil 2200 - Social and Political Philosophy
- Phil 2311 - Philosophy of Religion

**Track III - Historical Approaches**
- Hist 1110 - Western Civilization I
- Hist 1120 - Western Civilization II
- Hist 2120 - Ancient Greece
- Hist 2130 - Ancient Rome
- Hist 2140 - Ancient Near East
- General Electives

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 fist name, Mr. Holland’s Opus, The Shawshank Redemption, or another of the ten films we watch: I have studied the Pauline text which Jones identifies and read his discussion of the “interpretive arch” between Paul and the move. Then we watch the movie and prepare a classroom presentation in which they show a clip of the film and analyze Jones’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 actual text, but I continue to use this 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.

**Consideration: r: By far, the most satisfying classes that I’ve worked with are the weekend students at the 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 the BA and BS transition 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.
4. Non-traditional students taking language courses 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 househusbands, 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 courses 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 six-teen. Who, then, was that one student seen on a daily basis with me in a classroom? He was an old 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 enroll-ments. So far, in the sixteen years we have had this service and course 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 enroll-ments 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 a Hebrew and Greek class? 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 would I want to do such a thing. I just know that it has been a burning desire for as long as I can remem-ber. I love the Scriptures and have always wanted to be able to read them in the origi-nal languages. I find there are many bene-fits 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 newfound 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 thank-ful that it was taught, of all places, in a small community college in Wyoming.”

Although we have forty hours of class time, we simply cannot deal with as much mate-rial 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 piestistic and ascetic Danish congregation is transformed when a French cook, Babette, offers to pre-pare a banquet to honor the group’s founder. Having renounced all pleasures of the flesh, the congregation calls Babette a preparer of sumptuous spread of truffles, caviar, quail, sea turtles, wine and other dangerous pleasures. He is deter-mined not to enjoy the feast, but the delici-ous foods and wine work to soften their hearts and heal unspoken wounds. The group have divided people for decades. Jewett places the film in conversation with Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, where Paul reme-}