

World Religions

Hinduism

Ross Arnold, Summer 2015

World Religion Lectures

- August 21 – *Introduction: A Universal Human Experience*
- **August 28 – Hinduism**
- September 4 – *Judaism*
- September 11 – *Religions of India (Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, etc.)*
- September 18 – *Religions of China & Japan (Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, etc.)*
- September 25 – *Christianity*
- October 2 – *Islam*
- October 9 – *Animism, New Age, Atheism, Secularism*

What is “Religion?”

- “Genuine religion is fundamentally a search for meaning beyond materialism... A World Religion tradition is a set of symbols and rituals, myths and stories, concepts and truth claims, which a historical community believes gives ultimate meaning to life, via its connection to a transcendent beyond the natural order.”

Joseph Runzo, *Global Philosophy of Religion*

Three Types of Religions

World Religions – those extant faiths which are historically transcultural and international.

Indigenous Religions – smaller, culture specific or nation-specific religious groups.

New Religious Movements – those faiths that are recently developed.

Today's World Religions by Size

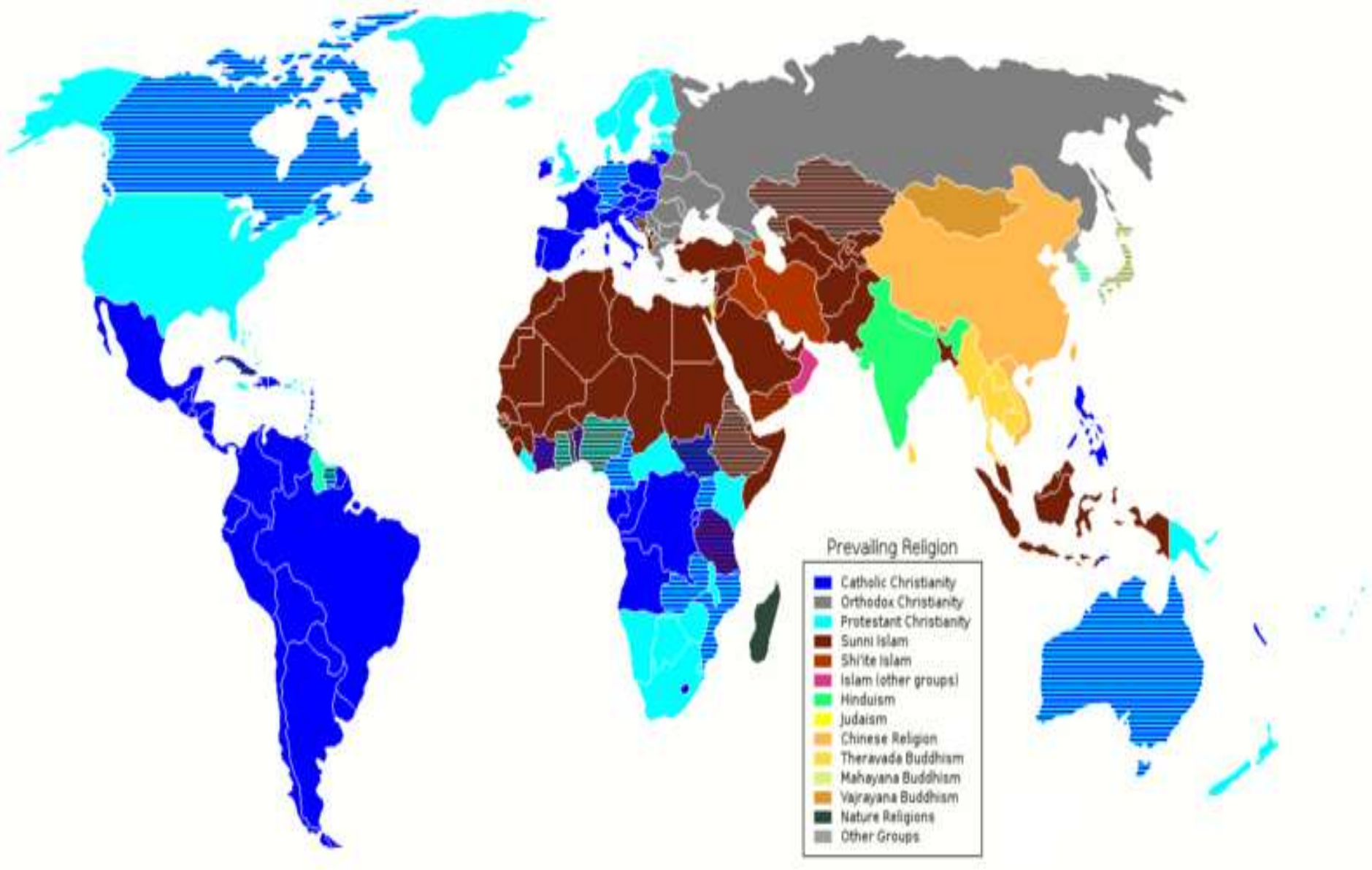
	<u>Pop. (000s)</u>	<u>% of World</u>	<u>Founded (c.)</u>	<u>Where</u>
Christianity	2,200,000	29.52%	30 AD	Palestine
Islam	1,600,000	21.09%	622 AD	Arabia
Hinduism	1,100,000	12.65%	4000-2500BC	Indus Valley
Buddhism	488,000	5.29%	560-490 BC	India
Chinese Trad. ¹	394,000	5.54%	500 BC	China
Sikhism	28,000	0.32%	1500 AD	India
Judaism	14,000	0.20%	2000 BC	Palestine
Bah'aism	7,300	0.10%	1863 AD	Persia
Jainism	4,200	0.06%	420 BC	India
Shinto	4,000	0.06%	500 BC	Japan
Other ²	690,000	9.70%		
Non-relig. ³	1,100,000	15.46%		

¹ Includes Confucianism, Taoism, Shamanism

² Includes all other smaller religious affiliations identified

³ Includes secular, non-religious, agnostic and atheist

World Religion Distribution Today



Today's World Religions by Date of Founding

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Hinduism

- ***Sanatana Dharma*** – “Eternal Way (Law)”
- ***Vaidika Dharma*** – “Way (Law) of the Vedas”

Hindu – *most likely* derived from the ancient Persian name for the Indus River (*Sindu*, or *Hindu*). The region was therefore called “Hindustan,” the inhabitants “Hindus,” and their religion “Hinduism.”

- World’s oldest extant religion, begun in the Indus River region between 10,000 BC and 2700 BC.
- No single founder, no prophets, no single concept of deity, no single theological system, no single holy text, no central religious authority.
- Various perceived as monotheistic, polytheistic, henotheistic, pantheistic, panentheistic, pandeistic or atheistic.

Hindu Religious Texts (“*Shastras*”)

- **Shruti** (“heard”) **literature** (from ancient Hindu monks)
 - **Vedas** (Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda)
 - **Upanishads**
- **Smriti** (“memorized” or “remembered”) **poetry/epics**
 - **Ramayana**
 - **Mahabharata**
 - ***Bhagavad gita**

Also...

- **Sutras** - a collection of aphorisms in the form of a manual or text
- **Puranas** - ancient texts eulogizing deities.
- **Aranyakas** - the ritual sacrifice part of the Vedas.

Five Principles of Hinduism

1. **God Exists** – the One Absolute OM, manifest in many divine forms, especially the Trinity of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), and Shiva (the Destroyer).
2. **All human beings are divine.**
3. **There is unity of existence through love.**
4. **Religious harmony.**
5. **Knowledge of the Three Gs:**
 - ***Ganga*** (sacred river)
 - ***Gita*** (sacred script)
 - ***Gayatri*** (sacred mantra)

Hindu Conception of Deity

Brahman – the One; the Supreme Absolute;
the unity of all reality.

The Trimurti

- **Brahma** – the Creator.
- **Vishnu** (Krishna/Rama) – the Preserver
(*Vaishnavism*).
- **Shiva** – the Destroyer (*Shivaism*).

Also:

- **Shakti (Devi)** – the Divine Mother (*Shaktism*).
- **Ganesha** – patron of writing, arts & sciences
(*Smartism*).
- **Surya** – the chief solar deity.

OM, symbol of Brahman
(and of the *atman*)



Brahma, the Creator



Vishnu, the Protector



Shiva, the Destroyer



Hindu Beliefs/Terminology

Dharma – “that which supports the universe;” what is right; ultimate truth; righteousness; balance.

Karma – the accumulated sum of a person’s good and bad deeds.

Samsara – the continuing cycle of birth, life, death & rebirth; the transmigration of the soul.

Atman – the spirit or “true self” of a person.

Avatar – a deliberate descent of a deity to Earth.

Mantra – a sacred utterance, sound or syllable, word or group of words believed to have power.

Yoga – paths/practices of discipline (mind/body/spirit).

Puja – worship/prayer directed to Brahman or avatars.

Bhakti – devotional practices, esp. to personal gods.

Devas – angelic beings or lesser gods (330 million!).

Ahimsa – the Hindu principle of non-violence.

Three Karmas and Four Yogas

Karma – accumulated sum of good & bad deeds.

1. **Kriyamana** (current), active karma being done now, the effects to be known later.
2. **Sanchita** (accumulated), karma from past lives that has followed to the present.
3. **Prarabdha** (fruit-bearing), part of unalterable *sanchita* leading to a person's present life.

Yoga – Hindu paths or practices of discipline.

1. **Karma Yoga** – action in doing what is right.
2. **Jnana Yoga** – knowledge leading to awareness.
3. **Raja Yoga** – meditation to cultivate the mind.
4. **Bhakti Yoga** – love towards God in worship.

Also, **Hatha Yoga** – secular yoga for health and wellness.

Four Aims (*Purusharthas*) of Hinduism or, “*Doctrine of the Fourfold End of Life*”

Grihastha Dharma (*Domestic Religion*) has four goals for the “*pravritti*” – those in the world:

- ***Dharma*** – righteousness; right living.
- ***Artha*** – wealth and material prosperity.
- ***Kama*** – gratification of the senses; pleasure; sensuality; sexual and mental enjoyment.
- ***Moksha*** – liberation from “samsara” rebirth (the supreme goal of humankind)

Sannyasin Dharma (*Ascetic Religion*) has the one goal of “*Moksha*” for the “*nivritti*” – those who renounce the world.

Ten Disciplines of Hinduism

1. ***Satya*** (truth)
2. ***Ahimsa*** (non-violence)
3. ***Brahmacharya*** (non-adultery; celibacy)
4. ***Asteya*** (no stealing; no desire to possess)
5. ***Aparighara*** (non-corruption)
6. ***Shaucha*** (cleanliness)
7. ***Santosh*** (contentment)
8. ***Swadhyaya*** (reading of scriptures)
9. ***Tapas*** (austerity, perseverance, penance)
10. ***Ishwarpranidhan*** (regular prayers)

Hindu Social Classes (*Varnas*)

The Hindu Shastras (esp. the Bhagavad gita) identify all people as belonging to one of four social classes, as a reflection of their individual duty, inborn nature and natural tendencies:

- 1. *Brahmins* – Vedic teachers and priests**
- 2. *Kshatriyas* – warriors and kings**
- 3. *Vaishyas* – farmers and merchants**
- 4. *Shudras* – servants and laborers**

Scholars debate whether this caste system was actually intended by Hindu scriptures, or has developed as a social custom.



Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple in Delhi

