

**West Linn–Wilsonville School District**  
**Social Studies Department – Course Statement**

<b><u>Course Title: Comparative Religious, Ethical, and Legal Systems</u></b>	
<b>Length of Course:</b> Semester <b>Number of Credits:</b> 1 <b>Grade Level:</b> 10, 11, 12 <b>Prerequisites:</b> World History <b>CIM Work Samples Offered in Course:</b> None	<b>Date of Description/Revision:</b> February 2006
<b>Course Overview</b>	
<p>Why do people believe and behave the way they do? What beliefs condition the way different cultures view the world? The Comparative Religious, Ethical, and Legal Systems course offers students an understanding of the world's major religions, ethical philosophies, and legal systems. The core tenets of each of the world's major religions are introduced through readings, lectures, and discussions. Students examine ethical philosophies as well as legal systems from around the world. Students interact with guest speakers from a variety of religious traditions. Finally, students choose and present research projects on religious topics of special interest to them.</p>	
<b>Essential Questions</b>	<b>Concepts providing focus for student learning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do people believe and behave the way they do?</li> <li>• What beliefs condition the way different cultures view the world?</li> <li>• How do the various belief systems of the world influence political and economic decisions?</li> <li>• What are the underlying assumptions of various belief systems?</li> <li>• What influences the ethical decisions common to different cultures?</li> <li>• What are the most common ethical systems?</li> <li>• What is the role of law in various societies?</li> <li>• What are the most common legal systems and how are they structured?</li> <li>• How do the different structures of various legal systems impact the societies they serve and vice versa?</li> </ul>	
<b>Proficiency Statements</b>	
<p>Upon completion of course, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the general theoretical approaches to the world's great religious, ethical and legal systems.</li> <li>• Explain the basic beliefs of the world's great religions.</li> <li>• Apply their knowledge of religious, ethical, and legal systems to analyzing world events and political movements.</li> </ul>	

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- Analyze religious approaches and international legal conflict through their knowledge of basic philosophical approaches to ethics.
- Make connections between the application of law in various cultures to the regional religious and ethical approaches.

**General Course Topics/Units & Timeframes**

- A. Introduction to Theory of Comparative Religion
- B. Various Religious Strands
  - Animism
  - Shamanism
  - Ancestor Worship
  - Varieties of polytheism
    - Ancient Polytheisms (Greek, Roman, Mesopotamian, Norse)
    - Hinduism
  - Varieties of Monotheism
    - Judaism
    - Zoroastrianism (Functional Monotheism)
    - Christianity
    - Islam
  - Philosophical Religion
    - Neo-Platonism
    - Buddhism
  - New Religious Movements
- C. Comparative Ethical Systems
  - Revelatory
  - Platonic-Aristotelian
  - Epicureanism
  - Hedonism
  - Utilitarianism
- D. Comparative Legal Systems
  - Blood Feud
  - Trial by Ordeal
  - Halacha and Shariah (Jewish and Islamic Religio-Civil Law)
  - Democratic Judgment (Ancient Greece)
  - Common Law (Jury Based: Anglo-American)
  - Civil Law (Statutory: Continental Europe and much of the world)

**Resources**

- Text: *Religions of the World, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition*; Hopfe, Woodward; Prentice Hall; 2005
- Supplemental Text: *Religions of the World Atlas*, Prentice Hall