

## **Course Syllabus**

Course: **AKAID IV – Comparative Study of Religions**

Study Program: **Theology**

ECTS Credits: **6 ECTS**

Level and type of course: **Compulsory**

Course code: **402**

Class hours: **2+2**

Course Year: **2026/2027**

Professor: **Prof. Assoc. Dr. Zija Abdullahu**

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## **Course Purpose**

Equipping students with basic knowledge from the field of Akaid IV, Comparative Study of Religions, by researching and studying the most important and widely spread religions in the world. Development of skills and abilities to analyze data from different religions included in the study program so that students can draw conclusions about them. Acquiring and advancing a critical sense in evaluating arguments based on relevant facts of religions. Training students to write essays or discuss them in a clear and persuasive style of oral and written expression-features of a person with a liberal academic education. From the lectures on Comparative Religion we expect that after completing this course the student will gain general culture about the most dominant religions in the international arena, including both man-made religions and those considered revealed in essence, such as Judaism and Christianity, religions with which we coexist in our regions and with which we share many things. The student will understand the processes of development from their formation to the present day. Students will be given the opportunity, through critical thinking and debate, to understand that the issues that bring religions closer together are far more numerous than those that divide them. They will also understand that the development of Comparative Religion has a positive trend in raising tolerance in society and that it should continue to develop and advance, as it is in the interest of coexistence and peace in the region and the world.

## **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

**After completing the course, the student will be able to:**

- Describe the stages of development of the most dominant religions in the world.
- Compare different religions studied during the course.
- Discuss these religions based on the arguments of each religion while remaining as objective as possible.
- Defend the positions of each religion as understood by their followers.
- Present critical thinking toward each of them, highlighting the most valuable aspects.
- Apply the acquired knowledge in inter-religious relations.

**Teaching Methodology:**

Teaching will be conducted through lectures, encouraging students to participate in interactive discussions, questions, and analysis within the lecture. Seminars and various essays will also be prepared and presented individually and in groups, along with self-assessment tests. Students will also have the opportunity during course preparation to contact the professor and receive guidance in order to achieve quality learning outcomes and academic success.

**Course Content:**

**Week 1:** Introduction, familiarization with the syllabus, methods, organization, requirements and evaluation. General considerations: Religion as a universal human phenomenon. Difference between philosophies and constructed religions. The fruits of faith in religion. Contribution of Muslims to comparative studies of religions and their methodology. Comparative study of religions among Albanians. Benefits of the science of comparative religion.

**Reading:** Dr. Zija Abdullahu, Studim krahasimtar i feve (Comparative Study of Religions), pp. 11–42.

(This work will serve as the core course literature; therefore, only page numbers will be indicated in subsequent weeks.)

**Week 2:** Introduction to the first part of the study—constructed religions. Religion in Ancient Persia – Zoroastrianism: life and work of Zoroaster, beliefs, fire worship, holy book, sects. Major religions in India – Hinduism: beliefs, worship, Ahimsa, sacred books, religious celebrations and customs. Interactive discussion comparing Hindu and Islamic morality.

**Reading:** pp. 43–78.

**Week 3:** Buddhism: origin, enlightenment (Nirvana), beliefs, worship, scriptures, Buddha's view on wealth, work and women. Jainism: origin, doctrine, beliefs, worship, scriptures, ethical teachings, factions, Jainism today. Sikhism: origin, beliefs, sacred book, rituals, rules, ceremonies, factions, historical development of Sikh identity, Sikhism today. Seminar presentations and discussion.

**Reading: pp. 79–123**

**Week 4:** Major religions in China – Taoism and Confucianism. Origins, beliefs, books, rituals and development. Major religion in Japan – Shintoism: origins, beliefs, temples, rituals, festivals, sects and historical development. Interactive discussion on transformation of philosophy into religion.

**Reading: pp. 125–164.**

**Week 5:** Introduction to the second part – Judaism and Christianity. History of Judaism from its origins to the formation of the State of Israel. Holy books of Judaism: Old Testament, Torah/Tanakh, apocryphal books, reliability, Islamic perspective on these books, the Talmud and its parts. Jewish beliefs including belief in God, prophets, resurrection and the Messiah.

**Reading: pp. 169–284.**

**Week 6:** Religious life in Judaism: identity, worship rules, holidays and symbols, family life. Sects in Judaism including Samaritans, Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Karaites, Jewish mysticism and Hasidism. First test.

**Reading: pp. 285–322..**

**Week 7:** Historical overview of Christianity in the Qur'an. Life of Jesus (Isa), prophethood and miracles in the Qur'an. Jesus in Christianity, apostles, death of Jesus, Christianity after Jesus and persecutions.

**Reading: pp. 325–360.**

**Week 8:** Christian divisions. Paul and his influence on Christianity. The New Testament and its books including the Gospels and apostolic letters. Interactive discussion on differences among the Gospels.

**Reading: pp. 325–360.**

**Week 9:** Apocryphal gospels. Critical review of sacred texts. The Qur'an as divine revelation. Christian beliefs and the Trinity. Islamic perspectives on the Trinity. Seminar discussions.

**Reading: pp. 400–433**

**Week 10:** Origin of the Trinity. Position of Mary in Christianity. Original sin and redemption. Crucifixion of Jesus and Islamic perspective on the event. Resurrection and the Day of Judgment.

**Reading: pp. 434-465**

**Week 11:** Religious life in Christianity. Church sacraments, worship, prayers, fasting, pilgrimage. Debate comparing Christian pilgrimage and Islamic Hajj.

**Reading: pp. 467-483**

**Week 12:** Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Ecumenical councils including Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople IV (869), Vatican II (1962–65).

**Reading: pp. 484-496**

**Week 13:** Christian sects and historical divisions. Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Protestantism. Structure and hierarchy of the Church. Final test.

**Reading: pp. 500-554.**

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Class participation: **10 points**

Seminar paper: **10 points**

First test: **40 points**

Final exam: **40 points**

#### **Grading Standard:**

10 = 90–100% Excellent

9 = 81–89% Very good

8 = 71–80% Good

7 = 61–70% Satisfactory

6 = 51–60% Pass

5 = 0–50% Fail

### Core Literature:

Dr. Zija Abdullahu, *Comparative Study of Religions*, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Prishtina, 2010.

### Supplementary Literature:

- **The Qur'an**, translation and commentary by H. Sherif Ahmeti, Medina, 1992.
- **The Bible: The Old Testament and the New Testament (Catholic Bible)**, translated by Don Simon Filipaj, Ferizaj, 1994.
- **The Old Testament and the New Testament (Protestant Bible)**, translator unknown, Tirana, 1999.
- **The Holy Scriptures (Jehovah's Witnesses Bible)**, translator unknown, New York, 2005.
- Abazi, Dedë, *How God Was Revealed to Us*, Prishtina, 2008.
- Alderson, Dr. Richard, *The Early Christians*, Prishtina, 2002.
- Bucaille, Dr. Maurice, *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*, Gjakova, 1997.
- al-Hawli, Dr. Muhammad Ali, *A Comparative Study of the Four Gospels*, Skopje, 2002.
- *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2011 – Ultimate Reference Suite* (Electronic Encyclopedia).
- Farago, France, *Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Western Thought*, Tirana, 2007.
- Karabell, Zachary, *People of the Book*, translated from English by Fuad Morina, Koha Publishing House, Prishtina.
- Gündüz, Dr. Şinasi, *Religious Violence*, Prishtina, 2005.
- Murtezai, Dr. Ekrem, *Dictionary of Religions*, 2000.
- Nesimi, Qani (MA), *Orthodoxy among Albanians*, Tetovo, 2005.
- Penner, Hans, *Buddha and Buddhism*, translated by Azra Kraja, Helga's Secrets Publishing House, Tirana.
- Sarıkçıoğlu, Dr. Ekrem, *History of Religions: From the Beginning to the Present*, Skopje, 2007.
- Solejmani, Abdurrahim, *Living Religions of the World*, translated from Bosnian by Ukshin M. Musliu, Ibni Sina Publishing House, Prishtina, 2015.
- Stott, John, *Basic Christianity*, Tirana, 1997.
- Topaloğlu, Dr. Bekir, *Fundamentals of Islamic Belief*, Prishtina, 2002.
- Tucci, Giuseppe, *History and Philosophy of India*, Prishtina, 1989.

### Academic Policies and Rules of Conduct:

Consultation hours are held in the instructor's office according to the announced schedule and may be used for assistance with all matters related to the course.

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### Student Workload Contribution (*Aligned with Student Learning Outcomes*)

Activity	Hours	Days / Weeks	Total Hours
Lectures	2	14 weeks	28
Theoretical exercises	1	14 weeks	14
Practical work	–	–	–
Contact hours with instructor / consultations	1	14 weeks	14
Field exercises	–	–	–
Colloquia, seminars, essays	2	2	4
Homework assignments	–	–	–
Independent student study (library or home)	2	14 weeks	28
Final exam preparation	4	2	40
Time spent in assessment (tests, essays, final exam)	2	8 days	16
Examination	2	1	2
<b>Totali</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14 javë</b>	<b>146</b>