

**Assignment 2: Compare and contrast essay**

Due: Monday, February 24<sup>th</sup> in class  
8 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins

The purpose of this assignment is to acquire a more in-depth understanding of two or more religious perspectives by exploring certain similarities and differences amongst these faiths. This gives students the opportunity to independently research the beliefs and practices that interest them most. This assignment also exercises writing and research skills.

**Your assignment is to write an essay concerning a topic selected from the attached list or a topic of your choosing (to be emailed to the course instructor for approval).**

**Essays must include an introductory section, a discussion section, and a conclusion section, as well as a works cited page\*. See attached grading rubric for more information.**

*\*Citations must be formatted in the Modern Language Association citation style (MLA Style). See Owl Purdue Webpage for instructions: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/>*

**Introduction**

- Describe the purpose of the paper and the comparisons/differences that will be discussed.

**Body**

- In one or more paragraphs for each, describe the similarities and differences alluded to in your topic. Include specific examples that illustrate each point.

**Conclusion**

- Why are these points of comparison important
- What conclusions can be drawn from these comparisons?

## **Topics**

*(Or a topic of your choosing to be approved via email by the course instructor)*

### **Indigenous Beliefs**

Compare and contrast aspects of two indigenous or holistic religions of your choosing. What are some themes and tendencies between these differing beliefs? Do these religions possess similar deities, rituals, ceremonies or creation stories? How does each respective environmental region – with its unique flora, fauna, and geography – figure into the religions of its peoples?

### **Reincarnation or the Afterlife**

Compare and contrast how the idea of reincarnation or the afterlife differs from two religious perspectives of your choosing (for instance Buddhism and Hinduism). How does each viewpoint affect the societies in which these religions are practiced? What common values do the practitioners of these religions share? How do these differing views of reincarnation shape each faith's understanding of morality and the role of the individual?

### **Women and Religion**

Describe the differing roles of women as defined by two religious perspectives of your choosing. How are women treated in these associated societies? What are the similarities and differences regarding how women are described and included or excluded? Explore concepts such as “forbidden fruit”, “women as homemakers” or “the Divine Mother” and how these concepts appear across these religions.

### **Religious Founders**

Compare and contrast the traditional founding figures of two religious perspectives (for example: Jesus and the Buddha). How does each of these figures play a similar role within the religions that were founded in their honor? How are their teachings similar and different? What are some major differences between the roles played by each figure within their respective faiths?

### **Iconography and Art**

How is the sacred represented visually (or architecturally, musically, etc.) from two differing religious perspectives? How do they use symbols, icons, art, and idols to create a sense of the sacred? Discuss how these representations are used: are they considered actual manifestations of the divine or simply images and representations that elicit specific feelings? How are important stories and figures portrayed?

### **Philosophical Themes**

Compare and contrast the ethics, values, and worldviews of two religious perspectives of your choosing. What are some differences and similarities regarding the treatment of the ego, various dualities or dichotomies (good/evil, male/female, life/death, etc.), and the nature of reality? How do these varying perspectives relate to one-another? Do they suggest any deeper themes underlying each of these belief systems?

### **Mysticism**

Almost all major religions have certain sects or schools that follow a mystical tradition. Compare and contrast the mystical components of two religious perspectives of your choosing. Are there any shared practices or techniques for inducing experiences of the sacred? In what ways are these mystical perspectives similar, even though other aspects of their belief systems may be extremely different?

**Grading rubric**

CATEGORY	Exceeds the Standard (A)	Meets the Standard (B-C)	Does Not Meet the Standard (D-F)
Purpose & Supporting Details	The paper compares and contrasts items clearly, points to specific examples to illustrate the comparison.	The paper compares and contrasts items clearly, but the supporting information is general.	The paper compares and contrasts items clearly, but the supporting information is incomplete.
Organization & Structure	The paper follows a consistent order when discussing the comparisons and includes each required section.	The paper may not follow a consistent order when discussing the comparison, but includes each required section.	Organizational pattern not identifiable. Some details are not in a logical or expected order and the paper does not include each required section.
Transitions	The paper moves smoothly from one idea to the next and uses transition words and subtle transitions to show relationships between ideas.	The paper moves from one idea to the next, but may lack transitions that show relationships between ideas.	Transitions are missing; connections between ideas are fuzzy or illogical.
Grammar & Spelling	Writer makes almost no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes a few minor errors in grammar or spelling that slightly distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes several errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.