

Unit 1: Religion Philosophy Government



This unit explores the rationale of how we came to think as a civilized society. Religion does not have the impact as it once did but has helped shape the values we share as a society. Philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of a variety of issues that revolve around our existence. Government is formed to protect the values and rights we deem appropriate for our society. It is important for you to have an understanding of these factors before we delve into 20th century American history.

Table of Contents	Page
1. How Needs Impact Behavior-----	2
2. Common Characteristics of Religions-----	3
3. Religion Timeline and Worshippers-----	6
4. Religious Family Tree-----	8
5. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam-----	9
6. Hinduism and Buddhism-----	12
7. Four Branches of Philosophy-----	16
8. Political Spectrum-----	18
9. Governments-----	21

Chapter 1 How Needs Impact Behavior



Our brains act as a control system that helps us decipher the emotions, ideas, and information that we have to constantly differentiate throughout our lives. How we behavior is determined by our attempt to satisfy some basic need. Our needs can be separated into two different categories: primary needs and secondary needs. Primary needs are those things that we need to survive. Until our primary needs have been met, these needs are the only thing we will seek out because it means our survival. Once our primary needs have been met we seek to satisfy our secondary needs.

We behave according to our ability to satisfy these needs. We learn the behaviors that bring satisfaction and try to avoid those that bring frustration. We choose the behavior that brings the desired results.

Chapter 2

Common Characteristics of Religions



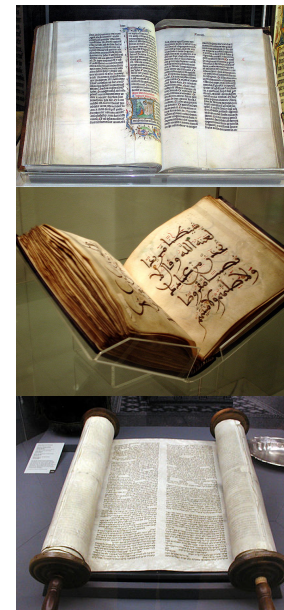
Religious belief is based on faith, which is the belief in something without concrete proof. Because there is an absence of proof, religious thought is open to interpretation. Regardless of the differences of opinion, all organized religions share some common characteristics.

Belief in a Deity

Most (but not all) religions believe in a deity or deities (god or gods). Theists are people who believe in a deity. Monotheists are people who believe in one god (Jews, Christians, and Muslims). Polytheists are people who believe in more than one god (Hindus and ancient Greeks). Henotheists are polytheists who believe in a supreme being but do not deny the existence of other deities. Atheists are people who do not believe in the existence of a god and rely heavily on science to answer questions about the unknown. Agnostics believe the existence of god cannot be proven or disproven and tend to be open to the many interpretations of faith.

Doctrine of Salvation

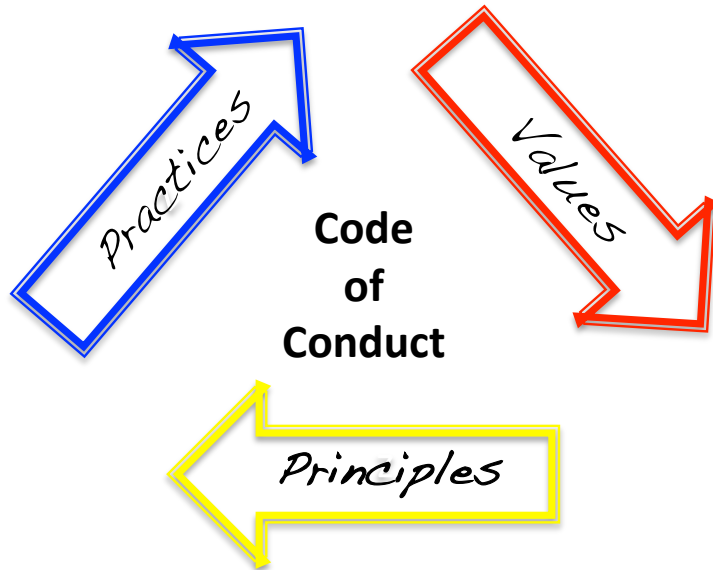
All of the religions that we will be looking at in this book have a doctrine of salvation, which is a text or written document that explains what you need to do in this life as a follower to reach salvation in the afterlife or be saved after you die. Each religion differs on how to be saved. Even the different branches of an individual religion may differ on this issue. However, all religions believe that there is something awaiting us after death and there is something we can do in this life to protect us against an unfavorable outcome.



Most religions believe that salvation comes from removing obstacles that block fulfillment. These obstacles take on different forms depending on the religion that is being worshipped. Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe in sin and the effects of sin. Actions that are seen as sinful have a negative effect on believers in the afterlife if there is not an attempt to atone for those sins. Hindus and Buddhists believe that worldly desires block human fulfillment. They believe that the act of desiring something prevents people from being truly happy and will suffer the consequences in the afterlife for those desires. We will get into more specifics about each one of these religions and worshippers' beliefs about salvation later in this book.

Code of Conduct

The code of conduct for religions is a set of moral teachings and values. It tells worshippers how they should live their lives on a daily basis. The code of conduct is the core practices, values, and principles of the religion and are used to find salvation for worshippers.



Use of Sacred Stories

Sacred stories tell what the religion is about. At first, they described how sacred powers influenced the world. Now, with scientific explanations, many people use the messages in the stories for guidance. In addition, these sacred stories were used to pass the religion down from one generation to another during the period of time in which many people were illiterate.

Religious Rituals and Ceremonies

Religious rituals and ceremonies are used in hopes of appeasing the religious powers and adhering to traditions.

Chapter 3 Religion Timeline and Worshippers

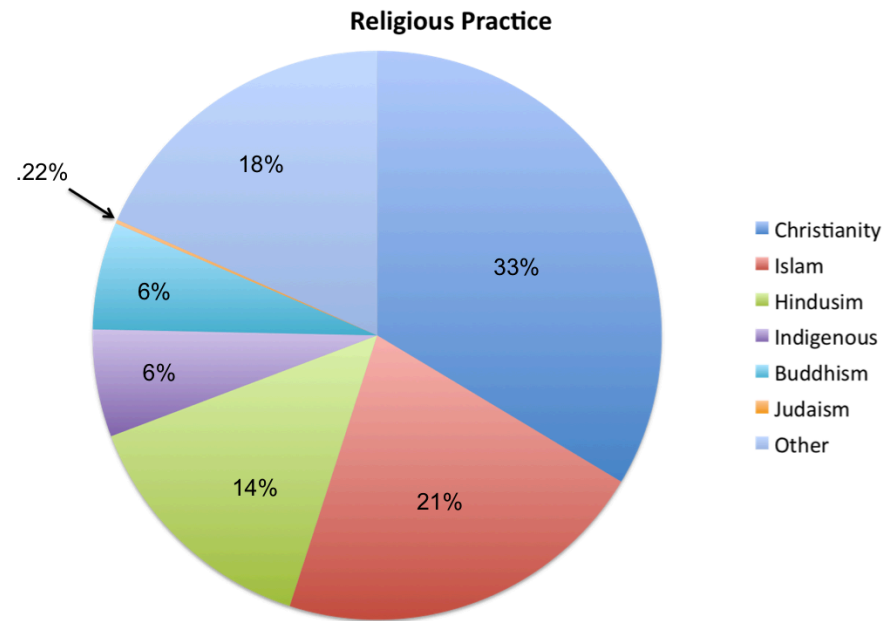
Before we get into the individual religions that will be studied in this book, you should understand when these religions started and how many people practice each religion throughout the world.

When looking at a timeline you may see the abbreviations B.C. and A.D. Because the current calendar originated from the Holy Roman Empire after the adoption of Christianity, B.C. stands for "Before Christ" and A.D. stands for "Anno Domini," which is Latin for "In the year of the Lord." The vast majority of the world uses this calendar but many celebrate different calendars that do not recognize the birth of Christ as the basis of time.

You may also see B.C. and A.D. changed to B.C.E. and C.E. to create a more secular sense of time. B.C.E. stands for "Before Common Era" and C.E. stands for "Common Era."

The five major religions that we will examine in this book are as follows, along with a rough estimate on when they were established:

- Hinduism (1,500 B.C.E.)
- Judaism (1,440 B.C.E.)
- Buddhism (563 B.C.E.)
- Christianity (33 C.E.)
- Islam (622 C.E.)

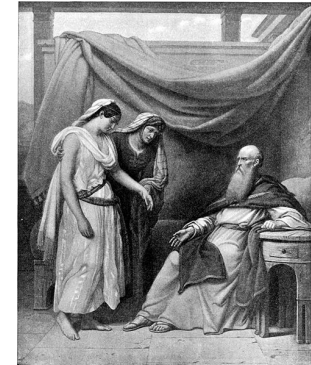


Christianity is the most widely practiced religion in the world at this time. Islam (people who practice this religion are Muslim) makes up the second most popular religion. Hinduism is practiced in many parts of the world but the religion is centralized in India, which is the second most populated country in the world. Buddhism is also widely practiced but many worshippers are found in China, which is the most populated country in the world.

Judaism has a very small population of worshippers throughout the world. One reason for this is due to the Holocaust that occurred during World War 2 when the European Jewish population was decimated. It is important for us to look into Jewish beliefs because they are the basis for Christianity.

Chapter 4 Religious Family Tree

We will examine each of the five major religions on an individual basis but group them according to their similarities. The first group of religions we will look at consists of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These three religions have a number of similarities beginning with their origins.

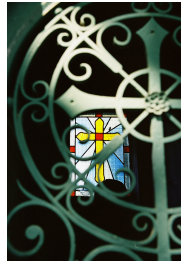


The story of Abraham (the following names may be spelled differently in the Torah, Bible, and/or Quran but they refer to the same people) is shared by all three religions. Abraham had a wife named Sarah. Sarah was unable to bear a child with her husband. It was extremely important for people to have children during ancient times because those children would then be responsible for taking care of you in your old age. Because Sarah could not provide a child for Abraham, he took a mistress named Hagar. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. However, at an age when many would consider impossible or dangerous, Sarah gave birth to Isaac.

God asked Abraham to sacrifice his most beloved son to test his devotion. All three of these religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) agree with the story up to this point. Muslims believe that Abraham chose his first-born son (Isaac), and Jews and Christians believe that he chose his first-born son through marriage (Isaac). This is where the origins of these religions split but all claim Abraham is the father of the religion.

Chapter 5

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam



As we examine the five major religions (starting with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), we will decipher the basic belief structure within those religions in which most worshippers practice. Within this book, we will not dissect the practices of the branches of each religion (such as Lutheranism, Orthodox, Sunni, etc.) but instead, this book covers the beliefs that each branch of the religions share. Each religion will be broken down based on the common characteristics of most religions that were covered in chapter 2: belief in a deity, doctrine of salvation, code of conduct, use of sacred stories, and religious rituals and ceremonies. Let us start by looking into Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Common Characteristic	Belief in a Deity
Judaism	Jews believe in one god and He is referred to as Yahweh.
Christianity	Christians also believe in one god and many refer to Him as Yahweh. Christians also believe that Jesus was the Son of God.
Islam	Muslims also believe in one god and He is referred to as Allah.

Common Characteristic	Doctrine of Salvation
Judaism	The holy text is called the Torah, which is basically the first five books of the Bible or the Old Testament. Jews follow this to find salvation.
Christianity	The Bible consists of two books. The Old Testament is lessons prior to the birth of Jesus and the New Testament is the lessons after the birth of Jesus. Christians believe that Jesus was resurrected from the dead after he was crucified. Christians also believe in the Holy Trinity, which is the belief that God takes the form of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Christians need to believe this to find salvation.
Islam	The Sharia is considered sacred law for Muslims. The Quran is part of sacred law and is based on the experiences of the prophet Muhammad. Muslims follow this to find salvation.

Common Characteristic	Code of Conduct
Judaism	Jews believe there are 613 commandments that need to be followed.
Christianity	Christians adhere to the 10 Commandments, which can be found within the Torah or Old Testament of the Bible.
Islam	Muslims believe in the five categories of the Sharia, which range from what God commands to what He forbids.

Common Characteristic	Use of Sacred Stories
Judaism	Jews (and Christians) believe in the covenant that was established between David and God. Due to his commitment and devotion, God turned him from a shepherd into a King.
Christianity	Christians believe that the Last Supper was between Jesus and His disciples, and is used as the basis for Holy Communion.
Islam	Muslims use the life of Muhammad as the basis for their beliefs, which includes when their belief that the Angel Gabriel came down from heaven to give Muhammad the words to the Quran.

Common Characteristic	Religious Rituals and Ceremonies
Judaism	Jews celebrate Yum Kippur, which is the day of atonement. It is the holiest day of the year in which worshippers pray, fast, and atone for their sins.
Christianity	Christians celebrate Easter, which is in memory of the resurrection of Jesus. During this time worshippers fast, pray, and atone for their sins.
Islam	Muslims celebrate Ramadan, which is believed to be the month in which the Quran was revealed to Muhammad. Worshippers fast, pray, and atone for their sins.

Chapter 6 Hinduism and Buddhism



The final set of religions we will examine are Hinduism and Buddhism. There are distinct differences between the two religions but also many similarities because Buddhism stems directly out of Hindu beliefs.

Common Characteristic	Belief in a Deity
Hinduism	Hinduism is a polytheistic/henotheistic belief system in which most worshippers believe there are three main gods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Brahma has the power to create •Vishnu has the power to preserve •Shiva has the power to destroy
Buddhism	When Buddhists tried converting people to their belief system, the idea that god did not exist was difficult to believe for some people. As a result, they allowed the belief in a god as long as the other tenants of the faith was followed. So there are some Buddhists that believe in a god but most worshippers do not recognize that there is a supreme being.

Common Characteristic	Doctrine of Salvation
Hinduism	Hindus follow Dharma as spiritual law. The ultimate goal is to reach enlightenment. Followers of this religion call enlightenment Moksha. If Moksha is not reached in this life, worshippers are reincarnated into another physical life form to make another attempt at reaching enlightenment. Hindus believe that Karma is the consequences for your behavior. Conscience of a prior life does not follow you to the next life but your past Karma does. The Vedas and Upanishads are the scriptures and instructions that Hindus follow to help them reach enlightenment.
Buddhism	<p>Buddhists also believe in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Dharma •Enlightenment (Nirvana for Buddhists) •Reincarnation •Karma <p>What is different than their Hindu counterparts is that Buddhists believe in the Four Noble Truths, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Suffering is the effect of past Karma •Suffering is based on desires •Suffering can stop if you remove desires •Follow the Eightfold Path

Common Characteristic	Code of Conduct
Hinduism	<p>Hindus believe there are at least three factors that guide behavior on a daily basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Way of Knowledge (correct knowledge releases one from the shackles of ignorance) •Way of Action (performing all your duties in life well) •Way of Devotion (commitment to their god(s))
Buddhism	<p>Buddhists use the Eightfold Path as their code of conduct and consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Right knowledge •Right action •Right speech •Right attitude •Right living (occupation) •Right effort •Right mindfulness •Right composure

The Hindu and Buddhist codes of conduct is what makes reaching enlightenment for them extremely difficult. Many Hindus and Buddhists believe that there are few new souls entering the world because the old souls are being reincarnated to attempt to reach enlightenment again.

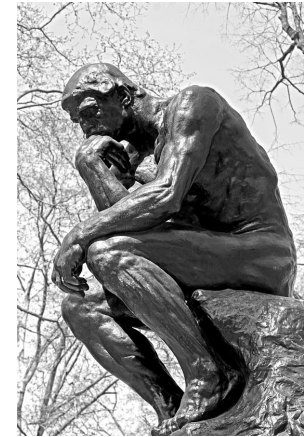
Common Characteristic	Use of Sacred Stories
Hinduism	Hindus believe that the gods will sometimes come down to earth as a human being to help people in their struggle toward enlightenment. This person is called an avatar.
Buddhism	Buddhists believe in the story of the first Buddha who was born a prince by the name of Siddhartha Gautama. A wise man told his father that his son would either become a king and follow in his father's footsteps or a holy man, depending on his exposure to the outside world. Siddhartha Gautama's father did what he could to keep him within the palace walls but was unsuccessful. When the prince left the palace, he saw all the suffering around him and decided to dedicate his life to a spiritual quest.

Common Characteristic	Religious Rituals and Ceremonies
Hinduism	Devout Hindus perform daily rituals that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worshipping at dawn after bathing • Meditation • Chanting • Reading scripture
Buddhism	Buddhists meditation encompasses a variety of techniques that develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness • Concentration • Tranquility • Insight

Chapter 7 Four Branches of Philosophy

The term *philosophy* comes from the Greek word *philosophia*, which means "a love of wisdom." Philosophical thought answers fundamental questions using reasoning skills. Some of these questions include:

- What is the meaning of life?
- What values should be shared by society?
- What is the nature of existence?

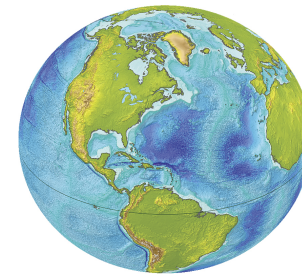


There are a number of branches of philosophy that can be categorized by what is trying to be answered but we will be looking at the four that summarize many of our questions:

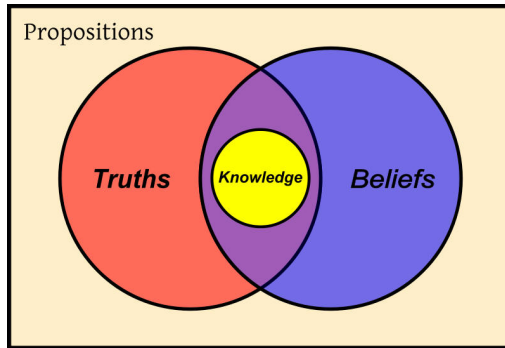
- Metaphysics
- Epistemology
- Ethics
- Aesthetics

Metaphysics

The study of existence or what is real.



Epistemology
The study of knowledge.



Ethics
The study of what is good/bad or right/wrong.

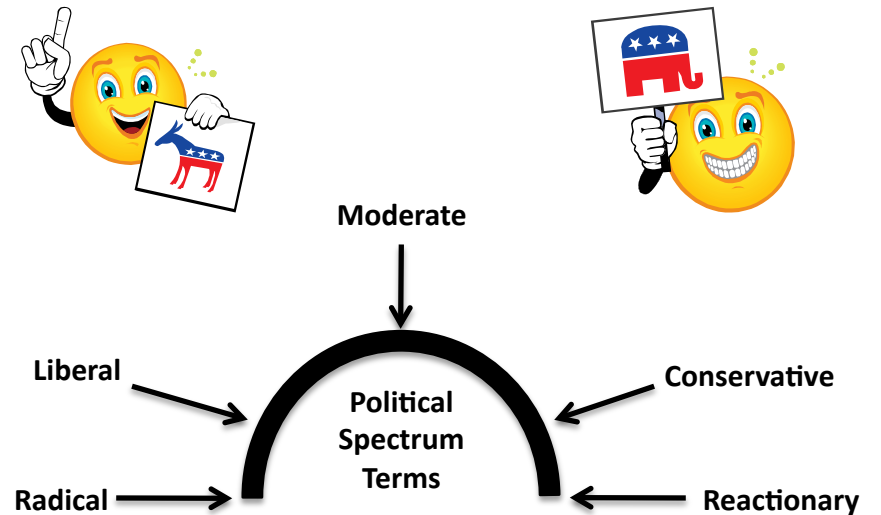


Aesthetics
The study of beauty.



Chapter 8
Political Spectrum

Similar to a color spectrum in which all colors can be placed from dark to light, a political spectrum places all political ideas from left to right. Understanding the political spectrum helps you form your own ideas and determine how others may feel about specific issues. Our electoral system is broken down into two main political parties: Democratic and Republican. However, as a result of our First Amendment right, many other parties have been created to endorse certain values and candidates. In reference to the Democratic and Republican parties, Democrats generally fall on the left of the political spectrum while Republicans are on the right.



If someone has an opinion about something, chances are their opinion can be placed somewhere on the political spectrum. There are two factors that determine where an idea is placed on the political spectrum: the amount of change a person is willing to accept within their society or government, and the amount of government involvement a person is calling for. If someone wants lots of change, they are generally placed on the left side of the spectrum and the opposite would put them on the right. If someone believes that there should be little government involvement, they are generally on the right side of the political spectrum and the opposite would put them on the left. Knowing this, let us examine each term from the previous page.

Radical

Radical thinkers are people who want wide-spread rapid change to the basic structure of the political, social, and/or economic systems. They may be willing to resort to extreme measures to bring about change, including violence and revolution.

Liberal

Liberals believe the government should be actively involved in the welfare of its citizen population. They are looking for peaceful and gradual change within the existing systems.

Moderate

Moderates share viewpoints with both liberals and conservatives. They are often tolerant of others' views and do not hold extreme views of their own. These type of thinkers believe that some things need to change while other things should be left alone.

Conservative

Conservatives are usually in favor of keeping things the way they are, which is also called maintaining the status quo. They are cautious or slow to change, especially when it includes more government involvement. Conservatives often believe that the less government is involved, the better we are as a society.

Reactionary

Reactionary thinkers want things to go back to the way there were in the past and erase some of the progress that has been made in society. They may also be willing to resort to extreme measures, such as oppressive use of government power.

The political spectrum is not a scientific formula. It can be used to categorize a political belief system but people often change viewpoints by researching the issues and experiencing outcomes that are contrary to what they originally believed.

Chapter 9 Governments



Governments are established as a tool to protect the interests of the citizen population. Because citizen populations differ throughout the world, there are a number of different governments that are formed to protect their varying interests. We will look at five of the most prevalent governments that have been formed throughout the course of human existence.

Monarchy

A monarchy is a government in which the power is in the hands of a monarch (king/queen). There are basically two types of monarchies. An absolute monarchy is a government in which the king/queen has absolute power and there are no limits on what he/she can do with their power. Many monarchies start as an absolute monarchy but abuses of power forced the king/queen to adopt a constitution to maintain their power on the throne. A constitutional monarchy requires the king/queen to make decisions that are guided by a constitution. This can lead to the monarch becoming a figurehead of the state with little power over the people.

Authoritarian/Totalitarian

An authoritarian/totalitarian government is one that exercises control over most aspects of their citizens' lives. An authoritarian/totalitarian rulers often takes power through force and maintains power through force. They do not tolerate political parties with differing opinions as it is seen as a threat to their rule. The rulers have unrestricted control of the government and society.

Socialist

A socialist government is one in which the citizen population as a whole contributes to many forms of their society. Taxes are often high but the government uses this revenue to do such things as own land to distribute to the community; own natural resources and their industries to control prices and generate income; and provide free education and medical care.

Communist

A communist government attempts to bring an end to economic class divisions by owning all property because it takes responsibility for the distribution of wealth but with unintended consequences.

Democracy

There are two main forms of democracy: parliamentary democracy and modern democracy. A parliamentary democracy is a government in which the people elect the legislature/parliament. The parliament in turn selects the people that run the top positions in government. A modern democracy is a government in which the people elect the officers that run the government. A modern democracy has more checks and balances on power than a parliamentary democracy.