

Notes from Wayne Ham's Class Visit on Sunday, October 31, 2004

Most comparative religion courses cover 12 major world religions. Huston Smith has chosen to cover only 7 plus the Primal Religions. Smith defines religion as “a way of life woven around a people’s ultimate concern.” Paul Tillich says “Whatever is your ultimate concern is your god.” Someone in class said, “God is the duct tape of the world.” ☺

All of the following are undergirded by the primal Religions.

India (Belief system incorporated into the religion)	Orient (Belief)	Mid-East (Belief)	Europe (Belief)	America
Hinduism (Monism)	Mahayana. Buddhism (Agnostic) only concern is how do believers avoid suffering.	Judaism (Monotheism)	Humanism (Agnostic/Atheism)	Mormonism ¹ (evolved from Christianity, everything is matter (materialism). God has flesh and bone, was once man.
Jainism (Atheism)	Taoism (Animism)	Christianity ² (Monotheism) ³	Scientism (Agnostic/Atheism)	
Sikhism (Monotheism)	Confucianism (Agnostic)	Islam (Monotheism) Allah means “the God.”	Marxism—Dialectic Materialism (Atheism)	
	Shinto (Animism)	Zoroastrianism (Monotheism)	Maoism (Atheism)	
		Baha’i (Monotheism)		
<i>Everything is Spirit; Maya (the physical world) is illusion</i>	<i>Spirit and Matter worlds exist together (yin / yang) both are real & important and exist together in mutually harmonious state</i>	<i>Spirit is opposed to Matter. “Spirit vs. Flesh.”</i>	<i>Everything is matter; no spirit world.</i>	

¹ Community of Christ: We have “cutoff” the Mormon materialism component and returned to more orthodox Christianity.

² Has existed for 20 centuries and the movement is undergoing radical changes. Jesus’ religion is behavior based, while Paul started the theological aspects of Christianity.

³ Christianity falls into several flavors: Catholic, Protestant, Coptic, and Orthodoxy.

Classifications of Belief Systems

Agnosticism:	We don't have knowledge if there is a God.
Animism:	Spirits populate the world and everything in the world has a spirit. Example: lake, stone, trees, oranges – all have spirits. Similar to primal religions.
Atheism:	We know that there is no God.
Deism:	Form of Monotheism, a creator God set everything in motion, creating the foundation for the universe (setting up natural law) and then allowing natural law to take control. God then took a step back or away. (Some of the founders of the United States were deists.)
Great Mystery:	There is a great force in everything. Something beyond the created order, but we don't know what it is.
Henotheism:	There are many gods, but the tribe is responsible to one tribal God.
Kat henotheism:	Multiple gods exist (e.g. God of war, God of Harvest, God of Love) (the Trinity?)
Monotheism:	One God or Supreme Being, God who can be named and/or related to.
Monism:	One force in universe, cannot be named (a la Star Wars "May the Force be with you.")
Pantheism:	Everything that is, is God and God is everything that is.
Panthesim:	Everything is in God, but God is outside (beyond) the created order.
Polytheism:	when spirits have enough power, they become gods. There are many gods.
