

# DSST® INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS

## EXAM INFORMATION

This exam was developed to enable schools to award credit to students for knowledge equivalent to that learned by students taking the course. This exam covers topics such as dimensions and approaches to religion; primal religions; Hinduism; Buddhism; Confucianism; Daoism; Judaism; Christianity; Islam; Shintoism; Hellenic and Roman traditions; and Scientology.

The exam contains 100 questions to be answered in 2 hours.

## EXAM CONTENT OUTLINE

The following is an outline of the content areas covered in the examination. The approximate percentage of the examination devoted to each content area is also noted.

### I. Definition and Origins of Religion – 5%

- a. Basic dimensions of religion (e.g. ethics, ritual, doctrine)
- b. Approaches to religion (e.g. natural and revealed theology, descriptive, historical)

### II. Indigenous Religions – 5%

- a. Native North American traditions (e.g. Aztec, Inuit, Lakota; Hopi, Cherokee)
- b. Native South American traditions (e.g. Incan, Mapuche)
- c. Native West African traditions (e.g. Yoruba, Dogon, BaVenda)
- d. Native Middle Eastern traditions (e.g. Mesopotamian, Canaanite)

### III. Hinduism – 11%

- a. Historical development (e.g. Vedic, Classical, Medieval and Modern periods)
- b. Major traditions (e.g. Theistic paths)
- c. Doctrine and practice (e.g. major philosophical systems, spiritual disciplines [yoga], moksha, festivals)

### IV. Buddhism – 11%

- a. Historical development (e.g. life of Buddha)
- b. Major traditions (Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana)
- c. Doctrine and practice (e.g. Four Noble Truths, Noble Eight-Fold Path, Three Jewels, rituals, symbols, festivals)

### V. Confucianism – 6%

- a. Historical development (e.g. ancient Chinese tradition, life of Confucius, classical Confucianism)
- b. Doctrine and practice (e.g. ritual, filial piety, loyalty, humaneness, genteel behavior, festivals)

### VI. Daoism – 4%

- a. Historical development (e.g. ancient Chinese tradition, Lao Tzu)
- b. Doctrine and practice (e.g. Dao, wu wei, rituals)

### VII. Shintoism – 4%

- a. Historical development (e.g. influence on Buddhism, influence within Japanese culture, WWII)
- b. Doctrine and practice (e.g. three forms of Shinto, Kami, festivals)

### VIII. Judaism – 11%

- a. Historical development (e.g. ancient Israelites, First Temple period, Second Temple period, modern Judaism, The Holocaust, Kabbalah)
- b. Denominations (e.g. Orthodox, Conservative [Masorti], Reform [Liberal/Progressive]; Reconstructionist)
- c. Doctrine and practice (e.g. Torah, Talmud, covenant, rituals, symbols, festivals)

### IX. Christianity – 18%

- a. Historical development (e.g. life of Jesus, early church, medieval church, The Reformation, modern church)
- b. Major traditions (e.g. Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant)
- c. Doctrine and practice (e.g. Old and New Testaments, crucifixion and resurrection, Trinity, Creeds, rituals, symbols, liturgical calendar)

### X. Islam – 16%

- a. Historical development (e.g., life of Muhammad, rise of Empire, Golden Age, Ottomans/Mughals, modern Islam)
- b. Major traditions (e.g. Sunni, Shi'a, and Sufi)
- c. Doctrine and practice (e.g. Allāh, Qur'an, Five Pillars of Islam, resurrection and judgment; predestination, Sharia/Fiqh; jihad, festivals)

### XI. Religious Movements and Syncretism – 9%

- a. Before 1000 C.E. (e.g. Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Mystery Cults)
- b. After 1000 C.E. (e.g. Baha'i, Sikhism)
- c. Contemporary Religious Movements (e.g. Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology, Nature Spirituality, etc.)

## REFERENCES

Below is a list of reference publications that were either used as a reference to create the exam, or were used as textbooks in college courses of the same or similar title at the time the test was developed. You may reference either the current edition of these titles **or** textbooks currently used at a local college or university for the same class title. It is recommended that you reference **more than one textbook** on the topics outlined in this fact sheet.

You should **begin by checking textbook content against the content outline** provided **before** selecting textbooks that cover the test content from which to study.

Sources for study material are suggested but not limited to the following:

1. *A History of the World's Religions*, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2011, David S. Noss, Prentice Hall/Pearson Education, One Lake Street, Upper Saddle River, NJ 07458, vig.prenhall.com.
2. *Religions of the World*, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2011, Lewis Hopfe and Mark Woodward, Prentice, Hall/Pearson Education, One Lake Street, Upper Saddle River, NJ 07458, vig.prenhall.com.
3. *Living Religions*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2014, Mary Pat Fisher, Prentice Hall/Pearson Education, One Lake Street, Upper Saddle River, NJ 07458, vig.prenhall.com.

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS

All test questions are in a multiple-choice format, with one correct answer and three incorrect options. The following are samples of the types of questions that may appear on the exam. Other sample questions can be found in the form of practice exams by visiting our website at [www.getcollegecredit.com/testprep](http://www.getcollegecredit.com/testprep).

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1. In Hinduism, the term "karma" implies
    - a. duty
    - b. predestination
    - c. action and reaction
    - d. good action
  2. Vedic religion originated with
    - a. people who were indigenous to India
    - b. Aryans who came to India ca. 1500 B.C.E. from Central Asia
    - c. Persians who came to India ca. 700 B.C.E.
    - d. Greeks who came to India ca. 300 B.C.E. with Alexander the Great
  3. Which of the following is NOT one of the Pillars of Islam?
    - a. Muslims are expected to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lives, if financially and physically capable.
    - b. Muslims have to seek the intercession of Muhammad to achieve paradise.
    - c. Muslims are expected to fulfill their charitable duties.
    - d. Muslims have to engage in prayer every day.
  4. In the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha proclaims that the cause of suffering is
    - a. lack of proper teachers
    - b. aggression and violence
    - c. craving
    - d. original sin
  5. In the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu indicates that the best way of living is a life of
    - a. passivity
    - b. assertiveness
    - c. natural simplicity
    - d. social commitment
  6. The New Testament Gospels are primarily
    - a. complete biographies of Jesus of Nazareth
    - b. summaries of Christian ethics
    - c. proclamations of Jesus as Risen Lord and Messiah
    - d. eyewitness accounts of four apostles
  7. The Covenant of Judaism refers to
    - a. ancient agreements between Israel and neighboring peoples
    - b. a pact initiated by Yahweh with a particular people
    - c. a contract among Jewish religious leaders
    - d. an agreement negotiated to be the Hebrew people and the Egyptians
  8. A religious observance commemorating the Exodus is
    - a. Mishnah
    - b. Passover
    - c. Yom Kippur
    - d. Rosh Hashonah

DSST EXAM CONTENT FACT SHEET

9. Which of the following Chinese figures transmitted Confucian teachings?

- I. Meng-tzu (Mengzi)
- II. Hsün-tzu (Xunzi)
- III. Mo-tzu (Mozi)
- IV. Chu Hsi (Zhu Xi)

- a. I and II only
- b. III and IV only
- c. I, II and III only
- d. I, II and IV only

**CREDIT RECOMMENDATIONS**

The American Council on Education’s College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT) has evaluated the DSST test development process and content of this exam. It has made the following recommendations:

<b>Area or Course Equivalent:</b>	Introduction to World Religion
<b>Level:</b>	Lower-level baccalaureate
<b>Amount of Credit:</b>	Three (3) semester hours
<b>Minimum Score:</b>	400
<b>Source:</b>	American Council on Education – College Credit Recommendation Service

Answers to sample questions: 1-C, 2-C, 3-B, 4-C, 5-C, 6-C, 7-B, 8-B, 9-D

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