Comparative Religion

**Phase I: 40 minutes**

In your all-star academic assemblies (i.e. small groups), prepare a brief overview of the following major religions:

**Hinduism Judaism Buddhism Christianity**

Include in your overview such information as

1. When and where it emerged
2. Who founded it
3. Cultures that practiced it
4. Important scriptures
5. Basic tenets
6. Broader impact (e.g. social, political, gender roles, etc.)

**Phase II: 40 minutes**

In your super awesome all-star academic assembly (i.e. the whole class), be prepared to discuss how these religions compare to each other.

1. Hinduism and Judaism
2. Hinduism and Buddhism
3. Hinduism and Christianity
4. Judaism and Buddhism
5. Judaism and Christianity
6. Buddhism and Christianity

Hinduism:

* When and where: Perhaps around 4,000 B.C.E; Indian subcontinent
* Who: Proto-Indo-Europeans (Aryans)
* Cultures that practiced it: Various peoples of the Indian subcontinent
* Important Scriptures: Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita, Agamas…
* Basic tenants
  1. The one supreme force, Brahma, is the creator and is in all things.
  2. Hindu gods are manifestations of Brahma (notably Vishnu and Shiva)
  3. Ultimate objective is to merge/commune with Brahma; can’t be done in one lifetime.
  4. Who you are in life determined by who you were in a past life
  5. The caste system
  6. How you conduct yourself (e.g. how you follow *dharma*) in your assigned role (caste) determines if you build up enough *kharma* to move up closer to Brahma in the next life.
* Broader impact:
  1. Social structures: Concept of *dharma* makes most Hindus of lower stations accept their suffering and inequality.
  2. No missionary spirit; tied too closely to Indian social structures and customs.
  3. Spawned Buddhism

Judaism:

* When and where: Between 4000 B.C.E. and 1,029 B.C.E; Mesopotamia
* Who: Abraham
* Cultures that practiced it: Hebrews/Jews
* Important Scriptures: Tenakh (Torah, Nev’im, Ki’tuvim); Talmud
* Basic tenants:
  1. One God (Yahweh), creator and lawgiver.
  2. Destiny of the world is paradise, but people need God’s help and protection.
  3. Human beings serve God by following the Laws of Moses, promoting the ethics of the prophets, and maintaining the identity of the Jewish people.
* Broader impact:
  1. Exclusive—“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”
  2. No missionary spirit; tied too closely to Jewish societal customs, only Hebrews are God’s chosen peoples.
  3. Spawned Christianity