

## ? COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS

**Dr. Erskine White, University School of Nashville**  
**FINAL EXAM / CONCEPT MAP**

Your final exam in this course is not a formal test, nor is it a traditional paper.? It is, instead, an alternative way of presenting in summary form what you have learned this semester.? My guess is that once you get into it, you know, like, you will, like really be surprised. Really. Whatever. Trust me on this one.?

Your assignment is to draw a concept map which covers all the religions we have discussed this semester.? You can do it one-dimensionally, e.g., on a poster.? You can do it three dimensionally, e.g., with mobiles.? You can rent a single-engine plane and present it as sky-writing.? Do it in any way you want, so long as you put serious time and work into this assignment.

What is a concept map?? Think of it as a visual way to present information.? In a traditional final exam format, you could write long essays summarizing and connecting all the big concepts you've learned in this class; instead, you are going to "draw" an essay as a way of presenting a great deal of information in a visual or conceptual format.? Some students use concept maps to take daily notes in class because they can learn better that way.

Here is one way to draw the map.? Draw six circles, one for each of the religions we have studied this semester.? Then think of the MAJOR people, ideas, concepts, Scriptures, controversies, or events which you associate with each religion.?? Or, alternatively, draw four circles, one for each of the four major questions (Creation, Theodicy, Ethics, Destiny) we have covered in this course, and begin making connections in that way.? Maybe you could start with major themes which struck your fancy this semester, like "Human Nature," "Myths and Stories," etc. Believe me, there is no "right way" to do this assignment.? (Don't you just hate that?).

Once you have drawn your major circles, draw "sub-circles" representing the significant people, ideas, concepts, Scriptures, controversies, or events which are conceptually related to your major categories.? Draw solid lines between the major circles and sub-circles and write along those lines a word or phrase (not a sentence or paragraph) explaining the connection.? After that, when you connect sub-circles to each other, draw dotted lines instead of solid lines, and write along those dotted lines a word or phrase explaining the connection.? Remember, you are NOT writing an essay here; you are drawing a concept map.

How much time should you spend on this? ?This is your final exam; spend as much time as you want, but spend at least as much time on this as you would spend studying for and taking a traditional final exam.? I will grade your concept map on the basis of how much thought you have put into it. "Verily, verily, I say unto you", there are endless ways to relate, compare and contrast these religions; indeed, our class discussions have amply demonstrated as much.? Consequently, I want to see concept maps which reflect all the depth and subtlety you can muster.

Show this assignment to your parents if you wish, and discuss with them the connections you might create.? Talk to each other and help each other see the endless options available to you in

this project. One more suggestion -- draw out a rough draft on multiple pieces of paper before you do your final copy; you will want to present your ideas in a way which shows clarity, not confusion. Most of all, have fun with a final exam which offers you creative ways to present what you have learned. You've taken enough traditional exams, *n'est ce pas*? I've graded enough of them, too. J