



**A Quality Matters (QM) Certified Continuing  
and Professional Education (CPE) Course (2018)**



GTU



TEMPLETON WORLD  
CHARITY FOUNDATION

**Wisdom from World Religions:  
A Massive Open Online Course**

**Course Plan (Syllabus)**

*Taught by*

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The Wisdom from World Religions global open online course is offered in partnership with the [Graduate Theological Union](#) of Berkeley, California, a unique multi-religious consortium for the graduate study of religion featuring more than 20 member schools, centers, and institutes.

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**Discussion Questions**

- a. **Seeker:** These questions are ideal for learners who are new to the study and practice of religion and spirituality.
- b. **Proficient:** These questions are for learners with extensive knowledge and practice of at least one religious tradition

- c. **Adept:** These questions are for learners with broad experience with the practice and study of multiple religious traditions.

### **Instructor Self-Introduction**

Kenneth Rose, Ph.D., is Senior Research Fellow at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, and emeritus professor of philosophy and religion at Christopher Newport University. An award-winning teacher, he has taught in the areas of comparative religion, comparative mysticism, religious pluralism at multiple universities. He holds an M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School and an M.A. and Ph.D. in the Study of Religion from Harvard University. At Harvard, he was a Fellow at the Center for the Study of World Religions. His publications include *Yoga, Meditation, and Mysticism: Contemplative Universals and Meditative Landmarks* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), *Pluralism: The Future of Religion* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) and numerous academic articles, reviews, and popular publications. Influenced as much by the Bhagavad Gītā as by Thomas Merton and the Buddha, Prof. Rose has engaged in a lifelong quest to understand and practice spirituality in light of the most sublime mystical texts in the world's wisdom traditions. *For more information and links to his books, see <https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/books>*

### **The Purpose and Structure of the Course**

#### **Course Description**

Until recently, the wisdom of the world's many religions existed in separate silos blocked from other traditions by barriers of language, distance, and slow communications. Now, more than any time in history, this collective wisdom is easily available to anyone with an internet connection. But without a guide to this enormous wealth of information and practice, we can quickly lose our way. In this course, comparative religionist Kenneth Rose will be your guide in learning about and practicing the religious and spiritual wisdom that can change your life and the life of your community. Taking his start from the spiritual principles and practices outlined by noted financier and spiritual teacher Sir John Templeton in his book *Wisdom from World Religions: Pathways Toward Heaven on Earth*, Kenneth Rose will trace these teachings to their sources in the world's major religions and show you how you can put them into practice.

#### **Learning Objectives**

##### ***Questions That Guide this Course***

*This course provides clear and inspiring answers to many of life's big questions:*

- Does life have an ultimate meaning?
- Is science the ultimate guide to the deepest truth of life?
- Does God, or a divine reality, exist?
- What practices can bring God, or a divine reality, into your own experience?
- Is death the end of life?

##### ***What You'll Learn***

*After taking this course, participants will be able to:*

- Identify the basic teachings of the world's major active religious traditions.
- Distinguish the different religions from each other.
- Compare these religions in search of commonalities and differences.
- Evaluate Sir John Templeton's contributions to the study of spirituality.
- Apply some of the spiritual practices suggested by Sir John Templeton

- Assess claims about spiritual realities made by the various religions.

### ***How You'll Learn***

*This is a fully online course, but it blends traditional and digital forms of learning:*

- The module for each of the 18 days contains links to four approximately 10-minute videos, which are the heart of the course. Watching them attentively is essential to success in this course. By clicking inside each video that is available to watch it on YouTube, viewers will have access to automated closed captioning in English and many other languages. Automated transcripts are also available via YouTube.
- The first two videos each day (Unit 1 and Unit 2) are short content videos that were specially recorded for this course. In these, the instructor traces central themes in the religions of the world and in the spiritual thought of Sir John Thompson.
- Each of these units contain learning objectives and discussion questions to guide you in participation in the discussion forums and in preparing for the short online test each Friday.
- The third unit each day (Video 3) introduces a spiritual practice that the instructor has adapted from Sir John Templeton's writings. You will be invited to participate in this spiritual practice.
- Unit 4 will vary from day to day among the following offerings: online videos such as Ted talks and YouTube videos of prominent figure in the world of religion, interviews with religious leaders recorded for this course, where I record my responses to emerging issues in the discussion groups. *Note that there is no Unit 4 video on Day 3.*

### **Suggested Book**

- *Wisdom from World Religions: Pathways Toward Heaven on Earth* (Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2002). This book forms the basis for this course, and lectures are based on selected readings from the book. These readings have been provided with the first unit in the module for each of the eighteen days. (**Abbreviated below as WWR**)
- This book is available in the following formats:
  - Print, audio, and e-book formats:
    - <https://www.templetonpress.org/books/wisdom-world-religions>
  - Used Print only formats (US sites)
    - [https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer\\_listing/1890151912/ref=dp\\_olp\\_all\\_mbc?ie=UTF8&condition=all](https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer_listing/1890151912/ref=dp_olp_all_mbc?ie=UTF8&condition=all)
    - <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/wisdom-from-world-religions-john-templeton/1114314497>
  - Google Play eBook:
    - [https://play.google.com/store/books/details?pcampaignid=books\\_read\\_action&id=vicTZS8PvgYC](https://play.google.com/store/books/details?pcampaignid=books_read_action&id=vicTZS8PvgYC)

### **Select Bibliography—Suggested Readings Religions of the World**

- Fieser, James and Powers, John, *Scriptures of the World's Religions* (McGraw-Hill, multiple editions).
- Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions* (Pearson, multiple editions).

- Herling, Bradley, *A Beginner's Guide to the Study of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bloomsbury, 2016).
- Nye, Malory, *Religion: The Basics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Routledge, 2008).
- Oxtoby, Willard G. and Roy C. Amore, et al. *World Religions* Oxford (many editions).
- Rose, Kenneth, *Knowing the Real: John on Religious Pluralism and the Cognitivity of Religion* (Peter Lang, 1996).
- Rose, Kenneth, *Pluralism: The Future of Religion* (Bloomsbury, 2011, 2013).
- Rose, Kenneth, *Yoga, Meditation, and Mysticism: Contemplative Universals and Meditative Landmarks* (Bloomsbury, 2016).
- Smart, Ninian, *Worldviews: Crosscultural Exploration of Religious Beliefs* (Prentice-Hall, multiple editions).
- Smith, Huston, *The World's Religions* (Harper-Collins, many editions).
- Smith, Christian, *Religion: What It Is, How It Works, and Why It Matters* (Princeton University Press, 2017).
- Van Voorst, Robert E. *Anthology of World Scriptures* (multiple editions and publishers).

### **Sir John Templeton**

- Hermann, Robert L. *Sir John Templeton: Supporting Scientific Research for Spiritual Discoveries*, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2004 [1998]).
- Proctor, William, *The Templeton Touch* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Templeton Press, 2012).  
Templeton, John Marks, editor, *How Large is God: Voices of Scientists and Theologians* (Templeton Foundation Press, 1997)

### **Daily Course Activities**

1. Open Unit 1-3. Reflect on the theme, the spiritual law, and the readings. Read the learning objectives discussion questions and keep them in mind as you watch each video.
2. Open Unit 4. Reflect on the theme raised in these videos, which will vary between guest lectures, interviews, and office hours dedicated to issues in the discussions.

### **Course Schedule (Self-Paced)**

#### **Week 1**

##### **Day 1: Wisdom from World Religions**

- Unit 1: Sir John Templeton's *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Topic: Wisdom from world religions
- Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Sir John Thompson and the Study of Religion
- Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*Lifting your awareness to a higher level of receptivity*
- Unit 4: Guest Lecturer: "Sir John Templeton on Science and Religion"  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T\\_21X\\_b9eLA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_21X_b9eLA)

##### **Day 2: The Divinity of the World: "God-life moving through all**

- Unit 1: Sir John Templeton's *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: The Divinity of the World: "God-life moving through all"

- Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Religion theology, and spirituality—what’s the difference?
- Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*Become “aware of our place in divine infinity”* (WWR 40)
- Unit 4: Unit 4: Interview with Prof. Graham Schweig on Hinduism, Yoga, and Divine Love

### **Day 3: The Spiritual Anchor of the Material World**

- Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: The spiritual anchor of the material world
- Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Practicing comparative religion
- Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*Establishing conscious unity with your spiritual center*

## **Week 2**

### **Day 4: Spiritual Pluralism**

- Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: Spiritual pluralism
- Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Truth and Religious diversity
- Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*Seeing Differently*
- Unit 4: Guest Lecturer: “Harvard Professor Diana Eck on Religious Pluralism”  
<https://vimeo.com/23923965>

### **Day 5: Spiritual Laws**

- Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: Spiritual Laws
- Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Hinduism
- Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*“Dare to develop personal spiritual truths that can be unassailable from outside forces”*  
(WWR 145)
- Unit 4: Interview with Prof. Nathan Katz on Buddhism, Jainism, and Indian Judaism

### **Day 6: Divine Intelligence and Creativity**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: Divine intelligence and creativity
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Jainism
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*Look deep within to the source and realize our divinity*

## **Week 3**

### **Day 7: The Humble Approach**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton's *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: The Humble Approach
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Buddhism
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*"Experiment with the meaning of life"* (WWR 322).
4. Unit 4: Guest Lecturer: Dr. John M. Templeton, Jr., "40 Years of Spiritual Progress & the 2012 Templeton Prize Laureate" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz-w0XaNj5A>

#### **Day 8: A Moral Wakeup Call**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton's *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: A Moral Wakeup Call
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Sikhism
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*"The crowding-out technique"* (WWR 11).
4. Unit 4: Interview with Prof. Diana Obeid on the Modern Middle East, Arab prison literature, and women and gender issues in the Arab world

#### **Day 9: Expanding Spiritual Science and Research**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton's *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: Expanding spiritual science and research
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Confucianism
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*Update scriptures in light of science*

### **Week 4**

#### **Day 10: The Law of Mind Action**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton's *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: The law of mind action
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Daoism
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*"Refuse to entertain any thought in your mind that you would not wish objectified in your life"* (WWR 205).
- Unit 4: Guest Lecturer: "The Karmapa, TED India 2009,"  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/his\\_holiness\\_the\\_karmapa\\_the\\_technology\\_of\\_the\\_heart](https://www.ted.com/talks/his_holiness_the_karmapa_the_technology_of_the_heart)

#### **Day 11: A Guiding Inner Power**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton's *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: A guiding inner power
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Shinto



3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
“See beyond activities of the personality to the greater spiritual force of the immortal soul” (WWR 323).
4. Unit 4: Interview with Prof. Edward Kelly on neuroscience and paranormal phenomena

### **Day 12: An Attitude of Gratitude**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: An attitude of gratitude
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Zoroastrianism
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
“Just start praising everything in your life” (WWR 121).

### **Week 5**

### **Day 13: The Return on Generosity**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: The return on generosity
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Judaism
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
“Give yourself to others for the pure joy of giving?” (WWR 320).
4. Unit 4: Guest Lecturer: “Alister McGrath: Academic Journey”:  
<https://youtu.be/M9ucObr6uAY>

### **Day 14: The Movement of Forgiveness**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: The movement of forgiveness
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Christianity
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
“The technique for achieving forgiveness is simple: release; let go!” (WWR 328).
4. Unit 4: Interview with Prof. Hussam Timani on classical and modern Islamic religious thought, comparative theology, and Interfaith studies

### **Day 15: Practicing Unlimited Love**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: Practicing unlimited love.
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Islam
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
“Look with the eyes of love” (WWR 13).

### **Week 6**

### **Day 16: Forward into the Divine Unknown**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: Forward into the Divine Unknown

2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: The Bahá'í Faith
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
“*Look for God in a multitude of ways*” (WWR 231)
4. Unit 4: Guest Video “The Baha’i World View”

**Day 17: The Mystic Power of Prayer**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: The Mystic Power of Prayer
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Prayer, meditation, and contemplation—what’s the difference?
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
*Attune with the invisible part of ourselves*” (WWR 307).
4. Unit 4: Hindu theology and ethics, women and Hindu goddesses, comparative theology  
(this interview is currently unavailable)

**Day 18: The Standpoint of Nonduality**

1. Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*  
Theme: The Standpoint of Nonduality
2. Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World  
Topic: Mystics, yogis, sages, and saints—the heart of spiritual religion
3. Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:  
“*Become still and know*” (WWR 4).