

Curriculum for Zarathushti Studies

Curriculum Document for Religious Education Programs for students from ages 6 to 16

Created for the FEZANA Religious Education Committee

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Overview of the Program

The program with Zarathushti Religious studies is primarily related to inculcating and developing in students an awareness of their Zarathushti identity. The course is designed to allow students to explore and make meaning of the religious component of their identity through a process of self awareness and through developing an awareness of their families, their local Zarathushti communities and the Zarathushti world at large. Students will be encouraged to be critical and reflective thinkers through interpreting practical experiences, engaging in debates and discussions, conducting research, study and analysis so that they develop a full and complex understanding of their faith and its role in their lives.

Teaching Approaches

The nature and complexity of a Religious studies curriculum designed to reinforce and build identity requires a variety of strategies and techniques for teaching and learning. However, the philosophical underpinnings of this course are based on the Confessional Model of Religious Education which allows students to affirm their belonging and participation in a particular faith based system. Teachers are encouraged to use both traditional and technological resources and instructional methods best suited to the needs of their students in meeting learning goals and teaching objectives.

Curriculum Expectations

This course is modeled along the guidelines of the Ontario High School curriculum in Social Science and Humanities. The expectations lay out the knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire and demonstrate by the end of the course. These expectations are grouped in strands and are classified in to two types. The first is Overall Expectations which describe in broad terms the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire and demonstrate. The second, Specific Expectations, are subsets that describe the knowledge and skills that students are to acquire in greater degree of detail and also serve as a content guide that directs teachers in terms of their lesson planning. While the course is divided into expectations and strands, these are not to be regarded as independent silos of material wherein there is no connection or interchange between them.

Many of the expectations are accompanied by examples, given in parentheses. These examples are meant to illustrate the kind of skill, the specific area of learning, the depth of learning, and/or the level of complexity that the expectation entails. They are intended as a guide for teachers rather than as an exhaustive or mandatory list.

Strands

The overall and specific expectations in this course are organized in distinct but related strands. The strands used in this course are listed in the overviews that introduce the five subject areas included in this document. In addition, the strand Research, Inquiry and Communication Skills is included which gives students the opportunity to examine the models of research, problem solving, analysis, and communication particular to this area of study and to apply them as part of their learning throughout the course.

(Elements of the above material are adapted and adopted from the Ontario Social Science and Humanities curriculum).



Overview

The Zarathushti Religious Studies course introduces students to an exploration of the Zarathushti Religion as it is practiced around the world. It attempts to inculcate and provide students with an awareness of the nature, place, and function of religion in identity formation. The course also endeavours to equip students with developing critical thinking skills that help them to make meaning of their beliefs, practices and culture.

Strands

Origins, History, Mythology and Legends

Beliefs, Rituals and Practices

Prayer, Language and Sacred Texts

Calendars, Festivals and Celebrations

Living Faith and Contemporary Manifestations

Research, Inquiry and Communication Skills

Overall and Specific Expectations per Strand

Origins, History, Mythology and Legends

Overall Expectations:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- ❖ Summarize their genealogical antecedents from Indo-European origins and the beliefs, practices and societal structures of the society at that time
- ❖ Analyze and understand the key legends of the Shahname including the authorship, development and significance of its stories and their symbols and motifs
- ❖ Summarize key biographical information about Prophet Zarathustra, including birth stories and life and legends
- ❖ Analyze Creation Stories specifically the Bundahishin and other creation myths
- ❖ Evaluate the role and historical significance of the Medes, Achamenians, Parthians, Seleucids and Sassanians on the development and continuity of the faith



- ❖ Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of Diaspora advent stories such as the Kissa I Sanjan

Specific Expectations:

Indo-European origins and the beliefs, practices and societal structures of the society at that time

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Identify the genealogical origins of the Indo-Europeans and the eras of migration (e.g. arrival on the Iranian Plateau circa 1200 B.C.E.)
- ❖ Demonstrate their knowledge of the nature of language and literature (e.g. oral transmission traditions of heroic and religious poetry)
- ❖ Demonstrate their knowledge of religious beliefs and practices (e.g. polytheistic beliefs of nature and cult gods, truth ordeals, sacrifices)
- ❖ Analyze social customs and practices (e.g. customs based on pastoral practices such as the use of bull's urine, garments that identified belonging)

Legends of the Shahname

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Identify the authorship and creation of the Shahname (e.g. name of author, time period of creation, sources used in creation by author)
- ❖ Demonstrate their knowledge of and analyze the significance of key stories, their symbols and motifs and their contributions to Zarathushti belief (e.g. Shah Faredun and the origins of fire, legendary dynasties of the Kayanians and Peshdadians, heroic behaviour models in the stories of Zal and Rustam, love and relationships in the stories of Zal and Rudabeh)

Prophet Zarathustra including birth stories and life and legends

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Demonstrate their knowledge of Prophet Zarathustra's family as derived from the Pahlavi texts (e.g. name of father, mother and their occupation, wife and children)
- ❖ Analyze the significance of birth stories about the prophet (e.g. stories about the smiling birth, divine protection extended through phenomena and animals)



- ❖ Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the prophet's early years, his enlightenment and the propagation of the faith (e.g. quest for enlightenment when he was 30 years old, royal patrons, first disciples)
- ❖ Assess and analyze existing available sources to establish the approximate era and place for the prophet's birth and location of his activities (e.g. symbolism and imagery from the Gathas, correspondence between the Gathas and the Rig Veda)

The Bundahishin and other creation stories

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the Bundahishin and the creation legend of Mashya and Mashyanag
- ❖ Analyze the schematic time elements of the Bundahishin (e.g. the three time periods of creation, differentiate between the Getig and Menog state)
- ❖ Identify the Apocalyptic tradition, the promise of the redeemers and the final promise of restoration to perfection (e.g. Saoshyants, Frasho-Kereti, the defeat of Ahriman)
- ❖ Analyze the positioning of creation stories in explaining the world view of the Zarathushti faith

Medes, Achamenians, Parthians, Seleucids and Sassanians

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the ancient Iranian Dynasties (e.g. historical timeline of dynasties)
- ❖ Analyze the role of key emperors, kings and prelates in the preservation of the faith (e.g. Cyrus and Darius the Great, Ardashir Papakan, Kirdar and Tansar)
- ❖ Analyze the impact of key changes instituted during the rule of these dynasties on the beliefs and practices of the Zarathushti Faith (e.g. calendar changes, establishment of the Avestan canon)



Diaspora advent stories

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Summarize the Kissa I Sanjan story with key elements that explain Parsi origins
- ❖ Analyze the significance of this story to Parsi History (e.g. establishment of date of diaspora to the Indian sub-continent)
- ❖ Interpret Parsi cultural practices in light of the Kissa I Sanjan story (e.g. cultural adjustments in clothing, marriage ceremony after sunset)
- ❖ Compare and contrast to Indian sub-continent with later diasporas to the Western world in the 19th and 20th century

Beliefs, Rituals and Practices

Overall Expectations:

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Be able to summarize the Gathas and analyze key concepts contained therein such as duality, nature of good and evil, nature of Ahura Mazda, etc.
- ❖ Be able to analyze the role and function of the Amesha Spentas and Yazatas in the Zarathushti pantheon of divinities
- ❖ Be able to summarize and describe the Zarathushti concept of the Nature of Man
- ❖ Be able to analyze the Zarathushti concept of death and understand the meaning of ceremonies performed at the time
- ❖ Be able to identify specific metaphysical ideas that are important to Zarathushti theology
- ❖ Be able to identify and understand the nature and role of rituals in the Zarathushti faith
- ❖ Be able to summarize the key ideas and concepts of Jashan, Navjote and Wedding ceremonies and the Muktaḍ rituals



Specific Expectations:

Gathas

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Identify the structure and composition of the Gathas(e.g. division in to five hymns, names of the hymns, derivation from Yasna liturgy, style and syntax)
- ❖ Analyze and summarize fundamental concepts of the Zarathushti faith contained within the Gathas (e.g. Zarathushti concept of duality, nature of good and evil, nature of Ahura Mazda, choice and free will, role of mankind in the Zarathushti world view)

Amesha Spentas and Yazatas

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Assess and identify how the concept of the Amesha Spentas represent personified aspects of the nature of Ahura Mazda
- ❖ Identify the seven Amesha Spentas and their link with aspects of creation (e.g. names of the Amesha Spentas and the seven creations each is associated with)
- ❖ Analyze and understand the ethical structure of the Amesha Spentas as it relates to fundamental Zarathushti beliefs
- ❖ Demonstrate the application of the ethical structure of the Amesha Spentas to the everyday life of a Zarathushti(e.g. undertaking academic tasks using the ethical structure of the Amesha Spentas as a paradigm)
- ❖ Identify and demonstrate the connection between the Amesha Spentas and ecology
- ❖ Describe the nature, role and structure of the pantheon of Yazatas (e.g. names, nature of their identity, role in the Zarathushti cosmological structure as hamkars of Ahura Mazda)
- ❖ Identify the connections between the Amesha Spentas and the Yazatas (e.g. association with the Amesha Spentas as guardians of specific creations)
- ❖ Identify and understand the connection between the Yazatas and the Zarathushti calendar



Nature of Man

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Describe and identify the five parts of man as seen in Zarathushti doctrine (e.g. body, soul, Fravashi)
- ❖ Explain and understand the role of each of the components of man and the connection to Zarathushti theology and doctrine (e.g. soul as the decision maker linked to choice and free will, Fravashi as the spiritual component absolved from final judgement)
- ❖ Analyze the role of the soul and the concept of responsibility(e.g. the soul guides the ashavan to be the bearer of truth and make morally and ethically sound choices)
- ❖ Analyze and understand the role of the Fravashi and the Zarathushti concept of the parts of the Fravashi and their link to Zarathushti scripture and doctrine (e.g. the constituent parts of the wings representing the Has of the Yasna)

Death in Zarathushtrianism

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Identify and understand the Zarathushti perspective of death (e.g. death as the temporary triumph of evil)
- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the Zarathushti after-life doctrine (e.g. the three day wait of the soul before proceeding to judgement, the judgement of the soul at the bridge of the separator)
- ❖ Identify the connection between the after-death ceremonies and the Zarathushti perspective of death(e.g. the Sajkar, Sagdid, Geh Sarnu and Sejdo rituals)
- ❖ Analyze and understand the traditional method of disposal of the dead and its development in the Zarathushti faith (e.g. the dakhma system)

Key Metaphysical Concepts

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the monotheistic nature and attributes of Ahura Mazda (e.g. Ahura Mazda is uncreated, perfectly good and omniscient in nature)



- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the paradoxical nature of evil in Zarathushti metaphysics (e.g. Zarathushti concept of duality and the final omnipotence of Ahura Mazda)

Prayer, Language and Sacred texts

Overall Expectations:

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Be able to analyze and understand the nature and purpose of prayer
- ❖ Be able identify, recite and understand the meaning of basic prayers in Zarathushtrianism
- ❖ Be able to identify and understand the higher liturgies and ceremonies in the Zarathushti faith
- ❖ Be able to analyze the significance and centrality of the role of Fire in Zarathushtrianism
- ❖ Be able to identify the Ancient Sacred Fires, types of Fire Temples and the process of creation of Sacred Fires
- ❖ Be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the contents and formation of the Avesta
- ❖ Be able to identify and summarize some of the key Middle Persian and Pahlavi Texts and the Persian Rivayats
- ❖ Be able to identify the role and significance of the languages of the Old World – Cuneiform Systems, Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian and Pahlavi.
- ❖ Be able to identify the role and significance of the languages of the new World – Farsi, Gujarati and English (as they relate to transliteration of texts)

Specific Expectations:

Nature and purpose of prayer

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Identify the purpose and construction of prayer (e.g. prayer as communication with the divine, prayer as a devotional tool, prayer as a link with the past)
- ❖ Summarize the development of Zarathushti prayers (e.g. role in liturgical services)
- ❖ Identify the categories of prayer (e.g. seeking blessings, meditative, praise and propitiation)

Basic prayers in Zarathushtrianism

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Recite basic prayers (e.g. Ashem Vohu, Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Kem Na Mazda, Hormazd Khodaie, Jasa Me Avanghe Mazda, Din No Kalmo)
- ❖ Summarize and understand the meaning of the prayers and their appropriate usage (e.g. use during the Kushti Bandhan)

Higher liturgies and ceremonies in the Zarathushti faith

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Identify and summarize the significance of higher liturgical ceremonies (e.g. Yasna, Vendidad, Barashnom, Ijeshne)
- ❖ Analyze and understand the role and purpose of higher liturgical ceremonies and their connection to Zarathushti theology and doctrine (e.g. ritual purification with the Barashnom ceremony)

The Role of Fire in Zarathushtrianism

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Analyze and understand the centrality of fire as a dynamic icon in Zarathushtrianism (e.g. the role of fire in Zarathushtra's revelation, significance of fire in pre-Zarathushti times)
- ❖ Identify and understand the significance of fire in Zarathushti rituals, ceremonies and prayers (e.g. the veneration of fire in the Atash Nyaish)

Ancient Sacred Fires, Fire Temples and Sacred Fires

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Identify and summarize the history of the three ancient Sacred Fires of the Zarathushti faith (e.g. Adur Farnbag, Gushnap, Burzen Mihr)
- ❖ Analyze the historical development of Fire temples from ancient times to today
- ❖ Categorise the types of Fire Temples and grades of Sacred Fires (e.g. Adarans, Atash Bahram)



- ❖ Summarize the process of the creation and consecration of Sacred Fires (e.g. collection process, rituals involved)

Content and formation of the Avesta

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Identify and list the divisions of the Avesta as they exist today (e.g. Yasna, Yashts)
- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of the Avesta and its canonization (e.g. oral tradition to a fixed canon under the Sassanian Emperors)

Middle Persian and Pahlavi Texts and the Persian Rivayats

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ List and provide a brief summary of key Middle Persian and Pahlavi texts (e.g. Shkand Gumanig Wizar, Zadspram, Denkard)
- ❖ Analyze and understand the significance of the Persian Rivayats (e.g. discourse that resulted in the affirmation of traditions and rituals)

Languages of the Old World – Cuneiform Systems, Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian and Pahlavi.

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Summarize the evolution and progression of the languages of the Old World (e.g. development of Pahlavi from Old Persian)
- ❖ Examine the development of the Avestan Script (e.g. development of Avestan Script from Pahlavi)

Languages of the new World – Farsi, Gujarati and English (as they relate to transliteration of texts)

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Analyze the development and significance of the use of Gujarati and Farsi among the Zarathushti communities in India and Iran
- ❖ Analyze the impact of the English language in making accessible scripture to 20th and 21st century Zarathushtis



- ❖ Analyze the use of English language as medium through which to bring about a harmonization of Iranian and Indian Zarathushti traditions

Calendars, Festivals and celebrations

Overall Expectations:

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Be able to describe the Ancient Calendars and the historic issue of intercalations
- ❖ Be able to demonstrate their knowledge of calendar systems currently used in the Zarathushti faith
- ❖ Be able to demonstrate an understanding of festivals and celebration of Gahambars, Parabhs and Navroze and other festivals and celebrations

Specific Expectations:

Ancient Calendars and the historic issue of intercalations

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Summarize and demonstrate an understanding of the calendar system during the time of the Achaemenian, Seleucid, Parthian and Sassanian dynasties.
- ❖ Describe and demonstrate an understanding of the intercalation issues during the Sassanian dynasty

Calendar systems currently used in the Zarathushti faith

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Describe and be familiar with calendar systems currently in use in the Zarathushti faith (e.g. Shenshai, Kadmi, Fasli and other calendar systems used by Irani Zarathushtis)
- ❖ Identify and summarize the differences between the current calendar systems and the reasons for these differences (e.g. discovery of intercalation differences between Indian and Iranian calendars, modern origins of the Fasli calendar movement)

Festivals and celebration of Gahambars, Parabhs and Navroze

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the nature, role, reason and method of celebration of Gahambars (e.g. communal gathering feast days)
- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the nature, role, reason and method of observation of Parabhs (e.g. Ava Parabh, Atash Parabh, Tir Ghan)
- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the reason and method of celebrating Navroze and the commonalities and differences between the Parsi and Iranian celebration (e.g. Haft Seen table)
- ❖ Identify and summarize a variety of miscellaneous celebration and festivals in the Zarathushti faith (e.g. Yalda)

Living faith and contemporary manifestations

Overall Expectations

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Be able to analyze the development and significance of Zarathushtrianism in the Indian subcontinent
- ❖ Be able to analyze the continuity and significance of Zarathushtrianism in post-Islamic Iran
- ❖ Be able to trace the advent and evolution of Zarathushtrianism in North America in the modern era
- ❖ Be able to identify the spread of Zarathushtrianism in the wider global diaspora during the modern era



Specific Expectations:

Zarathushtrianism in the Indian subcontinent

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Trace the development of Zarathushtrianism in India from the 10th century onwards (e.g. development of Zarathushti communities in Gujarat, history of the sacred Iran-shah fire)
- ❖ Identify practices and customs of the Zarathushti community in the Indian subcontinent (e.g. development of the priestly sects)
- ❖ Analyze the contribution of the Zarathushti community in the historical continuum of the Indian subcontinent (e.g. contributions to pre-British India, contributions during British rule, contributions to the Indian independence movement)
- ❖ Identify current challenges faced by the Zarathushti community in the Indian subcontinent (e.g. population decline, inter-marriage, minority status)

Zarathushtrianism in post-Islamic Iran

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Trace the survival of Zarathushtrianism in Iran in the post-Islamic period (e.g. existence of Zarathushti communities through various caliphates and invasions)
- ❖ Identify the struggles and vicissitudes faced by Zarathushtis in post-Islamic Iran (e.g. persecutions, jizya tax)
- ❖ Identify current challenges faced by the Zarathushti community in Iran (e.g. population decline due to migration, living in a theocratic Islamic state)

Zarathushtrianism in North America in the modern era

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Trace the advent and development of the Zarathushti diaspora in North America
- ❖ Identify the social and historical contributions of Zarathushtis in North America



- ❖ Analyze the development of customs and practices unique to the Zarathushti faith in North America
- ❖ Identify current challenges faced by the Zarathushti community in North America

Zarathushtrianism in the wider global diaspora during the modern era

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Trace the development of Zarathushti communities across the globe (e.g. England, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa, Australia, New - Zealand)
- ❖ Identify the contributions made by Zarathushti communities to the countries in which they have settled
- ❖ Identify current challenges faced by Zarathushti communities in the global diaspora (e.g. declining numbers, assimilation)

Research, Inquiry and Communication skills

Overall Expectations

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Distinguish between fact and opinion, belief and religion, and theory and practice, as they apply to the study of religion
- ❖ Employ a variety of research methodologies in investigating topics in religious studies
- ❖ Communicate the results of these inquiries effectively

Specific Expectations

Using Research and Inquiry Skills

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Identify challenges in the study of religion that require specific methods of quantitative and/or qualitative research



- ❖ Conduct in-depth interviews, using an appropriate interview format, with individuals who have a variety of different perspectives and cultural backgrounds and who identify themselves as practicing Zarathushtis
- ❖ Explore and employ primary and secondary research material appropriately in conducting research and completing assignments
- ❖ Demonstrate an ability to organize, interpret, and evaluate the validity of information gathered through research
- ❖ Use text based as well as technological (electronic) tools in researching topics in the study of the Zarathushti faith
- ❖ Initiate and establish appropriate communication with people of different faiths, in order to develop a broader understanding and appreciation of other faiths

Communicating Results

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Effectively record information from their learning and research using correct forms of notation
- ❖ Effectively communicate the results of their inquiries, using a variety of methods and forms (e.g., charts, diagrams, oral presentations, written reports, essays, newspaper-style articles, videos and other media forms)
- ❖ Effectively record information from their learning and research using correct forms of notation
- ❖ Use an appropriate research format to investigate a socio-religious issue or problem, and present the methods, results, discussion, and conclusion as part of a larger group assignment
- ❖ Use communications technology appropriately to produce and disseminate the results of their research

