

Religion 101 Online Course Syllabus
Introduction to Religious Studies
Spring 2015 / 3 Credits

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: By appointment.

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Course Description

Explores the nature of religion as experienced historically throughout the world. Examines the nature of religious experience with the divine and the relationship between science and religion. Discusses the roles of language, myths, and symbols in religion.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Articulate an awareness of the varieties of religious expression and the dynamic nature of religious traditions.
- Describe a variety of methodological approaches to the study of religion (e.g. anthropological, philosophical, sociological, feminist, postcolonial).
- Discuss and examine the diverse debates and issues related to the study of religion.
- Practice reflexivity, identifying and critically examining the source and content of one's own cultural perspectives and world-views.

Learning Activities

Interactive Lecture Commentaries/ Forum Discussions

Watching and Commenting on Film, DVD

Self-directed Reading, Writing, and Research

Prerequisite Course(s):

Reading 90 and Writing 115 or above are *strongly* recommended.

Required Texts:

Kessler, G. E., (2008). *Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases* (3rd Ed.). New York; McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.

Pals, D. L., (2006). *Eight Theories of Religion* (2nd Ed.). New York; Oxford University Press.

Course Requirements

The final grade in this class will be determined by performances on assignments and activities shown below.

- **Reading/ Writing/ Online Participation:**
 - *Forum Discussions / Weekly writing assignments* (10 points per week, 100 points total): **Each week** you will write a short essay on the assigned readings and the lecture commentaries. You will be answering questions on the material and adding your own personal thoughts. You will then reply to two of your classmates' forum discussion posts. Click on the assignment or forum for each week and follow the instructions. It is your responsibility to: **CAREFULLY READ THE 'FORUM POST GUIDELINES' PDF AT THE TOP OF THE COURSE PAGE AND EACH WEEK'S SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS.**
 - *Schedule:* Unless otherwise stated, weekly Learning Modules can be accessed by 8pm the Friday before (Ex. Week 2 learning modules will be posted by Friday evening of week 1). Assignments and discussions need to be completed by Thursday at 8pm of each week.
- **Exams:** There will be 3 exams, worth 90-110 points each. The final exam will be cumulative. These will be given over the course of the term using a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay-type questions.
- **Research Paper:** During the 6th week course, a 4-5 page paper will require you to examine one major religion of your choice (outside of your own tradition). The research paper is worth 100 points. Instructions are posted at the top of the course page, under your syllabus.

Grading

Final letter grades will be assigned based on the total number of points earned divided by the total possible points (see chart below). It is possible that the total number of points will change during the term (to include extra assignments, snow days etc.). I reserve the right to curve the grading scale positively if deemed necessary.

Percent	Grade
90% or above	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% or below	F

Work	Points available	Your points
Discussion Forum Work	~100	
Exam 1	~100	
Exam 2	~100	
Research paper final draft	100	
Exam 3 (final)	~ 100	
Extra credit	(+8)	
Total:	~ 500	

Extra Credit (8 points possible – one of each activity)

If you are struggling in the class, and are worried about your final grade, there will be up to 8 points available for extra credit. If you have questions about your choice of activity / program you will use (or, if you have an idea of your own), please do not hesitate to ask me. *I hope you take advantage of the extra credit opportunities offered for this course. This is your chance to experience religion and the ongoing dialogue about religion happening presently in our community -- which can be easily accessed by the curious-minded!*

Attend an event/service (5 points): You may attend a religious service or event (outside of your own tradition or closely related denomination) at any point during the term and write a 2-page, double-spaced paper including your thoughts and impressions on the experience. If you would prefer to attend a lecture about religion (for example, a debate on Jesus hosted by the Socratic Society at OSU would be a great option), I will accept a 2-page, double-spaced paper outlining the main points of discussion and your thoughts on the subject.

Listen to a Podcast (3 points): You may enjoy streaming a radio program or watching a documentary while earning extra credit. I will accept a full 1-page, double-spaced, paper outlining the main points of discussion and your thoughts on the subject.

On Being, hosted by Krista Tippett

onbeing.org

(Click on *Archive*, pick a program that interests you personally. This is one of my favorite radio programs.)

Philosophy Talk, hosted by Ken Taylor and John Perry of Stanford University

<http://www.philosophytalk.org/>

(Click on *past programs*. These are not all specifically related to religion *per se*, so here are a few that will meet the religion requirement: St.

Augustine; Faith, Reason and Science; Islamic Philosophy; Worship; Challenges to Free Will; Gandhi; Believing in God; The Problem of Evil; Jewish Philosophy; Concept of God; Confucius; Zen; The Existence of God; Religion and the Secular State; and, Has Science Replaced Religion?

Frontline – *The Mormons* (video)

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/>

(Click on *watch online*, scroll down to April 30, 2007, *The Mormons*)

This is a very interesting documentary on the historical and modern Mormon traditions. I wish I could show this in class, but it is quite long. So, if you have an interest in learning about this rapidly growing religion, have at it!

Tentative Course Schedule

Week/Class	Textbook Readings for the Week (in addition to Moodle readings)	Material to be covered: topics / lectures/ documentaries	Important dates: Exams / Research Paper due date
<u>Week 1</u> Mar 30- Apr 5	Kessler: Ch. 1, pp. 10-12; Ch. 2, 14-24	Introduction/Syllabus Defining Religion /	Research Paper Instructions Posted below syllabus.
<u>Week 2</u> Apr 6-12	Kessler: Ch. 2, pp. 24-35 Kessler: Ch. 1 pp. 1-3; Handout	Theology & Religious Studies; <i>Hinduism</i> Insider/ Outsider	
<u>Week 3</u> Apr 13-19	Kessler: Ch. 7 pp. 133-138, Ch. 11 pp. 242-246	Orientalism <i>Buddhism</i>	Study guide for Exam posted
<u>Week 4</u> Apr 20-26	<i>Study for exam 1</i> Pals: Ch. 7 (Evans-Pritchard)	Exam 1 Anthropology of Religion/ Writing for Research	Exam 1
<u>Week 5</u> Apr 27- May 3	Pals: Ch. 3 (Durkheim)	Sociology of Religion/ Writing for Research <i>Judaism</i>	
<u>Week 6</u> May 4-10	Pals: Ch. 6 (Eliade)	Phenomenology of Religion <i>Christianity</i>	Research Papers Due Wednesday, May 6th at 11pm
<u>Week 7</u> May 11-17	Kessler; Ch. 8 pp 161 and 174-181 The Book of Job (Hebrew Bible)	Philosophy of Religion Theodicy / <i>Kushner</i>	Study guide for Exam 2 posted
<u>Week 8</u> May 18-24	<i>Study for Exam 2</i> Kessler: Ch. 4 on Myth (read all)	Exam 2 Myth and Ritual/ <i>Campbell</i>	Exam 2
<u>Week 9</u> May 25-31	(<i>See Moodle</i>)	<i>Islam</i> New Religious Movements	Extra Credit Due Wednesday, March 4th at 11pm
<u>Week 10</u> June 1-7	Kessler: Ch. 11, pp. 264-268	Science and Religion Gender and Religion	Study guide for Exam 3 posted
<u>Finals Week</u> June 8-14	<i>See instructions on Moodle</i>	Final Exam	Final Exam, Cumulative Finished by Monday, 8th at 7pm

Class Policies:

Plagiarism: I reserve the right to issue an “F” grade for an assignment or the entire course if a student is found to have cheated or plagiarized. I do not allow students to re-write research papers for a higher grade. All direct quotes *and* information from outside sources must be cited within the text *and* in a bibliography or reference page. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism. If you are unsure, please seek help in the writing lab.

READ ALL Inclusive community / constructive discussions: This material is inherently interesting, but it can also be a sensitive subject to discuss. As a class we must welcome participation, open discussion, and insight from all. Please remember to keep an open mind, and be respectful to me as your instructor and to your peers. The field of religious studies is incredibly vast and we simply do not have time to delve deeply into each topic. You are expected to engage positively, and even critically, with the material presented. However, using online class forums to complain or to be consistently negative towards another’s traditions or culture will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to delete posts if necessary.

Late work: I do not accept late work (research papers, exams, weekly assignments etc). I do not allow students to re-take exams, or to re-write research papers (this is why the calendar is so specific). Please talk to me in the case of severe medical emergencies.

E-mail: Read the e-mail etiquette guidelines posted at the top of the course. I will respond to your e-mails within **2 business days**. Please plan accordingly.

College Policies:

Disability Services: Students who may need accommodations due to documented disabilities, who have medical information which the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in an emergency, should speak with the instructor during the first week of class. If you have not accessed services and think you may need them, please contact Disability Services, 917-4789.

Institutional Withdrawal / Waitlist Policy: Students who do not log on to the course by Tuesday at 12pm may be dropped from the course in order to allow for wait-listed student enrollment. Also, students who do not participate in week 1’s discussion boards will be dropped from the course. If you are on the waitlist, and wish to take the course you must e-mail me your intent to take the course by Tuesday at 12pm in order to be added if there is room.

Drop Policy: Students are responsible for knowing the last day to drop the course for a full refund. Also, be aware of the last day to officially withdraw from this course for transcripts to show a ‘W.’

Incomplete Grades: You may be eligible for an ‘Incomplete’ grade if you have finished 90% of the class work. Should you receive an ‘Incomplete,’ all course work must be finished by the end of the next term. Please contact the instructor prior to term’s end with appropriate documentation for requesting an ‘Incomplete.’