

University of Calgary
Faculty of Arts
Department of Classics and Religion

Course Outline – Fall 2020

**RELS 205:
RELIGION AND THE GOOD LIFE**

(Hybrid course with synchronous and asynchronous elements)

Course	Religion and the Good Life		
Time	Monday/Wednesday/Friday 11:00-11:50 AM		
Room	Zoom for synchronous sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays Friday sessions will be asynchronous		
Course Zoom Link	Coming soon		
Instructor	Office Hours	Office	Contact Information
Dr. Joy Palacios	Mon. and Wed., 12:00-1:00 PM	SS 534	E: joy.palacios@ucalgary.ca
Dr. Palacios' Office Hour Zoom Link:			
Coming soon			
Teaching Assistant	Office Hours	Office	Contact Information
			E:
Teaching Assistant's Office Hours Zoom Link:			
Coming soon			

Instructor Email Policy:

Please note that all course communications must occur through your @ucalgary email. I will do my best to respond to emails sent via students' @ucalgary emails within 48 hours.

Course Calendar Statement:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.html>

Required text(s):

Hexham, Irving. *Understanding World Religions: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Optional text(s): None

Course description:

This course examines the way religious beliefs and practices in a range of traditions propose conceptual and practical solutions to what John Milton Yinger has called "the ultimate problems of human life." How do religions model different versions of the good life and what kinds of attitudes and actions do they associate with human thriving? After a brief introduction to the problem of defining religion, we

will consider religious understandings of the self or its absence, ideas regarding salvation and enlightenment, strategies for fending off evil, and methods for connecting with the divine or ultimate reality. Reformulated as questions, these topics concern issues such as: Who are we and why are we here? What is happiness and how do we attain it? Why do bad things happen and what can we do about it? And how is human existence related to some sort of transcendent reality? Religious traditions studied will include African traditional religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. An ability to analyze primary sources – which include, among other things, images, symbols, religious objects, and rituals – is fundamental to the academic study of religion. In order to develop this skill, each synchronous session will use primary sources to explore the way religious traditions represent human thriving and its obstacles. Pre-recorded lectures and readings from *Understanding World Religions* will provide background information about each tradition.

Online elements for this course:

This course will use a **hybrid format**, which means it will combine synchronous and asynchronous elements.

- **Synchronous elements** are those that require everyone to be online at specific times. In this class, we will all meet together on Zoom on Mondays and Wednesdays during our scheduled class time (11:00-11:50 AM).
- **Asynchronous elements** are those that do not require you to be online at a specific time (although some of these elements may need to be downloaded or completed within a given timeframe). In this class, asynchronous elements will include, for example, pre-recorded lectures that you download and watch, readings you will do on your own from the textbook, primary sources posted as PDF files, assignments submitted through D2L, and the final exam conducted online via D2L.

We will not hold a synchronous session on Fridays in order to give you extra time to download, read, watch, and complete the asynchronous elements of the course. Our synchronous sessions will focus on interactive activities, such as in-class discussions and teamwork, which would be difficult to conduct or less fruitful if we were to do them asynchronously.

Synchronous dates:

We will meet synchronously via Zoom on Mondays and Wednesdays

9 Sept (11:00-11:50)
14 Sept (11:00-11:50)
16 Sept (11:00-11:50)
21 Sept (11:00-11:50)
23 Sept (11:00-11:50)
28 Sept (11:00-11:50)
30 Sept (11:00-11:50)
5 Oct. (11:00-11:50)
7 Oct. (11:00-11:50)
14 Oct. (11:00-11:50)
19 Oct. (11:00-11:50)
21 Oct. (11:00-11:50)
26 Oct. (11:00-11:50)

28 Oct. (11:00-11:50)
2 Nov. (11:00-11:50)
4 Nov. (11:00-11:50)
16 Nov. (11:00-11:50)
18 Nov. (11:00-11:50)
23 Nov. (11:00-11:50)
25 Nov. (11:00-11:50)
30 Nov. (11:00-11:50)
2 Dec. (11:00-11:50)
7 Dec. (11:00-11:50)
9 Dec. (11:00-11:50)

Core Competencies:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

Knowledge:

- Compare and apply academic definitions of religion
- Identify the understandings of self, salvation/enlightenment, evil, and divine connection associated with each of the six religious traditions covered by the course
- Recognize and interpret important texts, images, symbols, and performances from each of the traditions covered

Skills:

- Apply basic methods of textual and visual analysis important in the study of religion
- Analyze the way an excerpt of scripture, image, symbol, or ritual performance expresses a religious tradition's conception of human thriving

Course Requirements:

Your learning in this course will be assessed in the following ways:

1. Class participation (5%)

Your engagement with the asynchronous course elements and your contribution to the synchronous sessions is crucial to your success in the course, as well as to the learning of your peers. For more information about how participation will be evaluated, please see the Participation handout in D2L.

2. Team analyses of primary sources (10 x 2% = 20%)

Each week, the class will work in teams using Zoom breakout rooms during the Wednesday synchronous session to discuss and analyze a primary source in response to a series of prompts. The team will submit their responses via D2L in a shared document by 11:00 AM on Friday. Teams will complete ten primary source analyses during the semester, worth 2% each, for a total of 20% of the final grade.

3. Midterms exam (20%)

We will conduct our midterm exam via D2L on Wednesday, October 21st. You will have a 24-hour window in which to begin the exam so that you can choose the time of day that works best for you. Once you begin the exam, you will have 75 minutes to complete it, per University of Calgary policy (1.5 times the length of a class session). The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and one essay question. Once the exams are completed, each student will then read and evaluate three anonymized exam essays from other students in the class, using a preestablished rubric and providing substantive feedback in the form of at least one encouraging comment and one comment about what could be improved. The grade for the essay portion of the exam will be the average of the three marks given by anonymous peer reviewers. After receiving feedback on your essay, you will have the opportunity to grade the quality of the feedback you received. Two percent of the exam grade will represent the average mark given to the quality of your feedback by the students whose essays you evaluated. This process replicates on a micro-scale the process of peer review by means of which scholars produce and evaluate new knowledge in academic journals and is intended to position you as a critical thinker and doer rather than a passive recipient of knowledge.

4. Primary source analysis essay (25%)

For the primary source analysis essay, you will select a primary source from a list of options provided on D2L. These will include the types of sources we will have discussed during our synchronous sessions, such as excerpts of scripture, images, symbols, or video recordings of ritual performances. Then you will write a paper (750-1000 words) analyzing the way the primary source expresses some aspect of the “good life” as conceived by the religious tradition from which the source is drawn. See the handout on D2L for more details.

5. Written exam (30%)

We will conduct our registrar-scheduled final exam via D2L. The exam will likely include multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and essay questions. I will provide more detailed information about the types of questions on each exam closer to the date so that you can prepare.

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)	Required pass/fail
18 Sept.	Team Primary Source Analysis #1	2%	
25 Sept.	Team Primary Source Analysis #2	2%	
2 Oct.	Team Primary Source Analysis #3	2%	
9 Oct.	Team Primary Source Analysis #4	2%	
16 Oct.	Team Primary Source Analysis #5	2%	
21 Oct.	Midterm Exam	20%	

26 Oct.	Evaluation of anonymized essays due	<i>Part of midterm exam</i>	
28 Oct.	Evaluation of peer feedback due	<i>Part of midterm exam</i>	
30 Oct.	Team Primary Source Analysis #6	2%	
6 Nov.	Team Primary Source Analysis #7	2%	
16 Nov.	Primary Source Analysis Essay	25%	
20 Nov.	Team Primary Source Analysis #8	2%	
27 Nov.	Team Primary Source Analysis #9	2%	
4 Dec.	Team Primary Source Analysis #10	2%	
Registrar scheduled final via D2L (open book and notes; use of non-course materials such as Google prohibited)	Written Exam	30%	

Grading:

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme, usually used within the Department of Classics and Religion:

A+	100 – 96%	A	95 – 90%	A-	89 – 85%
B+	84 – 80%	B	79 – 75%	B-	74 – 70%
C+	69 – 65%	C	64 – 60%	C-	59 – 55%
D+	54 – 53%	D	52 – 50%	F	Under 50%

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

Syllabus:

A complete syllabus will be made available the first week of class.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

Policy with regards to missed assignments/assessments:

Unless you have made a prior arrangement with me for an extension, the weekly Team Primary Source Analysis and the Primary Source Analysis Essay will be **marked down by 1% for each hour they are late**. This policy is meant to encourage the timely submission of work.

At the same time, I know that we all juggle multiple, competing deadlines in our lives (me too!), and I am willing to work with you. **I want you to succeed in this course**. When you find yourself in a pinch, you have the following options:

- For the Team Primary Source Analysis, each team has two “extension cards” that will allow them to submit their team analysis by Monday at 11 AM instead of on Friday at 11 AM, no explanations needed or questions asked. To use an “extension card,” your team must email before 11 AM on the Friday that your analysis is due. Please include the phrase “Extension Card” in the subject line of your email.
- For the Primary Source Analysis Essay, the stated deadline is Monday, November 16th by 11 AM. I am, however, willing to arrange alternative deadlines when you contact me in advance. (I can’t grade all the essays at once anyway!) If you would like to request an alternative deadline for the essay, **send me an email before Friday, November 6th** and we will work together to select a suitable deadline.
- If health or family crises emerge that impact your ability to meet course deadlines and the above options are not sufficient, please email me so that we can work together to find a solution.

Class participation marks, especially for our Monday synchronous Zoom sessions, cannot be made up. However, everyone gets one free Monday absence. When health matters (medical appointments, etc.) or personal crises (sick parents or dependents, etc.) prevent you from attending the Monday sessions, you can submit a Statutory Declaration Form so that I can determine whether or not to excuse your absence.

Monday synchronous sessions will be recorded in Zoom and uploaded to D2L. On Wednesdays, the synchronous sessions will not be recorded because teams will be working in small groups via Zoom breakout rooms to prepare their Team Primary Source Analyses.

Expectations for student conduct in this course:

You will get the most out of this course if you complete the readings and videos in advance of our synchronous Zoom sessions. Our synchronous sessions will involve active learning, discussion, and reflection, either in collaboration with the whole class (in which case tools such as Top Hat will help provide opportunities for engagement) or in small groups. In all cases, your ideas and perspective are vital to the class. Please come to class ready to think and share.

During class discussions and activities, I expect each member of the course to help me create a positive learning environment by listening respectfully to each other, using transitions (“As Julia said, I think...”, “I agree/disagree with Mohad because...”, “I want to build on that idea...”), and by refraining from statements that signal judgment. We will be discussing material that can be sensitive and about which members of the course may have strong feelings. For this reason, all members of the class will be asked to use vocabulary that signals observation, description, analysis, scholarly argument, and hypothesis formation.

Electronic Device Policy:

The materials I post for this class are to be used for your own personal study and are protected by copyright (see below, ‘Copyright Regulations’), by the University of Calgary’s regulations for recording of lectures (see Calendar, section E.6: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>), and by federal and provincial privacy legislation. This means that:

- you must not distribute, copy, post elsewhere, or share **any course materials** with people outside our class.

- you must not make, distribute, copy, post elsewhere, or share **recordings of synchronous sessions or presentations by your fellow students.**
- you must not share with others or on any social media platforms **the Zoom link or password for synchronous sessions.** Zoom links and passwords are only intended for students registered in the course.

By taking this class you agree to these conditions. If you have any questions about this, please contact the instructor.

Learning Technologies and Requirements:

This course will use a D2L site to post required readings, lecture videos, handouts, and other relevant class resources and materials. We will use Zoom for our synchronous sessions and for office hours.

In order to successfully engage in this course, you will need the following:

- Access to a computer, laptop, or tablet with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates
- A current and updated web browser
- Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone
- Broadband internet access
- Your UCID
- A webcam (built-in or external) is strongly recommended

For the synchronous sessions and office hours, I encourage you to use your microphone and camera, because this helps us all get to know each other and feel comfortable working together. We are a learning community and it is easier to build a sense of collaborative camaraderie when we can see each other. If you have concerns about this, or if you will not have access to a microphone and camera during synchronous sessions, please contact me to let me know.

Guidelines for Zoom Sessions:

Zoom is a video conferencing program that will allow us to meet at specific times for a “live” video conference, so that we can have the opportunity to meet each other virtually and discuss relevant course topics as a learning community.

To help ensure Zoom sessions are private, do not share the Zoom link or password with others, or on any social media platforms. Zoom links and passwords are only intended for students registered in the course. Zoom recordings and materials presented in Zoom, including any teaching materials, must not be shared, distributed or published without the instructor’s permission.

The use of video conferencing programs relies on participants to act ethically, honestly and with integrity; and in accordance with the principles of fairness, good faith, and respect (as per the Code of Conduct). When entering Zoom or other video conferencing sessions (such as MS Teams), you play a role in helping create an effective, safe and respectful learning environment. Please be mindful of how your behaviour in these sessions may affect others. Participants are required to use names officially associated with their UCID (legal or preferred names listed in the Student Centre) when engaging in these activities. Instructors/moderators can remove those whose names do not appear on class rosters. Non-compliance may be investigated under relevant University of Calgary conduct policies (e.g Student Non-Academic Misconduct Policy). If participants have difficulties complying with this requirement, they

should email the instructor of the class explaining why, so the instructor may consider whether to grant an exception, and on what terms. For more information on how to get the most out of your zoom sessions visit: <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/guidelines-for-zoom/>.

If you are unable to attend a Zoom session, please contact your instructor to arrange an alternative activity for the missed session (e.g., to review a recorded session). Please be prepared, as best as you are able, to join class in a quiet space that will allow you to be fully present and engaged in Zoom sessions. Students will be advised by their instructor when they are expected to turn on their webcam (for group work, presentations, etc.).

The instructor may record online Zoom class sessions for the purposes of supporting student learning in this class – such as making the recording available for review of the session or for students who miss a session. Students will be advised before the instructor initiates a recording of a Zoom session. These recordings will be used to support student learning only and will not be shared or used for any other purpose.

Expectations for Writing:

All written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Learning Commons. For further information, please refer to the official online University of Calgary Calendar, Academic Regulations, E. Course Information, E.2: Writing Across the Curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>. A detailed handout and rubric will be provided for each writing assignment.

Course Evaluations and Feedback:

Student feedback will be sought at the end of the course through the standard University Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) and Faculty course evaluation forms. A midterm evaluation may also be included to provide students an opportunity to provide feedback, for the instructor to adjust their approaches to teaching and learning, and to continuously improve the course. Students are welcome to discuss the process and content of the course at any time with the instructor.

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY POLICIES AND SUPPORTS

Academic Misconduct:

Academic Misconduct refers to student behavior which compromises proper assessment of a student's academic activities and includes: cheating; fabrication; falsification; plagiarism; unauthorized assistance; failure to comply with an instructor's expectations regarding conduct required of students completing academic assessments in their courses; and failure to comply with exam regulations applied by the Registrar.

For information on the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure please visit: <https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-academic-misconduct-policy.pdf>

<https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-academic-misconduct-procedure.pdf>

Additional information is available on the Academic Integrity Website at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>.

Copyright Regulations:

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the [Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright Policy](#) and understand their copyright responsibilities. Instructor created content (lecture presentations, assignments, exams, etc.) have been designed for use as part of this course at the University of Calgary and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters and articles) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. Copyright-protected materials may only be copied or distributed provided it is permissible to do so under [Canadian Copyright law](#), university agreements and permission from the copyright holder. Find out more about copyright at library.ucalgary.ca/copyright.

Student Accommodations:

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures listed below. The Student Accommodations policy is available at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/access/prospective-students/academic-accommodations>.

Students needing an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf>). Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than Disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Instructor Intellectual Property

Course materials created by instructors (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

Desire 2 Learn (D2L) Help:

Go to <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students> for Student Help and FAQ's about D2L. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are also available on this website.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

- For program planning and advice, students in the Faculty of Arts will contact The Arts Students' Centre (ASC). Drop in at SS102, call at 403-220-3580 or email at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <https://arts.ucalgary.ca> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Block.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy:

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP): https://www.ucalgary.ca/hr/freedom_of_information_and_protection_of_privacy

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act indicates that assignments given by you to your course instructor will remain confidential unless otherwise stated before submission. The assignment cannot be returned to anyone else without your express permission. Similarly, any information about yourself that you share with your course instructor will not be given to anyone else without your permission. As one consequence, students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number on each subsequent page

Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative:

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See <https://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/> for more information. The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at arts1@su.ucalgary.ca.

Sexual Violence Policy:

The University recognizes that all members of the University Community should be able to learn, work, teach and live in an environment where they are free from harassment, discrimination, and violence. The University of Calgary's sexual violence policy guides us in how we respond to incidents of sexual violence, including supports available to those who have experienced or witnessed sexual violence, or those who are alleged to have committed sexual violence. It provides clear response procedures and timelines, defines complex concepts, and addresses incidents that occur off-campus in certain circumstances. Please see the policy available at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/sexual-violence-policy.pdf>

Safewalk:

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus

visitors 24 hours per day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.

Health and Wellness:

There are services available to students to help with physical and mental health, including the SU Wellness Centre: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>

Learn more about the Campus Mental Health Strategy here: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>

Other Important Information:

Please visit the Registrar's website at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for additional important information on the following:

- Emergency/Assembly points
- Student Success
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information