

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION**

**COURSE OUTLINE – Fall 2017**

**Course:** RELS 333-01 Religious Perspectives on Death & Afterlife  
**Time:** Tuesday 3:30-6:15  
**Instructor:** Craig W. C. Ginn, PhD  
**Office Hours:** Monday 2:30-3:30. Additional hours by appointment.  
**Office:** SS 516  
**E-mail:** cwcginn@ucalgary.ca  
**Telephone:** 220-5695

**Required Text(s):**

*Beyond the Threshold: Afterlife Beliefs and Experiences in World Religions.* Christopher M. Moreman. Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., First paperback edition 2010.

NOTE: If a student has access to an online version of the textbook that is without page numbers, it is the responsibility of the student to synchronize the readings with the required textbook.

**Course Description:**

What is death? Is there an Afterlife existence? Why do religious figures and traditions make truth-claims about the Afterlife and what is the reception? How did religious founders die and what were their final utterances? When facing death, do followers look to religious leaders as exemplars? Why do humans sacralize places and artifacts associated with death? What are near-death experiences (NDEs). Do humans fear or deny death?

This course will explore religious perspectives on death and the Afterlife. Course material will explore ancient conceptions of death and the Afterlife, as well as the Afterlife beliefs represented in the major world religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity (including Mormonism), and Islam. Other religious traditions may be considered including Jainism, Sikhism, and the Inuit tradition. Course material will provide historical context of beliefs, texts, and rituals, and explore the evolution of belief and practice over time. Where applicable unique features of individual religions will be emphasized, such as mourning practices in Judaism, resurrection and the Shroud of Turin in Christianity, Muhammad's Night Journey and the concept of martyrdom in Islam, Mormonism and baptism for the dead, cremation and reincarnation in Hinduism, and the Tibetan Book of the Dead in Buddhism.

Various beliefs/doctrines will be explored including beliefs of the human condition, the soul/the self, sacrifice, martyrdom, the intermediate state, heaven(s), and hell(s), and judgment. This course will also consider the spirituality of death in the broader cultural context of North America and may consider various topics, such as near death experiences, death and the Afterlife in song lyrics, the role of chaplaincy, and the secularization of funerals. Students will be introduced to various methodological approaches.

## Online elements for this course:

As required, additional readings and resources will be posted on D2L.

## Core Competencies:

Upon completion of this course, students will become familiar with:

- key terms and concepts in the study of religion, death, and the Afterlife
- dimensional and comparative analysis of religion related to death and the Afterlife
- various methodological approaches in the study of death and the Afterlife
- views of death and the Afterlife represented by various religions and traditions
- the importance of symbols, objects, relics, and artifacts associated with death and the Afterlife
- the religious importance attached to disposal of the body and funerary rites
- reductionist and non-reductionist views in the discussion of religion and the Afterlife
- the interest in paranormal phenomena, including NDEs, mediums, and exorcisms

## Course Requirements:

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)
Midterm Exam	October 31 (3:30-4:45)	30%
Research Paper	Due December 5 (3:30 pm)	40%
Final Exam	To be scheduled by the Registrar	30%

**Final Examination Period:** The final exam will be scheduled by the Registrar. Students must be available to write the final exam on the day and time set by the Registrar's Office, up to the last day of the examination period as specified in the Academic Schedule. The dates of the final exam period are December 11-21. A final exam cannot be deferred for misreading the final examination schedule or accommodating travel plans or work schedules. Valid reasons include illness or personal emergency, religious observance, or domestic affliction. Students with three exams in 24 hours may defer one of their exams to the deferred final examination period. For further information see Deferred Exams <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred-exams>

## Research Paper:

Students will choose from a list of topics provided by the instructor. Research paper specifications and a marking rubric will be posted on D2L. A hard copy must be submitted at the beginning of class (3:30 pm) on December 5. Do not email the research paper. Length: 1800-2000 words. Do not exceed 2000 words. Assignments that exceed 2000 words will be deducted 5% per 100 excess words.

## Writing Assistance:

The instructor will not read through or evaluate a student's research paper in advance of the due date. If a student would like to present a rough draft of the research paper to the instructor in advance of the due date, the student may bring the rough draft to the instructor during office hours or arranged appointment. The instructor will read select sections of the draft and advise the student according to the marking rubric. Do not email the rough draft to the instructor. For assistance in writing, students are advised to consult Writing and Learning Services.

**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.

**Adjusted Grades:**

The instructor will implement .5% as a standard measure of adjustment for grades. For example, a final grade of 64.5% (C) will be rounded up to 65% (C+). Please do not send email inquiries asking the instructor to increase or 'round up' your final grade.

**Policy with regard to missed assessments:**

If a student misses the midterm exam, the student must provide the instructor with supporting documentation (note from doctor, counselor, accident report, etc.) within 48 hours of the absence. If documentation is not provided within 48 hours, the student will not be provided an opportunity to make up the midterm exam and will receive a numerical mark of zero.

**Extra Assignments:**

There are no extra assignments for this course. Students will not be given an opportunity to submit extra work or retake exams to increase their grade.

**Expectations for student conduct in this course:**

Please be courteous toward other students in the course. For students who raise questions during class, please contribute to the resourceful use of classroom time by limiting the number of questions you ask in each class. While evaluative inquiries are permitted, students are encouraged to steer them toward objective investigation rather than confessional or adversarial agendas.

**Expectations for email correspondence in this course:**

Email must be sent from a U of C email account. Please do NOT send from other accounts, such as Gmail or Hotmail.

Please include the subject of your email and clearly identify yourself by name and the course you are registered in. Please do not send email inquiries related to dates and deadlines. Students shall refer to the university calendar, course outline, and final exam schedule for schedule information. Inquiries related to exams or assignments must be sent no less than 24 hours before a deadline.

The instructor will reply to emails on business days.

**Electronic Device Policy:**

Laptops are permitted during class if used for the purpose of taking lecture notes. Do not use laptops during class for email, Facebook, or other social or recreational activities. Cell phones must be turned off during the entire class time. Texting during class is not permitted. Taking pictures in the classroom is not permitted, including picture-taking of data projector images and slides. Students that distract the instructor or other students due to the misuse of electronic devices during class will be asked to leave the classroom for the duration of the lecture.

Recording of lectures is prohibited without the consent of the instructor. According to Academic Regulations E.6, "With the permission of the instructor, students may tape record lectures, provided that the student and instructor sign a Release form available from departmental and faculty offices. A copy of the Release form shall be retained by the instructor and by the department in which the course is offered." Regulation E.6 includes the notification to students, "Any use other than that described above constitutes academic misconduct and may result in suspension or expulsion." Regulation E.6 includes a statement on the Copyright Act: "The Copyright Act and the copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors."

**Office hours:**

Office hours are structured in 15-minute appointments. Sign-up sheets for the semester are posted on the instructor's door at SS 516. If a student is not able to meet with the instructor during office hours, the student may request to meet at an alternative time during department hours. Appointments for meetings outside of office hours must be requested in person before or after class, followed by an email request. If a student requires an extended meeting, the student must make an appointment outside of the instructor's scheduled office hours during department hours. Generally extended meetings will not exceed 30 minutes and will be scheduled on a weekly basis according to the instructor's availability. Appointments for extended meetings must be requested in person before or after class, followed by an email request identifying the list of items the student would like to discuss. Note: The instructor will not be available for office hours on October 5 (statutory holiday), November 13 (midterm break), or November 20 (Annual Meeting American Academy of Religion).

**Syllabus:**

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

**Academic Honesty:**

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar (section K, which can be found here: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>). If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor, or librarian staff.

**Student Accommodations:**

The student accommodation policy can be found at: [ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy](http://ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy).

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy).

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

### **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](mailto:ascarts@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> 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 Library.

### **Freedom of Information and Privacy:**

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP): <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/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 [www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds](http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds) for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at [arts1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@ucalgary.ca).

### **Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point:**

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at [www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints](http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints). Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

**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 hrs/day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.