

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY - FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION  
COURSE OUTLINE - FALL TERM 2016**

**RELS 338.01  
ATHEISM AND THE CRITICISM OF RELIGION  
This is a blended learning course**

<b>Instructor:</b>	Irving Hexham
<b>Teaching Assistant:</b>	TBA
<b>Class time:</b>	MW 10-10.50
<b>D2L Blended Assignments:</b>	F. 10-10.50
<b>Class location:</b>	AD 142
<b>Office hours:</b>	SS 538, M 11-12, or by appointment.
<b>Telephone:</b>	220-5886 (leave a message with the Secretary)
<b>E-mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:rels338.atheism@ucalgary.ca">rels338.atheism@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>Web site:</b>	<a href="http://people.ucalgary.ca/~uwr/">http://people.ucalgary.ca/~uwr/</a>

Please note: due to University of Calgary regulations all emails from and to students must be sent from a registered ucalgary.ca email address. Any other emails received will be deleted.

**Course description:**

Karl Marx declared that “the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism.” This course examines the criticism of religion concentrating on its development in Western society over the past two hundred years. This includes the development of modern agnosticism, atheism, and in recent times the ‘new atheism.’

The lectures will concentrate on what historians call “the Victorian crisis of faith” because it is in this period that the arguments used by critics of contemporary religion were developed into their modern forms. The course begins by examining traditional Christian beliefs and then looks at the rise of anti-Christian and later anti-religious arguments and movements beginning with the work of Tom Paine. It pays particular attention to the change from earlier rationalist attacks on religion, such as those initiated by Paine to sociological and psychological critiques developed by Ludwig Feuerbach and people influenced by him like Karl Marx. Throughout the course these issues are linked to these social and political movements. Finally, the impact of such arguments on non-Christian religions are discussed throughout the course.

**Teaching and learning – blended learning:**

This is a course that emphasizes reading, writing, and individual research by the student. To this end it is designed as a “blended learning” course. This means it is a course where one lecture session per week is set aside for students to view and use Internet assignments such as lectures, films, and interactive websites. Normally the day set aside for these activities will be Friday where there will be no classroom activities. Instead you will view an assignment that will be linked to the course pages on D2L.

N.B. The time assigned to these online sessions averages 50 minutes per week, but this may vary because some films are longer and some shorter than 50 minutes. Therefore, if a session is longer than the allocated time the next session will be shorter to compensate for your extra work.

**Core competencies**

At the end of this course students ought to be able to:

- 1) Understand the origins and significance of the criticism of religion.
- 2) Think critically about atheism, related ideas, and what they imply for society.
- 3) Gain an appreciation of the importance of different academic methods and theories
- 4) Be able to make informed judgments about religion and the criticism of religion and the reliability of specific books and texts.

**Textbooks:**

Irving Hexham, ed., *Modern Agnosticism and Unbelief: A Book of Readings*. This will be made available in pdf format on D2L and is available for free.

Additional readings in the form of academic articles will be listed on D2L. These will be available for download from the University of Calgary Library or online.

**Optional readings and study aids:**

The website [www.understandingworldreligions.com](http://www.understandingworldreligions.com) provides extensive supporting materials for this course.

**Course Requirements:**

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)	Required
<b>Blogs</b>			
2 October by midnight	First mini-Blog	15%	
6 November by midnight	Second mini-Blog	15%	
4 December by midnight	Third mini-Blog	15%	
<b>Tests</b>			
14 October in class	First test	20%	
25 November in class	Second test	20%	
9 December in class	Final test	10%	
Class participation	Based D2L materials	5%	
<b>No final exam</b>			

**Tests:**

The tests are multiple choice and will be administered in class.

Please note sample questions will not be issued for this course. The reason for this is that some students spoiled things for you by complaining that the tests were too easy and that the answers could be found on various websites. As a result the nature of tests had to be changed.

**Assignment mini-Blogs:**

For this course you must write three mini-blogs. Instructions for writing the mini-Blogs will be posted on D2L and discussed in class. You must submit your blogs to the dropbox section of D2L for Rels 338.

Blogs sent to other email addresses will not be accepted.

When you submit your blog assignments write the subject line of your email as follows:

Your Name and Blog number 1, 2, or 3; e.g. Tom Jones Blog-1

The object of this assignment is to engage you with a current issue related to the study of religion and the criticism of religion as well as enabling you to see the significance the study of religion in today's world. For this you must write three mini-Blogs according to the following format outlined in D2L. Instructions for writing the blogs will be discussed in class and posted on D2L. Some of the blogs will be posted anonymously on the course blogsite at: <https://uwreligions.wordpress.com/>

### Grading:

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. Written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content according to the rubric posed on D2L.

**Policy with regard to assignments:** students must take tests on the assigned day, have a valid medical note, or prove exceptional circumstances. Late papers are accepted, but will be automatically deducted 10% per day that they are overdue. This rule also applies to anyone who requests to sit the test on a different date without a doctor's note or other external evidence to show that this is necessary.

**Expectations for student conduct in this course: Attendance:** students are expected to attend most lectures.

**Class etiquette:** remember you are not the only student in the class. Please make every effort to arrive on time and not to leave before the class ends. You are expected to pay attention to the lecture and not distract other students.

**Computers and other devices:** while attending class the wearing of earphones or similar devices is not permitted nor can computers be used for watching videos or playing computer games.

Cell phones must be turned off and not taken out in class for texting or any other purposes. If you are seen using a cell phone in class you will be asked to leave the classroom.

**Recording lectures:** for copyright reasons recording any part of any lectures in any form, including through a computer, is not permitted. Nor will the power point slides or lecture notes be posted on the web for the same reason. Photographing power point lectures with a cell phone or other device is not permitted. All of these restrictions are due to copyright issues and are strictly enforced.

Some recorded lectures will be posted on D2L but only certain ones.

Some power point slides, i.e. those that do not include limited use materials, will be posted to D2L. It is your responsibility to pay attention and make your own lecture notes.

**Lecture schedule:** a complete lecture schedule will be made available on the course website during the first week of term.

**Final examination:** there will be no Registrar scheduled final examination.

**Electronic Device Policy:** recent evidence shows that students who use computers in class learn significantly less than those who write their own notes. You are encouraged to write your own notes. The wearing of earphones or similar devices is not permitted nor can computers to be used for watching videos or playing computer games.

### **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**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; 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/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

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.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at

[http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf).

### **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 Block.

### **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.