

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
FALL 2010**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES 205 L01
THE NATURE OF RELIGION**

INSTRUCTOR:	Anne White, Ph.D.
COURSE TIME AND DAYS:	MWF – 12:00 – 12:50
OFFICE:	SS 1322
OFFICE HOURS:	WF 1:00 – 2:00 P.M.
TELEPHONE:	403- 220-3285 or 403-220-5886 (main office)
E-MAIL ADDRESS:	awhite@ucalgary.ca
WEBSITE ADDRESS:	Blackboard

Required Texts:

Robert C. Monk et al, *Exploring Religious Meaning*, 6th ed., Prentice Hall (2003).

Suggested Reading (not mandatory):

Gilkey, Langdon, *Nature, Reality, and the Sacred*, Fortress Press (1993);
Livingston, James, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Prentice Hall (2001);
Pals, Daniel L., *Seven Theories of Religion*, Oxford University Press (1996);
Radford Ruether, Rosemary, *Gaia and God*, Harper Collins (1992);
Starke, Rodney, *Acts of Faith*, University of California Press (2000);
Stewart, David, *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*, Prentice Hall (2001).

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the academic study of religion. It will present the practical and theoretical analysis of religion through examination of a broad range of religious issues and phenomena. Adopting this analytical approach, students will gain insight into critical thinking as they are introduced to many of the major questions, problems, and arguments that occupy both male and female philosophers of religion. Examples from various major religious traditions will be used to demonstrate the nature of religion as interpreted by both adherents and critics of religious beliefs in contemporary society. The overall result of this approach will be to equip students with a variety of perspectives in order to understand the status, function, and issues pertaining to the nature of religion in our present age.

Classes will consist of lectures, assigned readings, films, and class discussion. As this is an introductory course, a detailed knowledge of Western and Eastern religions will not be required.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will develop a number of the skills identified in the University of Calgary statement of learning outcomes. These include: communication, thinking, ethical reasoning, computer literacy, information retrieval, and group effectiveness.
- The assigned readings, lecture material and methodology within the course should develop a student’s ability to think critically (i.e. judge, reflect, and analyze); web notes will further provide dissemination of information and enhance computer skills; preparation for examinations should foster the development of information retrieval and writing competency.
- It is important to remember that the attainment of any learning endeavour requires that students **regularly attend lectures**, read the required material, and complete all course work.

Course Requirements:

Oct. 1	- In class test worth	20%
Oct. 22	- In class test worth	20%
Nov. 15	- Film review/analysis – 6 pages (approx. 2,000 words) Double spaced, 1 inch margins left, right, top, bottom. Course information, student’s name and ID# on first page.	20%
TBA	- Registrar’s exam	40%

NOTE: Missed examinations or assignments must be accompanied by a medical certificate, or in the case of domestic affliction, a note from a counsellor. The instructor must receive notification within 24 hours of the missed examination by telephone or e-mail.

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:

A+	100 - 96	A	95.9 - 90	A-	89.9 - 85
B+	84.9 - 80	B	79.9 - 75	B-	74.9 - 70
C+	69.9 - 65	C	64.9 - 60	C-	59.9 - 55
D+	54.9 - 53	D	52.9-50	F	Under 50

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

COURSE SCHEDULE:

SEPTEMBER

13 – 17
Chapter 1
Plus web notes

Introduction and definition of religion.
Discussion

20 – 24
Chapter 2

Religious typologies – categories.
Concepts of soteriology/salvation/enlightenment.

27 – 29
Web notes

Developmental stages.
Documentary.
Study guide for in class test.

OCTOBER

1

IN CLASS TEST – 50 MINUTES

4 – 8
Chapters 4 and 5
Plus web notes

Experience and expression in religion.
Knowledge, belief and cosmology.
The meaning of human religious expression through ritual, symbol, myth and text.
The idea of the holy.

THANKSGIVING – OCTOBER 11 – NO CLASS

13 – 15
Chapter 6
Plus web notes

Documentary
Authority in religion. Its positive use and some of its abuses

18 – 20
Chapter 9
Plus web notes

The self in society
How religions form identity of self and create societies.
Positive and negative aspects

22

IN CLASS TEST – 50 MINUTES

25 – 29

Video review documentaries
Overview of how to write a video/film review.
Guidelines posted on web
Two documentaries on religious traditions.

NOVEMBER

1 – 5
Chapter 8
Plus web notes

The concept of evil.
Video documentary.

8 – 10
Chapters 10
Plus web notes

Concepts of accountability.
Human freedom versus hedonism. What is freedom?
Are we really that free?
Group discussion.

READING DAYS
11 – 14

NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 12

15 – 19

**DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS/REVIEW TO BE
HANDED IN – NOVEMBER 15.**

Chapter 11 and 13
Plus web notes

Sin and guilt. Theodicy, anthropodicy and issues of
karma.
Growth or destruction?
Salvation.

22 – 26
Chapter 12
Plus web notes

Death – is it the end or the beginning?
Religious perspectives.
Near death experiences (NDEs).
The five stages,

29
Chapter 7
Plus web notes

What does salvation mean?
Mysticism and Transcendence
Why do so many people feel the need for this?

DECEMBER

1 – 3
Chapter 7

What does salvation mean?
Mysticism and Transcendence.
Why do so many people feel the need for this?

6 – 10
Chapter 14 and 15
Plus web notes

Religions, human conduct - relationships
Personal and corporate expressions
of ethical conduct.
Is it possible to “tread lightly on the earth”?