

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
SPRING 2011

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 205 L20
THE NATURE OF RELIGION

INSTRUCTOR:	Anne White, Ph.D.
COURSE TIME AND DAYS:	TR 10:00am-12:45pm
OFFICE:	SS 1322
OFFICE HOURS:	TR 1:00-1:45pm
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 adherent 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.

Course presentation 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:

May 24	-	In-class test	30%
June 7	-	In-class test	30%
June TBA	-	Registrar scheduled final 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, e-mail, or by calling the Religious Studies Department (403-220-5886).

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 - 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

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. If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor.

Academic Accommodation:

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than **fourteen (14) days** after the start of the course.

Gnosis:

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: gnosis@ucalgary.ca or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Note: this is a guide only. All materials will be covered but due to class input, some material may be compressed or expanded.

MAY

12

**Chapters 1 and 2
Plus web notes**

Introduction and definition of religion.
Religious typologies – categories and cosmologies.

17

**Chapters 3 - 5
Plus web notes**

Experience and expression in religion
Knowledge, belief and cosmology (religious world view)
The meaning of human religious expression through ritual,
symbol, myth and text.

19

**Chapter 6
Plus web notes**

Authority in religion. Its positive uses and some of its
abuses.
Claims for 'special' authority. Cults.
Documentary "One Way Ticket to Sirius"

24

**In class test – worth 30 points – 75 minutes' duration. Class
reconvenes at 12 noon.
Documentary**

26

**Chapters 6, 7, 9
Plus web notes**

The self in society. How religions form identity of self
and create societies. Positive and negative effects.
Mature and Immature religious cognition.

31

**Chapter 8
Plus web notes**

The Shadow – Carl Jung
The concept of evil. Moral evil, natural evil
Concepts of accountability
Documentary

JUNE

2

**Chapters 11, 13
Plus web notes**

Sin and guilt, redemption. Theodicy, anthropodicy and issues of
Salvation/enlightenment/ karma

7

**In class test – worth 30 points – 75 minutes' duration. Class
reconvenes at 12 noon.
Documentary**

9

**Chapter 12
Plus web notes**

Death – is it the end or the beginning?
Growth or destruction? Transcendence or
annihilation? The NDE's

- 14**
Web notes
- Religion and Science
Science as a religion. Various ways of 'seeing'reality.
Documentary – “Newton’s Dark Secret” – pertinent to final exam
- 16**
Chapters 14 and 15
Plus web notes
- Relationships – personal and corporate expressions of ethical conduct. Globalization, social justice and poverty. Religions, human conduct and Gaia (Earth)
- 21**
Web notes
- Documentary – “Refugees of the Blue Planet” - pertinent to final exam**
Liberation theology; the tax free zones; sweatshops and brands.
- 23**
Web notes
- Religion and the environment. Ecotheology;
Environmental ethics
Is it possible to “tread lightly upon the earth”?
The Earth Charter Initiative

REGISTRAR SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM