

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
WINTER 2012**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES 205 L02
THE NATURE OF RELIGION**

INSTRUCTOR:	Anne White, Ph.D.
COURSE TIME AND DAYS:	MWF 11:00 –11:50am
OFFICE:	SS 1322
OFFICE HOURS:	MWF 2:00 – 3:00pm
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 (2005).

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 theorists of religion. Examples from various major religious traditions will be used to demonstrate the nature of religion as interpreted by both adherent and critic 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:

Feb. 17	-	Five page video report (approximately 2,000 words)	20%
		Directions posted on Blackboard under <i>Course Documents</i>	
Feb. 27	-	Test	20%
Mar. 12	-	Test	20%
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 Department of Religious Studies at 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

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

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.

Blackboard Help

Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/computersupport/onlineservices/blackboard> for Student Help and FAQ's about Blackboard. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are available at <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/blackboard/students>. Instructions for using the Digital Drop Box are available here: http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6_1/student/bbls_r6_1_student/digital_drop_box.htm.

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>.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources

- Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS110, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at artsads@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 program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre at (403) 220-5881 or visit them on the 3rd floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.
- 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.

Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative

The Office of the Student Ombuds 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 for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at 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. 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

NOTE: All subjects will be covered but scheduling may vary slightly due to class discussions.

JANUARY

9, 11, 13

Chapter 1

Plus webnotes

Introduction and definition of religion.
Group discussion.

16, 18, 20

Chapter 2

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

23, 25, 27

Chapter 3

Plus webnotes

Religious experiences. Their contribution to religious cosmologies (faith world views).

30

Overview of religions considered in up-coming documentaries.

FEBRUARY

1

VIEW FIRST DOCUMENTARY

3

VIEW SECOND DOCUMENTARY

Guidelines posted on Blackboard

6, 8, 10

Chapters 4 and 5

Plus webnotes

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

13, 15, 17

Chapters 6 and 7

Plus webnotes

Authority in religion. Its positive use and some of its abuses. Claims for 'special' authority.
Additional material as per webnotes.

FEB. 17 - VIDEO REPORT TO BE HANDED IN

FEBRUARY 19 – 26

READING WEEK - NO CLASSES

27

TEST – 50 MINUTES' DURATION

29

How religions form identity of self and create

**Chapter 9
Plus webnotes**

societies. Positive and negative aspects.
The self in society

MARCH

**2
Chapter 9
Plus webnotes**

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

**5, 7, 9
Chapter 8
Plus webnotes**

The concept of evil
Video documentary

12

TEST – 50 MINUTES' DURATION

**14, 16
Chapters 10
Plus webnotes**

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

**19, 21, 23
Chapter 11 and 13
Plus webnotes**

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

**26, 28, 30
Chapter 12
Plus webnotes**

Death – is it the end or the beginning?
Religious perspectives.
Near death experiences (NDEs).
Video documentary.

APRIL

**2, 4
Chapters 14 and 15
Plus Webnotes**

Relationships – personal and corporate expressions of ethical conduct:
Issues regarding the concept of social justice, globalization and hunger.
Religious perspectives on justice and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

6

GOOD FRIDAY – NO CLASS

**9, 11, 13
Chapter 17
Plus Webnotes**

Religions, human conduct and Gaia (Earth).
Religions and the environment.
Questions as posted in notes.
Is it possible to “tread lightly on the earth”?