

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

COURSE OUTLINE – Winter 2019

Course: RELS 343-01 Religion and Social Morality
Time: MWF 11:00-11:50
Instructor: Craig W. C. Ginn, PhD
Office Hours: Tuesday 11:00-12:00 by appointment; additional hours by appointment
Office: SS 516
E-mail: cwcginn@ucalgary.ca
Telephone: (403) 220-5695

Required Text(s):

William Schweiker (ed.) *The Blackwell Companion of Religious Ethics*. Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Note: The textbook is required as listed above. If a student acquires an older edition of the text book in any format and intends to use the older edition rather than the required edition, it is the responsibility of the student to compare the older edition with the newer edition to determine the material that may be different between the editions. If a student has access to an online version that is without page numbers, it is the responsibility of the student to synchronize the readings with the required textbook.

Additional readings will be posted on D2L.

Course Description:

How do humans discern good from evil? Right from wrong? Is a sin a crime? Should religious beliefs be protected by blasphemy laws? Is the cow sacred and rightfully protected by law? Should face coverings be banned in the public sphere? Is same-sex marriage an abomination? How do religious humans distinguish between moral, amoral, and immoral behavior, and adjudicate matters of ethics, behavior, law, sin, righteousness and punishment? Why do some religions believe that the impersonal cosmic law of karma dictates reward, punishment, reincarnation, and liberation? Why do some religions believe that a personal Creator will judge humanity based on a law-code revealed to a particular prophet? Should religions be supported as guardians of the greater moral good of all sentient beings, or should they be rejected as failed attempts to model and legislate equitable morality? What of the atheist or antitheist worldviews? Leading thinkers of the 'new atheism' regard religion as harmful and its laws as outdated and, in some cases, barbaric and inhumane. Does secular humanism provide the best path toward moral truth, virtue, social justice, peace, and wellbeing for human beings?

This course examines religious views of morality represented in the major world religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Other religious traditions may be considered including Jainism and Sikhism. Each religion will be considered using Ninian Smart's dimensions of religion and be examined in its historical and cultural context, interaction with other religions, evolution over time and particular case studies. Under the umbrella of religious studies, this course will take an interdisciplinary approach including the disciplines of history, theology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, musicology, and law.

Course material will explore conceptions of law, ethics, sin, crime, judgment, and punishment. Various beliefs and doctrines will be considered including beliefs of the Divine, good and evil, the human condition, revelation, law codes, hermeneutical approaches, exemplars and moral authority. Issues and topics will include human rights, treatment of women, treatment of children, humanitarian aid, slavery, sexuality, marriage, abortion, war, violence, blasphemy, diet, and religious rituals and practices.

The definition of religion (and the study of religion) will be considered through various lenses. Is religion *sui generis*? If so, are scholars able to study religion (and religious ethics) as an irreducible phenomenon? Is religion reducible to a cultural artifact? Do religious apologists employ reductionism selectively to disassociate their religion from rituals and beliefs that are incoherent to modernity?

NOTE: In studying religious ethics this course will not celebrate or defend religion. On the contrary this course will investigate and evaluate the truth-claims, law codes, and ethical standards of religious traditions. Course material will include potentially disturbing content that some students might find offensive.

Online Elements for this Course:

Access D2L for additional readings.

Core Competencies:

Upon completing this course students will become familiar with:

- Paradigms of good and evil in world religions
- Moral codes and religious ethical teachings
- Reductionist and nonreductionist views of religion
- The reciprocal relationship between culture and religion
- Secular humanist arguments against religious morality
- Discussion of morality at the intersection of religious studies and other disciplines
- Discussion of religion and social morality in local and global contexts
- Comparative approaches in the study of religion and morality
- Apologetics in religious discourse, including theodicy

Course Requirements:

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)
February 1	Test 1: Religion and Moral Inquiry	15%
February 8	Thinktank session participation – Judaism	2%
February 15	Thinktank session participation – Christianity	2%
March 6	Thinktank session participation – Islam	2%
March 11	Test 2: Western Religious Traditions and Morality	25%
March 18	Thinktank session participation – Hinduism	2%
March 27	Thinktank session participation – Buddhism	2%
March 29	Test 3: Eastern Religious Traditions and Morality	25%
April 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12	Comparative Assignment and Summary due on day of panel presentation	15%
April 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12	Panel Presentations	10%

This course will not have a Registrar-scheduled final examination.

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

Adjusted Final Grades:

The instructor will implement a standard measure of adjustment (.5%) for final 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.

Extra Assignments:

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

Weighting of Tests:

The weighting for tests is identified above. The weighting of tests will not be changed to accommodate individual student requests.

Midterm Deferrals

To accommodate students that have scheduling conflicts between RELS 343 tests and tests and from other U of C courses, the instructor's policy is as follows: A student may request to write a RELS 343 test on a different date if the student has two or more other tests scheduled on the SAME day that are each worth more than 25% of their final grade. A RELS 343 test will not be rescheduled to accommodate an assignment deadline in another course. The instructor must receive the request at least two weeks before the scheduled date of a RELS 343 test. Please request accommodation in writing (email).

Comparative Assignment:

Each student will select one eastern religion and one western religion and compare their views on a topic from a list of topics provided by the instructor. The comparative assignment will be coordinated with the panel discussion and will be due on the date that the student is scheduled to participate in a panel discussion, to be submitted in hard copy to the instructor. Length: 1800-2000 words. Do not exceed 2000 words. Assignments that exceed 2000 words will be deducted 5% per 100 excess words. All assignments must include a word count. Works cited and appendices are not included in the word count.

Panel Presentation:

Panels will be composed of four students. A sign-up sheet with panel dates corresponding to topics will be circulated in class. Each student will write a summary of their comparative assignment to include the following information: topic, religions compared, method(s) of comparison, equivalence of comparison, and results of the comparison. Each student will read their summary. Once all of the panelists have read their summary, an open discussion of approximately 10 minutes will follow. Length: 300-350 words. Do not exceed 350 words. Written responses that exceed 350 words will be deducted 5% per 50 excess words. All written responses must include a word count. Works cited are not included in the word count.

Writing Assistance:

The instructor will not read a student's comparative assignment in advance of the due date. The instructor is available to meet with students to assist with their research design and to evaluate of sources. For assistance in writing, students are advised to consult Writing and Learning Services.

Policy with regard to missed assessments:

If a student misses an assessment (test, thinktank exercise, or their scheduled panel discussion) due to illness or an emergency, the student must provide the instructor with supporting documentation (including, but not limited to, a U of C Statutory Declaration) within 72 hours of the absence. Except in cases of extenuating circumstances, if documentation is not provided

within 72 hours the student will not be provided an opportunity to make up the assessment and will receive a numerical mark of zero.

If a makeup assessment is approved by the instructor, the student must take the initiative to arrange a time to complete/submit the assessment. The assessment must be completed within one week from the date of the assessment. If a student is unable to complete the assessment within a week, an extension will be provided if a student provides documentation. When extensions are granted, all makeup assessments must be completed on or before the last day of classes.

Expectations for student conduct in this course:

In general, please be courteous toward other students in the course. Be respectful of class time. 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. Be respectful of class space. Seating in the course is reserved for students registered in the course. Guests are permitted to attend a lecture if seats are available. All guests must obtain the permission of the instructor in advance to attend a lecture. Be considerate of the shared learning environment. Avoid distracting behavior and activities. Focus on objective inquiry. While critical evaluation is permitted in this course, students are encouraged to steer inquiries 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 emails from other accounts, such as Gmail or Hotmail. Please include the subject of your email and clearly identify yourself by name and identify 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.”**

Office hours:

Office hours are structured in 15-minute appointments. Sign-up sheets for appointments 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. 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. Students wishing to schedule an extended appointment must provide rationale in their request, e.g. a list of specific items requiring attention. Note: The instructor will not be available for appointments after 4:00 pm on weekdays, at any time during the weekends, or during Reading Week (February 18-22).

Syllabus:

A complete syllabus (class schedule) 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:

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/.

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.

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. 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 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.

Health and Wellness:

There are services available to students to help with physical and mental health, including the SU Wellness Centre: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>.

Learn more about the Campus Mental Health Strategy here: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>.

Supporting Documentation and the Use of a Statutory Declaration

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of documentation be provided and the student should provide the documentation they feel best supports their case. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html>.