

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
WINTER TERM 2010 - RELS 605/705 L01**

**Method and Theory in the  
Study of New Religious Movements**

This is a “blended learning” course. All students are required to have the use of a computer with Internet access, a sound card, and headset with microphone.

**Instructor** Irving Hexham  
**Class time and room** Thursdays 2:00-4:45pm

Students will meet together in class every other week. On alternate weeks the class will be conducted using Elluminate – which allows real time Internet discussions. As a result the times for some classes will be somewhat flexible to involve people in Europe and other parts of North America.

**Office** SS 1332  
**Office hours** R 12:30-1:30pm  
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**Objectives of the Course:**

This is an experimental seminar that will introduce students to the study of religion with a particular emphasis on research methods and theories used to understand new religious movements. The core seminar will be enhanced through online conversations and presentations using Internet based technologies such as Blackboard.

**Course competencies**

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

- a) use a variety of methods for the study of religion;
- b) discuss various theoretical explanations for the rise of religion movements;
- c) think critically about the appropriate ways to study religion;
- d) appreciate the importance of using correct academic methods intelligently;
- e) be able to make informed judgment about the reliability of specific books and texts.

## Course Foundations and Expectations

This is a fifteen week course with the equivalent of 3 hours of class contact per week. For each hour of class contact time you are expected to allow at least four hours for reading, research and writing.

Practically this means you ought to plan for 10 hours of reading and research each week plus 2 hours of writing. Assuming an average reading speed of 20 pages per hour then the normal expectation is that you read 200 pages per week or a total of 3000 pages throughout the course. Given that the average academic book has between 250 and 350 pages then you ought to expect to read at least ten academic books during this course.

## Course Preparation:

Students must familiarize themselves with *Endnote* or *Reference Manager* and the *Elluminate* program. Introductory courses on these software tools are offered by the Library and Teaching and Learning Centre. You also require a headset with microphone and Internet access in a place where you can talk and join in an online discussion using *Elluminate*. More details about *Elluminate* can be found at:

<http://commons.ucalgary.ca/teaching>

<http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/elluminate/>

You can also contact Joanne Carruthers at: [carruthe@ucalgary.ca](mailto:carruthe@ucalgary.ca)

## Course Details

### Required Texts:

<i>Approaching your thesis</i> -	To be distributed electronically to the class.
Herbert Spencer	<i>The Study of Sociology</i> [electronic resource]
Richard J Evans	<i>In Defense of History</i>
Richard J. Evans	<i>Lying about Hitler</i>
Stebbins, R.A.	<i>Exploratory research in the social sciences</i>
Ted Palys and	
Chris Atchinson	<i>Research Decisions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives</i>

### Background Readings:

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe	<i>New Religions as Global Cultures</i>
Karla Poewe	<i>New Religions and the Nazis</i>
Lorne Dawson	<i>Comprehending Cults</i>

## Unit One: Weeks 1- 4:

### Preliminary Considerations and Practical Steps

### Suggested Readings:

<i>Approaching your thesis</i> -	To be distributed electronically to the class.
Herbert Spencer	<i>The Study of Sociology</i> [electronic resource]
Tony Buzan	<i>Use Your Head</i> or one of his other books

Jacques Barzun	<i>The Modern Researcher</i>
Rowland, Robin	<i>The creative guide to research</i> [electronic resource] :
Berry, Ralph	<i>The Research project</i> [electronic resource]
Irving Copi	<i>Introduction to Logic</i> – chapters on traditional logic only.
Michael Detlefsen	<i>Logic from A to Z</i> [electronic resource]
W. Ward Fearnside	
and William B. Holther	<i>Fallacy: the Counterfeit of Argument</i>
I. M Schlesinger	<i>The structure of arguments</i> [electronic resource]
George A. Kennedy	<i>Classical rhetoric &amp; its Christian &amp; secular tradition from ancient to modern times</i> [electronic resource]
Karl Mannheim	“On the Interpretation of Weltanschauung” and “The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge” from <i>Essays on sociology of knowledge</i>
Karl Popper	<i>The Myth of Framework</i>
SSHRC	Policy on Research Ethics Governing Human Subjects
This is found on the Internet at:	
<a href="http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/policystatement.cfm">http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/policystatement.cfm</a>	
SSHRC Introduction:	<a href="http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/">http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/</a>

*Mindmap* program

### **Course Assignments:**

Each unit involves an assignment worth 25% of the final grade. The remaining 25% is awarded on the basis of class presentations and participation.

### **Assignment:**

1) Write a 1500 word research proposal describing your intended research topic and a 1500 word essay critically reflecting on your understanding of the research process. You must send a copy of both essays to each member of the class by 10 pm on Sunday 14 February Your reflections will be discussed in class.

## **Unit Two: The Nature of Historical Research**

### **Suggested Readings:**

G.R. Elton	<i>The Practice of History</i>
Richard J Evans	<i>In Defense of History</i>
Richard J. Evans	<i>Lying about Hitler</i>
Irving Hexham	“Inventing ‘Paganists’: A Close Reading of Richard Steigmann-Gall’s <i>The Holy Reich</i> ,” in <i>The Journal of Contemporary History</i> , January, 2007
Irving Hexham	“Violating Missionary Culture: The Tyranny of Theory and the Ethics of Historical Research”, in <i>Mission und Gewalt (Mission and the State)</i> , edited by Ulrich van der Heyden, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000, pp. 193-206.
Louis R. Gottschalk	<i>Understanding history: a primer of historical method</i>

Leopold von Ranke	<i>The Secret of world history: selected writings on the arts and science of history</i>
Lord Acton	<i>Lectures on modern history</i> [electronic resource]

**Assignment:**

Write a 3000 word essay discussing the problems faced by historian in accessing one of the following topics:

- 1) The historical claims of Joseph Smith. Use journals such as *Dialogue* and books like Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History*.
- 2) So-called "Holocaust Revisionism." Do not discuss the works of David Irving which are dealt with by Richard Evans. You should look at Arthur R. Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (D810 .J4 B86 1977 1), Udo Walendy, *Truth for Germany : the guilt question of the Second World War*, or a similar work. You can also choose to write on an article or articles from the *Journal of Historical Review* which is found on the Internet at: <http://www.ihr.org/main/journal.shtml>.
- 3) Mohammed and the origins of Islam. See the works of Andy Rippin and writers like Patricia Crone, Michael Cook, or John Wansbrough.

You must distribute your essay in electronic format to all the members of the class by 10 pm on Sunday 14 March.

**Unit Three: Anthropological Methods**

**Suggested Readings:**

John Beattie	<i>Understanding an African Kingdom</i>
Thomas RhysWilliams	<i>Field Methods in the Study of Culture</i>
L.L. Langness	<i>The Life History in Anthropological Science</i>
David C. Pitt	<i>Using Historical Sources in Anthropology and Sociology</i>
Earl R Babbie	<i>The practice of social research</i>
James P Spradley	<i>Participant observation</i>
James P Spradley	<i>The Ethnographic interview</i>
Cathy.Lewin	<i>Research methods in the social sciences</i> [electronic resource]
Zina O'Leary	<i>The essential guide to doing research</i> [electronic resource]

**Assignment:**

Write a 3000 word essay containing two sections. In the first section outline your reaction to a place of worship with which you are unfamiliar. In the second section write a 1500 word analysis for the use of myth in the religious group you studied. You must distribute your essay in electronic format to all the members of the class by 10 pm on Sunday 11 April.

**\* *There will be no Registrar scheduled Final Exam in this course***

All assignments will be given a letter grade according to the Faculty of Graduate Studies grading system.

**Academic honesty**

*Students should be familiar with the University regulations regarding academic honesty. See University Calendar, p. 49.*

See also: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/study/plag.html>