**RS 100 / Introduction to Religious Studies**

California State University Northridge, Fall 2014

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**Office Hours: M/W 11:00-12:00 and W 1:45-2:45**

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Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to the academic study of religion through an examination of religion within contemporary culture. We will begin by asking how there came to be a concept called “religion” as a distinct formation within modern life. Then we will trace changing ideas of what might constitute religion from the Enlightenment through the twenty-first century. In the final portion of the course we will apply the tools we have learned and explore the varied roles of religion in the modern world. Throughout the semester we will explore ways that our own attitudes, values, and experiences shape our approach to understanding religion.

Required Reading:

Nye, Malory. *Religion: The Basics* (2nd Ed). Routledge, 2008.

Additional readings available on Moodle (M)

Professor Baugh’s Three Cardinal Rules

The following guidelines are written in stone and should be memorized, internalized, and adhered to. Failure to adhere to these rules will result in the bestowal of the instructor’s wrath and will negatively impact your grade.

1. **Arrive on time** (or early). Class begins promptly at 12:30. This means you should be in your seat ready to discuss course assignments every Monday and Wednesday at 12:30, not 12:31 or 12:35.
2. **No cell phones. Ever. This even includes using your cell phone to access course materials.** Your phone must be turned off and properly stowed in your bag prior to class takeoff (which is promptly at 12:30. See Rule #1). Your phone should NEVER be in your hand, on your desk, in your pocket, or anywhere else that it might distract you, your classmates, or the professor. Note that the professor is easily distracted by cell phones.
3. **Always bring the assigned reading to class**. You have a reading assignment for every class meeting and class time will be devoted to discussing that reading. In order to participate in close readings and discussions it is imperative that you have all texts assigned for the day in hand. For articles available on Moodle you must either bring a printout or have access to the document on a computer/tablet (see below for Policy on Electronics in the Classroom). IT IS NEVER OKAY TO ACCESS COURSE MATERIALS USING A CELL PHONE (See Rule #2).

**Important Student Information**

Here you will fill in important information that will help you throughout the semester.

**Your #** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Please write in the top LEFT corner of everything you hand in)

**Your row** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Please write in the top RIGHT corner of everything you hand in)

**Classmate contact information**: Please get the name and email address of two classmates so you can call on these classmates for help if you miss a class or have a simple question.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Attendance

You are expected to attend every class and arrive on time, a professional courtesy to both fellow students and the professor. More than 2 absences during the semester will negatively impact your grade, as will habitual tardiness. There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences/tardies.

Email etiquette

I am happy to communicate with you via email and will do my best to respond within 24 hours during the week. Messages sent over the weekend will be read on Mondays. In the subject line please indicate the content of the email and begin your message in the following manner:

Dear Dr. Baugh,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am in your RS 100 class.

Evaluation

Your grade will be calculated using the points system. Throughout the semester you will have the opportunity to earn up to 250 points in the following six areas.

1. **Class preparation and participation (20 points) –** This includes regular attendance and participating in class discussion. Strong class participation does not mean simply “talking a lot” in class. It means speaking in an informed way about the readings, synthesizing the comments of others, and listening with respect and attention to the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of your peers.
2. **Yes I Did the Reading” (YIDTR) and other in-class assignments (30 points)** Careful examination of assigned readings is essential for this discussion-based course, so you will be held accountable for completion of reading assignments each week. YIDTR assignments might include reading questions to be completed in advance and posted to Moodle, short quizzes/writing assignments completed at the beginning of class.
3. **Position Papers (50 points) –** (3 total, 17 points each) Instructions will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle. Essays will be scored using the +/- system.
4. **Quizzes (50 points)** – (3 total, 25 points each) There will be three short quizzes given throughout the semester. Each quiz is worth 25 points. Only the top two quizzes will be counted toward your final grade, but students who earn 22 points or more on all 3 quizzes will earn 3 extra credit points. Quizzes will be given during the first ten minutes of class. **If you arrive late, you will not be able to take the quiz.**
5. **Midterm Exam (50 points)** There will be an in-class midterm exam on Wednesday October 29. We will discuss exam format and details in class.
6. **Class Project (50 points)** – In the final portion of the class you will work on a class project in which you will apply the academic skills you learned during the semester. The final assignment is due on December 8. Project guidelines will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle.

\*\*\*You MUST take the midterm during the scheduled time. Barring any serious, **documented** emergency, you will be ineligible to make up a missed exam.

Grades

Course grades will be calculated by dividing the points you earned by 300 (e.g. say you earn 270 points. 270/300 = 90%, or A-.) Letters will be assigned based on the following percentages (portions of percentages will be rounded down if 0.4999999 or below. They will be rounded up if 0.5 or above):

94% or above = A

90%-93% = A-

87%-89% = B+

84%-86% = B

80%-83% = B-

77%-79% = C+

74%-76% = C

70%-73% = C-

67%-69% = D+

64%-66% = D

60%-63% = D-

59% or below = F

Policy on electronics in the classroom

If you wish to use an electronic device for note taking or to access reading assignments **you must sit in the first three rows of the classroom.** Texting, playing games, checking email, shopping, preparing for other classes, or any other distractions during class time are strictly prohibited. Engaging in these activities will negatively impact your grade and result in a revocation of your computer privileges for the rest of the semester.

Plagiarism/Cheating

The CSUN Religious Studies Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence, honesty, and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating or helping someone else cheat will receive an F on the assignment and will be subject to disciplinary action such as suspension or expulsion.

For more information of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult pages 614-615 of the 2010-2012 CSUN catalog. **Remember, too, that much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws**. Passing off this information as your own is plagiarism and carries the penalties outlined above.

Accommodation for disabilities

If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611. If you would like to discuss your need for accommodations with me, please contact me to set up an appointment.

**RS 100 Class Schedule\***

The following schedule represents a broad outline of class topics and reading assignments. The course Moodle page will offer the most detailed and up-to-date assignments and deadlines. Assignments must be completed before the beginning of class on the date listed.

\*NOTE: Reading assignments and the dates of exams and written assignments are subject to revision as needed. I will announce all revisions in class, post them on Moodle, and do my best to make sure that everyone knows about revisions. If you miss class, you must nevertheless submit assignments according to any revisions that we make to the schedule. You should either make sure that you do not miss class or find a sure way of becoming aware of any revisions we make to the schedule or syllabus.

**I. The Academic Study of Religion – Setting the Stakes and the Parameters of our Study**

M Aug 25: Introduction to the Class – What is Religion?

W Aug 27: Religion – Some Preliminary Definitions

* Assignment:
  + Read Nye ch 1
  + Prepare for Syllabus Quiz on Aug 27

M Sept 1: LABOR DAY – No class

W Sept 3: The History of Religion

* + Read Kessler, “The Field of Religious Studies” (M)
  + Read “Youth Don’t Trust…” (M)

Sept 8: Film Screening in Class: “In the Light of Reverence”

Sept 10: Setting the Stakes in our Study of Religion

* + Read Gardner, “Engaging Religions to Shape Worldviews” (M)

**II. The Modern Study of Religion – A Survey of Major Approaches**

M, W Sept 15-17: Religion and Faith

* + Read Nye ch 5 – Belief
  + Read Kessler, “Insider’s and Outsider’s Perspectives” (M) and Muesse, “Making the Strange Familiar and Making the Familiar Strange” (M)
  + Prepare for Quiz #1 on Monday, Sept 15

M, W Sept 22-24: Religion and Power

* + Read Nye ch 3 – Power
  + Position Paper #1 due Monday September 22

M, W Sept 29- Oct 8 Religion and Society

* + Read Nye ch 2- Culture, McLoughlin, “Religion, Ritual, and Culture,”(M) and Gardner, “Ritual and Taboo as Ecological Guardians” (M)
  + Position Paper #2 due Monday September 29

M, W Oct 13-15 Religion and Gender

* + Read Morgan, “Feminist Approaches” (M)
  + Position Paper #3 due Monday October 13
  + Prepare for Quiz #2 on Wednesday, Oct 15

M, W Oct 20-22 Religion in the Contemporary World

* + Read Nye ch 8, “Contemporary Religions, Contemporary Cultures”

M, W Oct 27 -29 MIDTERM WEEK

* + Prepare for Midterm Exam on WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 29

**III. Practicing the Discipline – Religious Studies Applied**

M, W Nov 3-5 Religion and Environmental Ethics

In-class Film Screening: *Renewal*

M, W Nov 10-12 Religion and Environmental Ethics

* + Read Musil, “Behind the Wall: American Religion and Global Climate Change” (M)
  + Work on Class Project
  + Prepare for Quiz #3 on Monday, November 17

M, W Nov 17-19 Religion and Environmental Ethics

* + Read Catholic Bishops and Drought articles (M)
  + Work on Class Projects

M, W Nov 24-26 Religion and Environmental Ethics

* + Assignment: Conduct Ethnographic Interview

M, W Dec 1-3 Religion and Environmental Ethics

* + Work on Class Project

M Dec 8 Class Project Due. Closing Discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to recognize and to articulate (orally and in writing) the difference between an academic approach to religion and a personal, devotional approach.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in recognizing the major contributors to the modern study of religion and their models/theories from philosophy, theology, the history of religions, and the social sciences.
3. Students will be able to understand the following terms in their conventional, popular usage, and then discuss the variety of ways that religious studies scholars have critiqued, expanded, or problematized these areas: religion, religious, myth, ritual, symbol, philosophy, subjectivity, objectivity, secular/secularization, cult, sect, mysticism, theism, atheism, polytheism, monotheism, spirituality, magic, paganism, animism, canon, religious violence, post-colonialism, individualistic compared to community-based religions.
4. Students will be able to explain and give basic examples of the social function of religion with regard to gender, ethnicity, and nationality.
5. Students will be able to recognize religiosity in an aspect of modern culture such as different forms of media, art, music, films, politics, sports, and the public discourse on science.
6. Students will be able to demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in describing two specific religious traditions (perhaps one from North America, one outside of it), including their historical development, major beliefs and practices, and demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in interpreting religious texts and rituals from each religious tradition.

General Education Goal

Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy.

**General Education Student Learning Objectives, Arts and Humanities:**

1. Students will explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures.
2. Students will analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;
3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;
4. Students will demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;
5. Students will be able to use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged;
6. Students will learn to describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.