

# RS 100: INTRO TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Dr. Baugh

## Who is the professor and how can I get in touch?

Dr. Amanda Baugh

[Amanda.Baugh@csun.edu](mailto:Amanda.Baugh@csun.edu)

818-677-4733



*Santa Susana Hall*

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 12:30-1:55 and Wednesdays 2:00-3:30 (online appointments available)

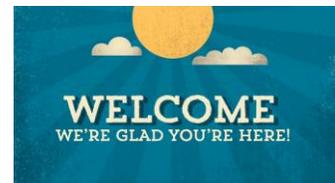
**Office Location:** Santa Susana 237

Santa Susana is SN on campus maps. It is the 4-story brick building immediately to the west of the bookstore complex. My office is on the second floor.

## When and where do we meet?

Class meetings: Tues and Thurs, 11:00-12:15

Location: Sierra Hall 390



## What books to I need to purchase?

*Religion: The Basics* by Malory Nye\*

\*This text is available at the Matador Bookstore, or you are welcome to find a cheaper used copy online. Any edition is fine. You can access the book online through the Oviatt Library, but only three students can view the ebook at one time, so I urge you to purchase your own copy if it's at all possible.

- Additional chapters and articles will be available on our class's Canvas website.

## **What are we doing and why are we here? An invitation to the study of religion.**

You're probably coming to this class with some very strong ideas about religion. Maybe you think religion is a set of silly superstitions that your grandmother believes in and that it has little relevance in your own life. Maybe you have had personal experiences that have led you to a deeply held faith, and you regret that your peers don't understand you. Maybe you think religion involves brainwashing, promotes violence, and is a terrible human institution, or maybe you think religion is ultimately good and all religions teach basically the same thing.

If you have ever thought about religion in any of these ways, then congratulations! You've already begun to think about some of the tough questions that many people, including myself, have grappled with for ages. In this class we will think about what religion is, why it matters, and how it affects daily life, *even for people who do not consider themselves religious*.

Religion, as we will study it this semester, is not something that exists in the world as a permanent or unchanging set of ideas. Instead, religion is a way of being in the world that affects and is affected by society, culture, and history. It involves questions about race, ethnicity, class, gender. And most importantly, as we think about who gets to decide what religion is, and what is considered proper ways of being religious, we will learn that religion has a lot to do with POWER.

This semester you will have the opportunity to think open-mindedly and creatively about religion. We may study ideas, people, or traditions that are surprising to you, and you may encounter worldviews with which you disagree. You will get to reflect on your own ideas and discuss your own perspectives as we co-create a shared learning community. I am looking forward to embarking on this journey with you!

## **Assignments and Grading**

Grades will be calculated using a points system. Throughout the semester you will have the opportunity to earn up 500 points through the following assignments. Your final grade is determined based on the percentage of the possible points you earned (i.e. if you earned 425 points, then your grade is a B, because  $425/500 = 85\%$ ).

- 1) Chapter outline activities (12 assignments, 5 points each = 60 points possible)

For each reading assignment you will complete a chapter outline activity in which you answer two questions about the reading and submit a summary in outline form. These assignments must be completed before the beginning of class. Because chapter outline activities are intended to help you prepare for class discussion, it is not possible to submit late assignments. However, your two lowest grades for this assignment will be dropped, so you may skip two outlines without penalty.

- 2) Quizzes (3 quizzes, 35 points each = 105 points possible)

There will be four in-class quizzes during the semester that will test your knowledge of course concepts. Quizzes will consist of multiple-choice, true-false, and short answer questions. You

must be present in class to take the quizzes and make-up quizzes are not possible. However, your lowest quiz grade will be dropped, so you may miss one quiz without penalty.

3) Case Study Group Assignments (3 assignments, 25 points each = 75 points possible)

Throughout the semester we will examine three case studies that will help you think about ways that class concepts actually matter in the “real world” beyond the college classroom. You will work on the case studies in a group that will remain consistent throughout the semester. Each case study assignment is worth 25 points. Instructions will be discussed in class and posted on Canvas.

4) Reflective Journal Assignments (3 journal entries, 20 points each = 60 points possible)

You will complete 3 short reflective journal entries that will help you think about your own experiences, values, and outlooks as they relate to course concepts. Each entry is worth 20 points. Instructions will be discussed in class and posted on Canvas.

5) Midterm Exam (100 points)

There will be an in-class midterm exam on Thursday October 17. The midterm will consist of multiple-choice, true-false, short answer, and short-essay questions. You must be present in class in order to take the exam. Make-up exams will be offered only in the case of serious, documented emergencies.

6) Final Group Project: Teaching about why religion matters (100 points)

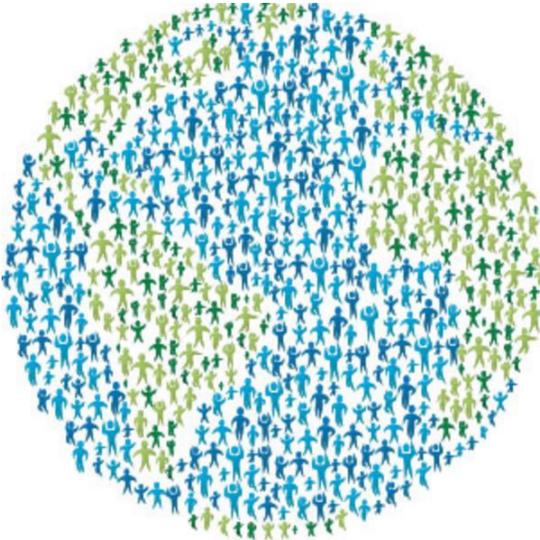
For your final project you and your group from the case study assignments group will create a video that uses a case study to teach religious studies concepts to others. The details of the project will be discussed in class and posted on Canvas.

Grades

Letter grades correspond to the percentage of the possible points earned during the semester, based on the following scores:

94% or above = A	74%-76% = C
90%-93% = A-	70%-73% = C-
87%-89% = B+	67%-69% = D+
84%-86% = B	64%-66% = D
80%-83% = B-	60%-63% = D-
77%-79% = C+	59% or below = F

## How will this course help you succeed?



No matter what you want to do in your career, you need to know how to read, write, and think. The overarching goal of the Humanities (the larger field that includes disciplines such as Religious Studies, English, Chicana/o Studies, etc.) is to help you do those things. In this class you will learn to think about religion and culture in new and complex ways that will help you become an informed citizen and a more interesting conversation partner.

But even if you do not remember a single fact from this class in five years, you will be empowered with a set of critical tools – the ability to effectively read, write, and think – that will help achieve your goals, whatever they might be.

## What will you learn along the way?

The overarching goal of this course is to deepen your ability to think critically about complex issues, to critically examine your own perspectives, and to effectively express your ideas in written and verbal communication. Religion involves some of the most complex (and fascinating!) issues in human society, so it offers an ideal set of topics for sharpening your critical thinking, self-reflective, and communication skills.

More specifically, by the end of the semester you will be able to:

- 1) Identify and articulate the differences between an academic approach to religion and a personal, devotional approach, and use an academic approach.
- 2) Discuss the history of the academic study of religion, including how others have defined, classified, and explained religion and why that matters.
- 3) Analyze ways that religion affects daily life and intersects with culture, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and power.
- 4) Critically reflect on the ways your own viewpoints shape your understanding of the world.
- 5) Value the contributions of Humanities fields.

## How will you know that you're learning?

Throughout the course, you will have multiple opportunities to explore a variety of religious issues and perspectives, critically reflect on your own assumptions and ideas, form and develop arguments, and share what you learn through discussion and writing. We will have frequent in-class discussions, debates, small group activities, and other similar exercises. In addition, the following activities will help guide you through your learning process and help you measure your progress as you move toward deeper understanding.

**In-class Engagement.** Learning is hard! Meaningful learning – the kind of learning that last well beyond the test – is hard. You will have to struggle through complex ideas, reconcile misconceptions, take risks, and continually practice the skills you learn. At times this will be frustrating, but the more you engage, the more you will learn.

**But what is engagement, *exactly*?** Engagement in this course means that you **read** the

assigned work and complete the outline activity assignment before coming to class; prepare for, attend, and participate actively in every class session, and complete all out-of-class work to the best of your ability.

Deep engagement, the kind that leads to significant learning, involves:

- Remaining consistently engaged throughout each class session and the semester. This doesn't mean you have to *talk* all of the time, but it does mean that throughout class you always need to *think*;
- Connecting your writing and in-class comments to relevant evidence;
- Being constructive and collegial, especially when you disagree with someone;
- Taking a critical but open approach to different or new ideas;
- Focusing and helping your peers focus on the big themes of the course.

**What if you're feeling lost or overwhelmed?** I welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss ways you can meet your own engagement goals. I promise to help you to the best of my ability, and to connect you with other campus resources when they can serve your needs better than I can.



I also encourage you to connect with your classmates! Sometimes it might feel like you are the only one struggling. But I assure you that if you are lost, others are too! Use this **classmate contact information** space to get the name and email address/phone number of two classmates. As a group, you can agree to create your own buddy system. Call on these buddies for help if you miss a class, have a simple question, or just need to talk about your struggles in this class. And pass on the karma by being a good buddy when your classmate is in need!

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

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

## **What are the rules and policies for our class?**

At the beginning of the semester we will develop classroom policies regarding tardies, late assignments, class discussions, and use of electronics. In addition to the guidelines we create, the following policies are non-negotiable:

### Attendance

Most of the intellectual work that you will do this semester will take place during class. For that reason, you

should plan to attend every class meeting! Your first two absences are automatically “excused.” Each additional absence will result in a loss of two percentage points from your final grade.

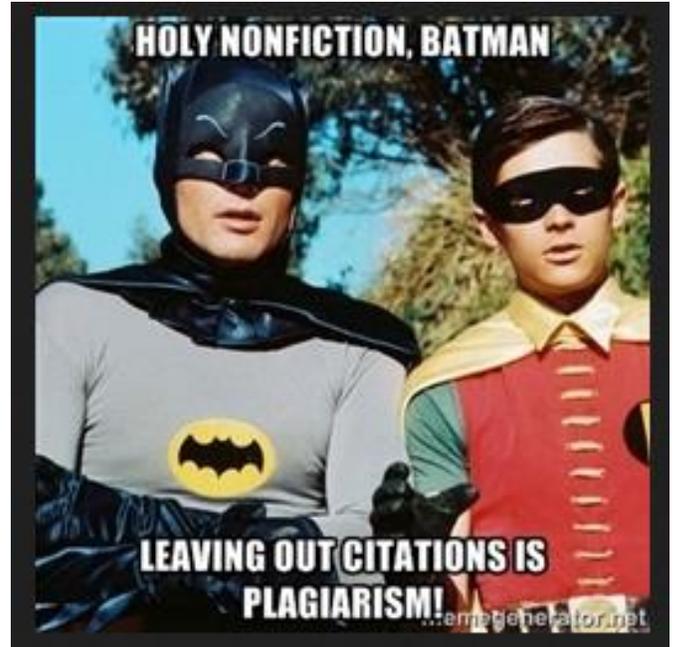
### Plagiarism/Cheating

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.

For more information of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, please see CSUN’s policies on Academic Dishonesty, which can be found at:

<http://catalog.csun.edu/policies/academic-dishonesty/>

**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\*

\*Reading and written assignments are subject to revision as needed, and Canvas will contain the most detailed, accurate, and up-to-date schedule. I will announce all revisions in class 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.

<b><u>Unit 1: Introduction to the Class</u></b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major questions we will consider: What is religion, why does it matter, and who gets to decide? Doesn't religion mean something different to everyone?</li> </ul>				
Week	Date	Topic	What to read before class	What to do before class
1	Tues 8/29	Welcome to RS 100!	The syllabus	✔ Complete pre-class survey on Canvas
1	Thurs 8/31	What's in a name?	"Getting to Know Religious Studies" (C)	✔ Complete Chapter Outline Activity
2	Tues 9/5	Religion: Some Basics	Nye ch 1	✔ Complete Chapter Outline Activity
2	Thurs 9/7	Religion, Self, and Other	"Body Ritual Among the Nacirema"	
<b><u>Unit 2: Religion, Culture, and the Sacred</u></b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major questions we will consider: Why are some forms of culture, including religious culture, considered superior to other forms and what does that say about power structures in human society? Who has the right to deem particular spaces sacred?</li> </ul>				
3	Tues 9/12	Culture: Some Basics	Nye ch 2	✔ Complete Chapter Outline Activity ✔ Complete <b><u>Reflective Journal #1</u></b>
3	Thurs 9/14	Religion: Some Preliminary Definitions – Functionalist and Essentialist Approaches		✔ Prepare for <b><u>Quiz #1</u></b> on Religion, Culture, and the History of Religion
4	Tues 9/19 & Thurs 9/21	Case Study on the Sacred – What is sacred space, and who has the power to define its boundaries?	<b><u>Center of Dispute</u></b> – The Ground Zero Mosque (C)	✔ Complete Chapter Outline Activity

<b><u>UNIT 3: Religion, Gender, and Power</u></b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major questions we will consider: To what extent has religion been used to oppress and control people? How does religion convey what it means to be a man or a woman?</li> </ul>				
5	Tues 9/26	Feuerbach, Marx, and the Power of Religion to Control	Nye ch 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Complete Chapter Outline Activity</li> <li>✓Prepare for <b>Quiz #2</b> on definitions of religion</li> </ul>
5	Thurs 9/28	Black Liberation Theology	Listen to podcast, “Black Liberation Theology in its Founder’s Words”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Submit <b>Case Study Assignment #1</b> (one per group)</li> <li>✓Complete Chapter (Podcast) Outline Activity</li> </ul>
6	Tues 10/3	Religion and Gender: How to be a Woman	Nye ch 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Complete Chapter Outline Activity</li> </ul>
6	Thurs 10/5	Religion and Gender		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Complete <b>Reflective Journal #2</b></li> </ul>
7	Tues 10/10	Case Study on The Women’s March and Politics of Inclusion/Exclusion	Women’s March Sources posted on Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Complete Chapter Outline Activity</li> </ul>
7	Thurs 10/12	CASE STUDY continued		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Prepare for <b>Quiz #3</b> on religion, gender, and power</li> </ul>
8	Tues 10/17 & Thurs 10/19	MIDTERM WEEK		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Complete <b>Case Study Assignment #2</b> – due Thursday October 19</li> <li>✓Prepare for <b>Midterm Exam</b> on Thursday October 19</li> </ul>
<b><u>Unit 4: Belief, Ritual, and Religion in Contemporary Culture</u></b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major questions we will consider: What are ritual and belief, and what role do they play in religions? How does religion intersect with race, ethnicity, and class?</li> </ul>				
9	Tues 10/24	Belief	Nye ch 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Complete Chapter Outline Activity</li> </ul>
9	Thurs 10/26	Ritual	Nye ch 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Complete Chapter Outline Activity</li> </ul>

10	Tues 10/31 and Thurs 11/2	Case Study on “The New Deciders” – How did Black Millennials, Arab Americans, Latino Evangelicals, and Asian Americans shape the American electorate in 2016?  Black Millennials • Arab Americans • Latino Evangelicals • Asian Americans		✓Complete “Election Scorecard and Viewing Guide” during film screening on 10/31
11	Tues 11/7 and Thurs 11/9	Contemporary Religions, Contemporary Cultures	Nye ch 8	✓Complete Chapter Outline Activity  ✓Complete <b><u>Case Study Assignment #3</u></b> – due Thursday November 7
12	Tues 11/14 and Thurs 11/16	Religion, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States	Goizueta, “Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Heart of Mexican Identity”	✓Complete Chapter Outline Activity  ✓Prepare for <b><u>Quiz #4</u></b> on belief, ritual, and contemporary religion on Thurs 11/16

### **UNIT 5: Group Projects and Concluding Thoughts**

13	Tues 11/21	Project Meetings		✓Complete <b><u>Case Study Assignment #3</u></b>
13	Thurs 11/23	Happy Thanksgiving!		
14	Tues 11/28 and Thurs 11/30	Final Project work week		✓Complete <b><u>Reflective Journal #3</u></b> due Thurs 11/30
15	Tues 12/5 and Thurs 12/7	Final Project Presentations		



## 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.