

RS 100: Introduction to Religious Studies
Fall 2017
Mondays, 1600-1845

Instructor: Robert Mason, PhD.

Room: SH 390

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Office hours: 1500-1550, Mondays, Santa Suzanna Hall, room 418 by appointment (use email).

Course Description: This course will exam religion as an academic discipline introducing students to the tools used to study and engage the way that religious phenomena both exercise power relations and are shaped by negotiations with other power institutions. Historical, socio-political, anthropological and existential (ethical) approaches and terminology will be introduced. With these tools the class will explore questions such as what is religion?, what is the relation between religion and culture?, how do science and religion relate to one another?, among others.

GE Student Learning Objectives

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.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures;
2. 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. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;
5. 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. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.

RS 100 SLO's:

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: 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.

Required Text:

Paul O. Myhre, editor, *Introduction to Religious Studies*, (Anselm Academic Press, 2009).

In addition, students will be using resources from the web and handouts in class.

Preparation: You are expected to be FULLY prepared for each class. Discussion of effective and efficient reading tactics and strategies will be discussed throughout the course, but you must be prepared to dedicate adequate time for preparation as you may be called upon to discuss critically and intelligently the readings for that particular class session. Please bring electronic or printed copies of reading assignments to class on the day when they are discussed.

I will contact you regarding important notices about the class using your CSUN email address so be sure to check your e-mail regularly.

Evaluation:

Classwork (including weekly quizzes = 20 pts.): you are expected to be FULLY prepared for each class. Discussion of effective and efficient reading tactics and strategies will be discussed throughout the course, but you must be prepared to dedicate adequate time for preparation as you may be called upon to discuss critically and intelligently the readings for that particular class session. Please bring electronic or printed copies of reading assignments to class on the day when they are discussed.

Ritual evaluation project (including observation and 2 page analysis = 50 pts.) During the semester each student will observe a religious ritual/event outside their own religious tradition with a view to analyze the ritual involved.

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Mid-term (50 pts) and Final (100 pts).

Weekly postings on Moodle. (5 pts.) Students will be responsible for posting comments on moodle based on questions assigned by the instructor. Students will post one comment and then comment on two posts from their fellow students.

1. Grade Range:

94-100 = A	77-79 = C+
90-93 = A-	74-76 = C
87-89 = B+	70-73 = C-
84-86 = B	60-69 = D
80-83 = B-	<60 = F

Electroniquette: Please turn off electronic devices such as iPods and cell phones before entering the classroom. We are a dynamic community of learners and our class will be enhanced as we interact with each other. You may use your computer/tablet during class *for class purposes only*—note taking/accessing reading assignments. If your computer is distracting then don't bring it to class. I reserve the right to deny your computer privileges during class.

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 be subject to disciplinary action which could result in suspension, expulsion, or other disciplinary actions. For more information about the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult the CSUN catalog. Remember, also, that much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by US copyright laws. Passing off this information as your own is plagiarism as well.

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 (DCOD). 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

(Note: Reading assignments and the dates of exams and written assignments are subject to revision as needed. 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. You should either make sure that you do not miss class or find a way to be apprised of any revisions made the schedule or syllabus).

Monday, Aug 28: Introductions, Syllabus, Update Moodle info.

Monday, Sept 4: **LABOR DAY HOLIDAY: NO CLASS. But you are still responsible for Myhre, Chapter 1: “What is Religion?” and the Moodle readings:**

Monday, Sept 11: Myhre, Chapter 2: “How is Religion Studied?” Moodle readings:

Monday, Sept 18: Myhre, Chapter 3: “How are Religions formed?” Moodle readings:

Monday, Sept 25: Myhre, Chapter 4: “Religion as ‘Truth –Claims’.” Moodle readings:

Monday, Oct 2, Myhre, Chapter 5: “Sacred Words, Stories, Writings, and Books.”
Moodle readings:

Monday, Oct 9: Myhre, Chapter 6: “An Aesthetic Approach to Religion.” Moodle readings:

Monday, Oct 16: Myhre, Chapter 7: “Religious Ethics, Moral Values, and Standards for Human Conduct.” **Mid-term exam during last half of class.** Moodle readings:

Monday, Oct 23: Myhre, Chapter 8: “Violence and Religion.” Moodle readings:

Monday, Oct 30: Myhre, Chapter 9: “Social Activism and Engagement.” Moodle readings:

Monday, Nov 6: Myhre, Chapter 10: “World Religions: Environmentally Active.” Moodle readings:

Monday, Nov 13: Myhre, Chapter 11: “Ascetically and Mystically Removed and Engaged.”
Moodle readings:

Monday, Nov 20: Myhre, Chapter 12: “Technology and Religion.” Moodle readings:

Monday, Nov 27: Myhre, Chapter 13: “Studying Science and Religion.” Moodle readings:

Monday, Dec 4: Myhre, Chapter 14: “Ritual Studies.” Moodle Readings:

Monday, Dec 11: **Final exam**