

**REL 105.001**  
**Honors Introduction to Religious Studies**

**Time:** Tue & Thu 9:30am – 10:45am

**Location:** Lloyd 318

**Instructor:** Dr. Suma Ikeuchi

**Office:** Manly Hall 204

**Phone:** 348-9994

**Email:** [sikeuchi@ua.edu](mailto:sikeuchi@ua.edu)

**Office Hours:** Thu 2:30pm – 3:30 pm and by appointment

**Course Description:**

In this introductory course, students will learn about different approaches and debates that shape the academic study of religion. The course surveys a broad range of theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have influenced the field, such as the definition of religion, theories and origins of religion, the comparison of religion, and religion's psychological, social, and political effects. As the Honors/Core Humanities introduction to the study of religion, REL 105 examines the material in greater detail than REL 100, and in a smaller class setting. A minimum 3.3 GPA is required to register.

**Learning Outcomes:**

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

1. explain key concepts, methods, and approaches in the academic study of religion
2. distinguish between emic and etic perspectives
3. support claims with textual evidences
4. implement the above knowledge in writing assignments

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for the course.

**Consultation:**

All students are encouraged to come to my office hour as listed above, set up an appointment, and/or contact me by phone or email as listed above for assistance. Please speak with me well in advance if you are having difficulties in satisfactorily completing the course's requirements on time or if you anticipate routine absences. Although I cannot guarantee that reasonable accommodations can be made, speaking with me before a problem arises will greatly enhance my ability to address the situation in a way that is fair to your classmates and beneficial to you.

Students with documented physical and/or learning disabilities should contact me as soon as possible to provide copies of their documentation and to discuss the reasonable accommodations that can be made to meet their needs. These students must also contact the Office of Disability Services in Martha Parham East, 348-4285.

## **Blackboard**

Blackboard site will include areas for private correspondence with the teachers, an open discussion forum and areas where students will find useful files. A copy of the Syllabus will also be archived here. Assigned **Electronic Texts** will also be found on Blackboard. Exam papers and project essays will be handed in Blackboard. MS Word will be the default format for these posted documents.

## **Course Requirements and Assignments:**

### **1. Class Attendance and Participation (20 points):**

Class attendance and participation are an important part of this class. Attendance is taken at regular intervals. You can miss **up to 3 classes** with no repercussions for participation grade (unless that makes you miss your own presentation, discussion moderation, or other responsibilities). If you need to miss more than 3 sessions for valid reasons (e.g. job interviews, health problem), please contact me prior to the day you will be missing the class and provide appropriate documentation. You may be assigned to do additional work in that case. **More than 3 absences** without a valid document will significantly impact your attendance/participation grade. If you miss **more than 6 classes**, then you will fail this course. Please make sure to be in class on time. Repetitive late attendance will count as absence.

What is distinctive about this class is that it is not a course that provides “facts” to learn but which prompts you to reflect on the subjects we explore. You are expected to understand the facts and concepts, but also to develop a critical assessment of them. Therefore, close reading of the material with a critical mind and active class participation that reflects a) an in-depth understanding of the reading material, and b) reflective thinking on the subjects we discuss are required. **Just attending will not lead to the full 10 points.** The quality of your participation and response to other students’ contributions will be assessed.

### **2. Weekly responses posted to Blackboard Discussion Board (3 x 10 = 30 points):**

Almost every week by Monday noon, you are required to submit a one-paragraph response of at least 150 words on one of the readings for the coming week to the Blackboard discussion board. In some instances this response may be to a required video that you will watch outside of class time or on an assigned task such as a mini-analysis of a news article. The response should consist of a statement and at least one question. There are **10 weekly responses you are required to post** for this class, **out of 12 possible dates of submission** (In other words, you can choose to “take a break” from weekly response for whichever 2 weeks you desire). Each response will earn 3 point if it shows good understanding of the material and reflective thought. These responses will be graded simply as submitted/not submitted, but responses which do not exhibit the evidence of reading the material or your reflection will not earn any point. The instructor may address questions based on the response you have posted. You cannot make up missed responses.

- Responses that do not exhibit a comprehension of the reading material and a reflection on that material will earn **no credit**.

- 3. Three Multiple-Format Tests** (30 points each, 90 in total): There will be three tests, each of which will cover all the readings, class lectures, films, multi-media materials, and discussions up to that point. Most tests will have questions of multiple formats (e.g. multiple-choice, short analysis of a song, etc.). The instructor will provide students with more information on how to prepare for them during class.
- 4. Take-Home Essay Exam** (60 points in total)
- Practice Essay Assignment (10 points)
  - Revised and Resubmitted Practice Essay Assignment (10 points)
  - Making Sample Essay Question and Outline in Class (10 points). This is to help students prepare for the upcoming essay exam.
  - Final Take-Home Exam Essay (30 points). A list of essay questions will be available on BB at 6am on May 1 (Mon). You are asked to choose 1 question from each of the 2 “groups,” thus choosing 2 questions in total to answer. They are due within 72 hours, by 6am on May 3 (Wed).

**Total Points: 200**

**Grading Policy:**

A+	200 – 190
A	189 – 180
B+	179 – 170
B	169 – 160
C+	159 – 150
C	149 – 140
D+	139 – 130
D	129 – 120
D-	119 – 110
F	109 – 0

**On Late and Missed Coursework:**

I do not accept any late work or make-up assignments unless there is a documented emergency (injury, sickness, job interview, urgent health problem of close family member, etc.). Computer and network issues, traffic issues, lost items, etc. are not considered as emergencies, so please plan accordingly. I reserve the right to ask for a document or email from someone who can attest to your situation. Please see “Consultation” above – then we discuss appropriate accommodation for your situation.

**E-mail Policy:**

Please write concise emails and allow at least 48 hours for response (longer for times when I am traveling). For substantial questions, please talk to me during office hours rather than using e-mail, as it is mutually more beneficial.

**Syllabus Revision**

This syllabus may be revised if necessary due to changes in scheduling and other factors. The most updated copy of this syllabus will always be available on Blackboard.

**UA Severe Weather Protocol:**

UA's primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at [www.ua.edu](http://www.ua.edu). In the event of an emergency, students should consult this site for further directions. In the event of an emergency, I will provide additional course information via email. If you have not done so already, please set up your weather advisory through Connect-ED-- faculty, staff and students (sign up on myBama). Alternatively, you can listen to weather advisory broadcasts over WVUA 90.7 FM, Alabama Public Radio 91.5 FM or use WVUA 7 Storm Watch, which provides a free service you can subscribe to that allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail, pager or cell phone.

**Statement on Academic Misconduct:**

Academic misconduct is a serious offense and is taken very seriously at UA and in the class. Suspected cases of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. You are bound by UA's Honor Code in this class.

**Required Texts:**

Tanya Luhrmann. When God Talks Back.  
Jason Josephson. The Invention of Religion in Japan.

**Schedule (BB = BlackBoard)**

**1. Introduction**

**Jan 12 (Thu)**

introduction

**2. Beginnings**

**Jan 16 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (1) Due Noon

**Jan 17 (Tue)**

Rudolph Otto, "Religion is an Experience of Awe and Mystery" (BB)

**Jan 19 (Thu)**

Edward Tylor, "Religion in Primitive Culture" (BB).

**3. Enduring Themes and Approaches in the Study of Religion**

**3a. Religion, Function, and Society**

**Jan 23 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (2) Due Noon

**Jan 24 (Tue)**

Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" (BB).

**Jan 26 (Thu)**

Karl Marx, "Religion is the Opium of the People" (BB)

**Jan 30 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (3) Due Noon

**Jan 31 (Tue)**

Eric Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol" (BB).

**Feb 2 (Thu)**

Bellah, "Civil Religion in America" (BB).

**Feb 7 (Tue)**

✓First Test

**3b. Religion, Self, and Mind**

**Feb 9 (Thu)**

Sigmund Freud, "Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices" (BB)

**Feb 13 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (4) Due Noon

**Feb 14 (Tue)**

Dulaney and Diske, "Cultural Rituals and OCD: Is There a Common Psychological Mechanism?" (BB)

**Feb 16 (Thu)**

Levi-Strauss, "The Effectiveness of Symbols" (BB)

**Feb 20 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (5) Due Noon

**Feb 21 (Tue)**

Boddy, Janice. "Spirits and Selves in Northern Sudan: The Cultural Therapeutics of Possession and Trance." (BB)

**Feb 23 (Thu)**

Luhrmann, Tanya. When God Talks Back (1)

**Feb 27 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (6) Due Noon

**Feb 28 (Tue)**

Luhrmann, Tanya. When God Talks Back (2)

**Mar 2 (Thu)**

Luhrmann, Tanya. When God Talks Back (3)

✓Practice Essay Assignment Due

**Mar 6 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (7) Due Noon

**Mar 7 (Tue)**

Luhrmann, Tanya. When God Talks Back (4)

**Mar 9 (Thu)**

✓Second Test

**Spring Break**

#### 4. Category of Religion and Insider/Outsider Problem

**Mar 20 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (8) Due Noon

**Mar 21 (Tue)**

McCutcheon, "Religion and the Insider/Outsider Problem" (BB)

**Mar 23 (Thu)**

Geertz, Clifford. "Religion as a Cultural System." (BB).

✓Practice Essay Assignment Revise and Resubmit Due

**Mar 27 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (9) Due Noon

**Mar 28 (Tue)**

Asad, Talal. "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category" (BB).

**Mar 30 (Thu)**

Mathew Engelke, "The Problem of Belief" (BB)

**Apr 3 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (10) Due Noon

**Apr 4 (Tue)**

Donald Lopez, "Belief" (BB)

**Apr 6 (Thu)**

Sharf, The Zen of Japanese Nationalism (BB)

Movie: The Souls of Zen

**Apr 10 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (11) Due Noon

**Apr 11 (Tue)**

Josephson, Jason. The Invention of Religion in Japan (1).

**Apr 13 (Thu)**

Josephson, Jason. The Invention of Religion in Japan (2).

**Apr 17 (Mon)**

✓Weekly Response (12) Due Noon

**Apr 18 (Tue)**

Josephson, Jason. The Invention of Religion in Japan (3).

**Apr 20 (Thu)**

✓Third Quiz

**Apr 25 (Tue)**

Josephson, Jason. The Invention of Religion in Japan (4).

Review

**Apr 27 (Thu) Last Day to Meet in Class**

✓Drafting Sample Essay Questions in Class

Summing Up

**May 1 (Mon)**

✓Take-Home Essay Questions Distributed on BB at 6am, due in 72 hours