



REL 100.003
INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES
FALL 2019

Instructor: Richard Newton, PhD

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Allison Isidore, MA Student in Religion in Culture
(8/22/19)

Class Meetings: North Lawn 2008, T/R 11:00-12:15pm

Office Hours: By Appointment

Office Location: Manly Hall 204

Phone Number: 205-348-9994

Email: RN rwnewton@ua.edu; AI aisidore@crimson.ua.edu

Prerequisites: n/a

Course Description and Credit Hours:

This Core Humanities course surveys debates in the history of the field, definition of religion, insider/outsider problem, theories of religion and religion and law. It is an ideal introduction to the study of religion as practiced in a public university. **HU INB, 3 Credit Hours**

For many religion is a captivating topic; for others, a controversial one. In this class we'll examine the modern history of this subject matter and the social dynamics behind its cultural impact. As an academic course, we will calibrate our investigation around the aims and methods of the human sciences. And finally, we will consider what religion's legacy helps us observe in the world around us—even and especially instances that seemingly have no relation to “religion.”

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to do the following:

- (1) *Recognize the deployment of essentialist, functionalist, and family resemblance definitions of religion.*
- (2) *Distinguish between theological and anthropocentric approaches to the study of religion.*

- (3) *Differentiate emic and etic explanations of religion.*
- (4) *Define key concepts such as classification, essentialism, structure, habitus, legitimization, authority, authenticity*
- (5) *Identify key scholars and their contributions to the academic study of religion.*
- (6) *Redescribe historical moments using social theories from the broader academic study of religion.*

Required Course Materials

The following resources are required purchases. Please bring all of these materials to class with you everyday!

Bibliography

Craig Martin, *A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2017).

This book is a guide to the academic study of religion. It frames the aims of the discipline while introducing you to the methodological concerns, nuances, and subtleties to which students and scholars alike should be privy. I will also assign readings and media from other sources as well. Links to these will be published on Blackboard.

Interactive Notebook

Each student will need a College Rule Composition Book (i.e. 9.75 in x 7.5 in bound notebook). These are available at the SupeStore and other school supply retailers. This is the raw material out of which you will be creating your “interactive notebook,” a guided course research journal that you will be using regularly.

Blackboard

This learning management software will house all of our assignments and where you will submit your completed work— barring the interactive notebook. Through it, I will also share an array of e-resources to enrich your understanding of the academic study of religion. See this site as a digital representation of our classroom community. Since we will be making use of Blackboard as our main learning hub outside of class time, make sure that you’re in the habit of checking it daily.

*Pro Tips: You can set Blackboard to email or text you all updates. Also since we will be using Blackboard for exams, make sure that your web browser and computer hardware are fully compatible. When taking tests, make sure to review University’s guidelines here: <https://cit.ua.edu/technologies/blackboard/testing-tips-for-students/>.

Failing to do so may inhibit your ability to successfully complete assignments (for which there will be no retake barring extreme situations determined at the instructor's discretion).

Outline of Topics:

Below you'll find a course calendar. Each box notes the content for the day and the materials you need to prepare prior to class. So you will see the assigned reading and the title of the interactive notebook assignment (designated "IN"). These correspond to a page on Blackboard that details how to accomplish them. In class, you will complete the interactive notebook assignment listed at the top of the square. On Blackboard, the modules are divided by weeks for your convenience.

Unit Focus	Tuesday	Thursday
<p>Week 1</p> <p><i>Orientation</i></p>		<p>8/22</p> <p>Syllabus Day</p> <p>*Please bring an accessible and amendable copy of the syllabus with you to class.</p>
<p>Week 2</p> <p><i>What is(n't) religion?</i></p>	<p>8/27</p> <p>A History of Definitions</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>IN: "Religion Before and During Modernity"</p> <p>Read: Martin, 1-11.</p> <p>**8/28 Last Day to Drop w/o a Grade of "W."</p>	<p>8/29</p> <p>Defining the Study of Religion</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>IN: "Religion and Postmodernism"</p> <p>Read: Martin, 11-18.</p>

<p>Week 3</p> <p><i>Criticism: The Art of the Cutting Question</i></p>	<p>9/3</p> <p>Why you can't just "stuff" it!</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>IN: "Religion and Essentialism"</p> <p>Read: Martin, 19-26.</p>	<p>9/5</p> <p>Etic and Emic Perspective</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>IN: "Insiders and Outsiders"</p> <p>Read: Martin 26-32.</p> <p>*Exam 1 Due by Sunday 9/8 at 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 4</p> <p><i>Social Theory in Practice I</i></p>	<p>9/10</p> <p>The Naci-who?</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>Read: Miner, Nacirema</p> <p>IN: Free Note Activity-- Deciphering the Nacirema: After reading the Miner essay, draw upon prior knowledge to figure out who the "Nacirema" are. Write down the English names for the rituals and artifacts you recognize.</p> <p>*Seminar Group Sign-Up Due by the end of class.</p>	<p>9/12</p> <p>Analytical Breakdown</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>Read: The Blog Posts in the Folder</p> <p>IN: Free Note Activity— Inside the Scholar's Study: I want you to take 350-500 words to just journal about what these blog post show you about the academic study of religion, given the work you've done thus far. Reference concrete example from the semester's and day's readings.</p>
<p>Week 5</p> <p><i>Have a Little Class?</i></p>	<p>9/17</p> <p>Signification</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>IN: "Classification and Social Constructionism-Part I"</p>	<p>9/19</p> <p>"Classification is a Political Act"</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>IN: "Classification and Social Constructionism-Part II"</p> <p>Read: Martin, 43-50.</p>

	Read: Martin, 33-43.	
Week 6 <i>Just the Non-essentials...</i>	9/24 There's nothing to it? <u>Have Prepared:</u> IN: "Non-Essentialism-Part I" Read: Martin, 51-58	9/26 That's not the stuff. <u>Have Prepared:</u> IN: "Non-Essentialism-Part I" Read: Martin, 58-64.
Week 7 <i>Build it and they will come... and never leave.</i>	10/1 Who likes discipline? <u>Have Prepared:</u> IN: "Structure Structure Everywhere-Part I" Read: Martin 65-72.	10/3 "free as a bird ... this bird you cannot change." <u>Have Prepared:</u> IN: "Structure Structure Everywhere-Part II" Read: Martin 72-83
Week 8 <i>Matrix of Perception</i>	10/8 Behind the Pale, Behind the Veil <u>Have Prepared:</u> IN: "Kicking the Habit-Part I" Read: Martin 85-96	10/10 Is there a problem here? <u>Have Prepared:</u> IN: "Kicking the Habit-Part II" Read: Martin 96-102 *Exam 2 Due by Sunday 10/13 at 11:59pm

<p>Week 9</p> <p><i>Social Theory in Practice II</i></p>	<p>10/15</p> <p>In-Class Group Brainstorm Session for Final</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>TBD -Syllabus-RE: Final</p>	<p>10/17</p> <p>An Introduction to Discourse Analysis</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>Read: Article in the folder.</p> <p>IN: Free Notes— “Reading Outline”: Read the article in the folder and outline it as you wish. Pay attention to the kinds of rhetorical and discursive moves it makes. How does it get people to do something? That’s what you’re outlining.</p> <p>*Fill out Final Project Interest survey by Monday 10/21 at 11:59 pm.</p>
<p>Week 10</p> <p><i>Am I right?</i></p>	<p>10/22</p> <p>Having my back.</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>IN: “Too Legit to Quit-Part I”</p> <p>Read: Martin, 103-115.</p>	<p>10/24</p> <p>The Law on my Side.</p> <p><u>Have Prepared:</u></p> <p>IN: “Too Legit to Quit-Part II”</p> <p>Read: Martin, 115-120</p>
<p>Week 11</p> <p><i>Writing Your Own Ticket</i></p>	<p>10/29</p> <p>Being In Charge</p> <p>IN: “Author-Me—Part I”</p> <p>Read: Martin, 121-130.</p> <p>**10/30 Last Day to Drop with a “W.”</p>	<p>10/31 No Class</p>

Week 12	11/5 Being a Boss IN: “Author-Me—Part II” Read: Martin, 130-143.	11/7 Guest Lecture IN: None- Review Read: TBD
Week 13 <i>The Real McCoy</i>	11/12 More than True to One’s Self IN: IN: The One and Only?-Part I. Read: Martin, 143-150	11/14 Being An Original is Hard to Do IN: “The One and Only?-Part II.” Read: Martin, 151-157 *Exam 3 by Sunday 11/17 at 11:59pm.
Week 14 <i>Case Study Analysis and Final Preparations</i>	11/19 Discuss Case Study Assignment and Final Preparations Read: Martin, 179-182. McCutcheon, “A Tale of Prepositions and Conjunctions”	11/21 In-Class Work Day Read: Martin, 159-179.
Week 15	11/26 No class < In-Class Work Day > *WWJD Exam 4 Due at 11:59pm.	11/28 No Class

Week 16 <i>Final Work Week</i> No new grades this week	12/3 In-Class Work Day	12/5 Final Project Conversation *Attendance is part of your Final Exam grade. **Last day to Drop Class 12/6.
Final Exam	Friday, December 13, 2019 Final Project Submissions Due at 10:30am	

Exams and Assignments

The level to which you've met our Student Learning Outcomes will be measured by the following assignments.

PARTICIPATION:

Learning is an active process that requires preparation, practice, and questioning. While I will not be calling roll in this large-enrollment course, your presence is assumed. Points will be assessed through "ticket out the door" completion assignments collected throughout the semester. I will also use this and other activities to take attendance for purposes of official University enrollment reporting.

INTERACTIVE NOTEBOOK:

Notetaking is not simply recording information, but also training your mind to process it so that you can retrieve and use it as needed. The interactive notebook will help you become your best tutor. They should be brought to each class and will be graded at random throughout the semester for completion. Note that I reserve the right to determine whether an attempted entry constitutes sufficient effort so as to count as "completed."

EXAMS:

These short exams are your opportunity to demonstrate your handle of the course material. They will be taken via Blackboard within a designated window. The questions will be a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and matching. The exams are not cumulative but skills and theories are scaffolded so you would do well to make sure you've mastered prior concepts. Should you take seriously the interactive notebook assignment and class participation, you will be ready to perform well on the exam. They are closed and timed exams. You may not use or have near any resources (i.e. handouts, cellphones, books, notes, online resources). Nothing should be open on your computer beside the exam on Blackboard. In accordance with The Capstone Creed, I am trusting that you take this exam with integrity. ProTip: See ProTip about using Blackboard above. I will drop the lowest exam grade should you have an A- or above on the Interactive Notebook and Participation.

FINAL PROJECT— *Keep It REL News*.

People complain about the coverage of religion and culture in the news. We will use tools from class to showcase what the study of “Religion *in* Culture” can do. Working in groups of five, you will be create a 5-minute video news segment covering some contemporary issue in culture. It will look like this:

- 30-second Cold Open Introduction
- Title Card (Provided)
- 4 minute video
- 30-second Outro and Sign-off
- Credits (Provided)

In preparation for and completion of your assignment, each individual will complete and submit the following:

- (1) One news article
- (2) One blog post from an approved site.
- (3) One unique focus chapter from Martin
- (4) A 750-1000 word minimum discourse analysis that references the article, blog post, and chapter as studied in class. (template provided in class)
- (5) Assignment Cover Sheet on 12/5 for Final Project Conversation

FAQ:

You will have around five class periods in which you will get to work on this project together. Additionally, we will reserve time and space for your group to record elements of your news clip (e.g. station desk) at Manly Hall. Our GTA will be able to provide some technology assistance. And equipment check-out can be arranged through campus resources including the Alabama Digital Humanities Center and the Sanford Media Center (though cell phone quality video should suffice).

The quality should be good enough that you would feel comfortable streaming it on a professional site. I have included examples for quality comparison in the folder. Videos that go above and beyond may receive extra credit. This is a very doable project, but you need to use your time wisely. (Did I say that you get around five class periods to work on this?)

GENEROSITY POINTS (aka extra credit)

Throughout the semester, I may show generosity to those attending select Religious Studies Student Association or Department of Religious Studies events (i.e. campus lectures, the Religion Goes to the Movies film series). Any extra credit points received may be designated toward your interactive notebook grade. In the case that you have completed this and all completion-based tasks at the A or A+ range, I will apply your points toward an exam or the final project.

The Department of Religious Studies has a very active social media presence. Should you produce knowledge (video, blogpost, etc.) of publishable quality related to “Studying Religion in Culture,” you may receive additional extra credit toward any assignment. You must receive my approval should you want to take advantage of this opportunity and determine how it will impact your grade. So if you have ideas or questions, let’s chat. Students have found this to be an especially worthwhile in their college experience. But do not wait until the end of the semester. There comes a time when this is no longer a tenable option.

Assignment Type	Percentage
Participation	20%
Interactive Notebook	20%
Exams (I,II,III,IV)	40%
Final Project Individual	20%
Final Project Group	20%

C. Grading Scale

59 > =F	Unacceptable Performance
60-63 =D-	Insufficient Performance
64-66 =D	Needs Improvement
67-69 =D+	Adequate Performance
70-73 =C-	Acceptable Performance
74-76 =C	Satisfactory Performance
77-79 =C+	Promising Performance
80-83 =B-	Good Performance
84-86 =B	Commendable Performance
87-89 =B+	Great Performance
90-93 =A-	Advanced Performance
94-96 =A	Excellent Performance
97-100=A+	Superior Performance

Classroom Policies

ATTENDANCE

This course is taught from the perspective that higher education is a professional endeavor. Just as there are ramifications for missing a job, there are ramifications for missing class. The student learning outcomes for this course presume active class attendance, so personal expectations regarding grades should be revised in light of absences. You may miss 2 (two) classes without penalty. These are to help you account for those times when life just happens (family emergencies, serious illness, etc.). Any absence thereafter will result in a deduction of half your participation grade (i.e. 10% of your course grade) and discount you from all extra-credit opportunities—including generosity points and exam grade drops. An absence after that will be a deduction of a quarter of your interactive notebook grade (i.e. 5% of your course grade). If you know you’re going to be absent/late/leaving early for a class, please email the teaching assistant and instructor (single email) as soon as possible (preferably 48 hours, but ASAP) so we can work out how to help you get credit.

MISSED EXAMS AND COURSEWORK

Anytime you miss class, you should take the following steps (in this order): (1) meet with a classmate to copy any notes, (2) schedule an appointment with the instructor or teaching assistant to get clarity on the notes, missed lesson, and any handouts, (3) study the material and come back ready to actively participate in class.

You are still responsible for submitting assignments by their deadlines. Late work and exams are only accepted in the most extreme circumstances—that is, matters of life and death, not pass or fail. Be aware that for me to justify this decision, I will likely require external documentation of the matter in consultation with campus administrative offices and reserve the right to make any deductions. I implore you to be proactive and keep me posted within in 24 hours of the issue or as soon as circumstances feasibly allow. Tardiness here will leave me less equipped to be gracious.

I do not permit incompletes except in the most extreme circumstances. Should you find yourself considering an incomplete or dropping the class, come see me first to discuss your profess. I can only work with you if you are doing your part to work with me and with the class.

OFFICE HOURS AND COMMUNICATION

Office hours are an opportunity for you to get one-on-one assistance with the course. I invite you to come prepared with questions and to take advantage of the opportunity. I don't worry about students who come to office hours. I worry about those who never do. As I'm often on campus, please feel free to drop by if you see my office door open. Otherwise come by during my appointed office times or make an appointment. Do not be afraid to ask for help learning something you don't know well. That's precisely what we're here to do.

Online communication is a wonderful convenience, but it can give a false impression of engagement. Please note that I will generally respond to emails within 36 hours of receipt during the work week. I may not see emails during the weekend or otherwise noted occasions, so please be patient. Similarly, my communications with you will happen primarily during the work week.

DEVICE/TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Technology is a tool, and in a world in which digital technologies are increasingly abundant, the classroom environment must take them into account. This class will use technology in a guided way. You will certainly be using computers/devices for homework activities and exams. And I may invite you to use technology for an in-class activity. That said, digital technology is prohibited during class except in those circumstances. The exceptions to this are those who are consulting an e-version of the book (please email me ASAP to let me know that you are doing this) or are permitted to by way of documentation for an approved device from the Office of Disability Services. If the instructor or teaching assistant sees you using digital technology (including but not limited to mobile devices and laptops) during a class session, you will lose participation points for that day.

Please make sure your devices are silenced or on vibrate for the duration of the class. If you need to answer a call, text, or email, quietly excuse yourself from the classroom to do so. Also note, that all PPT slides will be uploaded to class, so you do not (and should not) copy slides down. Your notes should be more engaging.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE POLICIES

Notification of Changes

The instructor will make every effort to follow the guidelines of this syllabus as listed; however, the instructor reserves the right to amend this document as the need arises. In such instances, the instructor will notify students in class and/or via Blackboard and will endeavor to provide reasonable time for students to adjust to any changes.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the official [Code of Academic Conduct](#) provided in the Online Catalog.

Statement On Disability Accommodations

Contact the [Office of Disability Services \(ODS\)](#) as detailed in the Online Catalog.

Severe Weather Protocol

Please see the latest [Severe Weather Guidelines](#) in the Online Catalog.

Pregnant Student Accommodations

Title IX protects against discrimination related to pregnancy or parental status. If you are pregnant and will need accommodations for this class, please review the University's FAQs on the [UAct website](#).

Religious Observances

Under the Guidelines for Religious Holiday Observances, students should notify the instructor in writing or via email during the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class for religious observance. The instructor will work to provide reasonable opportunity to complete academic responsibilities as long as that does not interfere with the academic integrity of the course. See full guidelines at [Religious Holiday Observances Guidelines](#).

UAct Statement

The [UAct website](#) provides an overview of The University's expectations regarding respect and civility.