

INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES

REL 100-001 | Fall 2019

T/TR 12:30-1:45pm | Farrah Hall 214

Prof. Michael J. Altman

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Office: 205 Manly Hall

Office hours: Mon and Thu. 11am-12pm

GTA: Caity Bell

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

As a general introduction to the academic study of religion, REL 100 is focused on the problem of defining religion, in theory and in practice. The course examines classic approaches to defining religion and identifies the theories of religion's role or purpose implicit in each.

As a Core Curriculum Humanities course, REL 100's goal is for all students to learn to define, accurately describe, and compare in a non-evaluative manner so as to find significant similarities and differences among forms of observable human behavior.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will recall important terms in the academic study of religion.
2. Students will recall major theories in the academic study of religion.
3. Students will recall major scholars in the academic study of religion.
4. Students will distinguish between etic and emic viewpoints.
5. Students will analyze systems of classification.

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT

Caity Bell will be working as the GTA in this course. She is a current MA student in the Religion in Culture program in the Department of Religious Studies. In her research she examines the ways museums categorize and represent materials. You should talk to her about her work beyond this class because it's really interesting. She will help manage the day to day logistics of the course and will consult with students on their final video projects.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Studying Religion: an introduction, Russell McCutcheon (London: Equinox Publishers, 2007)

Religion in 5 Minutes, Aaron W. Hughes and Russell McCutcheon eds. (London: Equinox Publishers, 2017)

BOX FOLDER

Reading assignments other than the required books are posted in the course Box folder: <https://alabama.box.com/v/REL100FA2019>

REQUIREMENTS

1. Peer-assessed Pop Quizzes (0%)

During some classes we will have unannounced pop quizzes on the day's reading assignment. These quizzes are purely diagnostic and will not be part of your grade. They will be graded by a nearby peer in the class and then we will discuss them. They are a chance to help you see how well you are reading and whether you are preparing well for the quiz questions that will count.

2. 4 Quizzes (40%)

The quizzes cover the bolded terms and people in the *Studying Religion* book. You should make use of the Glossary and Scholars sections of the book as you read the chapters to better understand these key people and terms. It will also cover key concepts and terms from the additional readings from *Religion and 5 Minutes* and the readings in Box. Prof. Altman will provide a list of terms not in *Studying Religion* to assist you in studying for the quiz. The quizzes will be given through Blackboard and taken outside of class time. They are open book but they are also timed so you won't be able to rely on the books. **Pay attention to the due dates for the quizzes listed in the schedule.**

3. 3 Self-Assessments (30%)

These self-assessments require you to answer a few questions about what you have learned in the class, where you think you are learning more, and where you might be getting lost or struggling. There are no right or wrong answers. Rather, these are graded as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory based on how thoroughly you answer. These will help you see what you are learning, help Prof Altman fill in trouble spots that appear across self-assessments for the whole class, and help you frame exactly what you are getting out of the class. **Pay attention to the due dates for the self-assessments listed on the schedule.**

4. *Religion in 5 Minutes* video project (20%)

Working in groups of up to 4, students will be assigned a chapter from *Religion in 5 Minutes* that we did not read as a class. Your assignment is to turn that chapter into a video explainer that presents the question and then summarizes the answer the author gave in your own words. More details on this project as we get closer to the end of the semester.

GRADING SCALE

A+	95-100%	C	70-74
A	90-94	D+	65-69

B+	85-89	D	60-64
B	80-84	D-	50-59
C+	75-79	F	below 50

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS CLASS: 3 EASY STEPS

1. Read. The guts of the course are in the readings. To really get what we're doing you have to start by reading before you come to class.

2. Collaborate. The best way to understand the ideas we're covering in class is to talk about them. The better you participate in class discussions and activities, the more you will learn.

3. Be curious. This is a class all about looking at the world around you differently. Be on the lookout for ways you can see ideas and theories from our class in examples all around you.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONFUSED OR NEED HELP

1. **Come to Caity's GTA office hours**
2. **Come to Prof. Altman's office hours**
3. **Email Caity**
4. **Email Prof. Altman**

Logistical questions about assignments or what was covered in a particular class should go to Caity first, though email or her office hours. Any questions about your grade, the class as a whole, etc. should come to me through email or, even better, office hours. I am happy to talk to you and I am here to address any concerns or problems you are having in the class. Also, note that I am a Safe Zone Ally, one of many resource people on campus who provide an open door for individuals seeking information or assistance regarding issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, harassment, and/or discrimination. Feel free to talk to me any time if you or someone you know has questions or concerns.

WHAT NOT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONFUSED OR NEED HELP

1. **Nothing**
2. **Stop coming to class**

GROUND RULES

Attendance

Regular attendance and adequate preparation are expected in this course. **You have to be here to do well.** You will need the context I provide in class to make sense of the

readings you do on your own. If you don't come to class you will probably do very poorly.

Extra Credit

There will be many opportunities to earn extra credit in this course. These opportunities will generally ask you to attend events (public lectures, films, etc.) related to the Dept. of Religious Studies or the study of religion on campus.

The assignment for these events is always the same. Write a one-page double-spaced response to the event. The first half should be a summary of the event itself. The second half should be your thoughts on the event. How did what was said connect to our class? What did you think about the event? What was the most interesting part of it to you? These are due before the next upcoming quiz for 3 bonus points on the quiz. Below are some dates of events already announced that you may attend for extra credit.

Sept. 3: REL Goes to the Movies "Dr. Strangelove," 6pm, Gordon Palmer 230

Sept. 24: REL Goes to the Movies "Children of Men," 6pm, Gordon Palmer 230

Oct. 15: Dept. of REL Day Lecture, 7pm, ten Hoor Hall 30

Oct. 22: REL Goes to the Movies "Beasts of the Southern Wild," 6pm, Gordon Palmer 230

Nov. 19.: REL Goes to the Movies "Wall-E," 6pm, Gordon Palmer 230

Late Work/Missed Quizzes

I do not accept late work. I do give extensions in the case of extraordinary circumstances, but I expect that you will ask for the extension promptly. Do not email asking for an extension unless it is under extreme circumstances outside of your control (like a relative died over the weekend and you need to leave immediately.) I allow for make-up quizzes and exams in extraordinary circumstances and only with appropriate documentation that a student missed the quiz/exam for reasons outside of their control. Note that all of the quizzes in this class are online. At this point I want to test and see who has read this far into the syllabus. If you are reading this, Google image search "Macho Man Randy Savage" and email me the best gif you find. I will give you 3 bonus points.

UNIVERSITY 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 email 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 [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) 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.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS DUE BEFORE CLASS	ASSIGNMENT AFTER CLASS
Aug. 22	Introductions		Read the syllabus. Seriously. Read it.
Aug. 27	How do you study religion?	<i>Studying Religion</i> Introduction, <i>Religion in 5 Minutes</i> Ch. 62, 64	
Aug. 29	Where did "religion" come from?	<i>SR</i> Ch. 1, <i>5 Minutes</i> Ch. 8, 9	
Sep. 3	Essentialism	<i>SR</i> Ch. 3	
Sep. 5	E. B. Tylor	<i>SR</i> "Edward B. Tylor" p. 247-248	
Sep. 10	Mircea Eliade	<i>SR</i> "Mircea Eliade" p. 200-202	
Sep. 12	Essentialism in the Field: Sacred Presence/Review for Quiz #1	Orsi reading on Box	Quiz #1 on Blackboard due by end of day Sept. 16
Sep. 17	Functionalism	<i>SR</i> Ch. 4, <i>5 Minutes</i> Ch. 12	Self-Assessment #1 on Blackboard due by end of day Sep. 18
Sep. 19	Emile Durkheim	<i>SR</i> "Emile Durkheim" p. 196-199	
Sep. 24	Sigmund Freud	<i>SR</i> "Sigmund Freud" p. 205-207	
Sep. 26	Functionalism in the Field: Cognitive Science	Barrett reading in Box	
Oct. 1	Resemblances	<i>SR</i> Ch. 5, <i>5 Minutes</i> Ch. 29	
Oct. 3	God, Books, and Miracles	<i>5 Minutes</i> Ch. 8, 9, 10	
Oct. 8	Resemblances in the Field: Four Cs/Review for Quiz #2	Albanese reading in Box	Quiz #2 on Blackboard due by end of day Oct. 9.
Oct. 10	Public/Private	<i>SR</i> Ch. 6	Self-Assessment #2 on Blackboard due by end of day Oct. 13
Oct. 15	Religion in Public Schools	<i>5 Minutes</i> Ch. 68, 72	

Oct. 17	Public/Private in the Field: Why did they stop killing Quakers?	Hill reading on Box	
Oct. 22	Insider/Outsider	SR Ch. 7	
Oct. 24	Who can study religion?	<i>5 Minutes</i> Ch. 70, 71, 77, 78	
Oct. 29	Insider/Outsider in the Field: Hinduism/Review for Quiz #3	Hinduism reading in Box	Quiz #3 on Blackboard due by end of day Oct. 30.
FALL BREAK			
Nov. 5	Studying Classification	SR Ch. 8, <i>5 Minutes</i> Ch. 5, 6, 7	
Nov. 7	"World Religions" Paradigm	SR "Tomoko Masuzawa" p. 224-226, <i>5 Minutes</i> Ch. 18	
Nov. 12	What is a religion?	<i>5 Minutes</i> Ch. 3, 15, 30, 32, 55, 58	
Nov. 14	Classifying Religion in the Field: Coca-Cola, Baseball, and Rock n Roll/Review for Quiz #3	Chidester reading in Box	Quiz #4 on Blackboard due by end of day Nov. 18.
Nov. 19	How do you study religion?/Begin group projects	Lincoln reading in Box	
Nov. 21	NO CLASS-CONFERENCE	Work on your videos	
Nov. 26	NO CLASS-CONFERENCE	Work on your videos	
THANKSGIVING			
Dec. 3	Short Film Festival!		
Dec. 5	Short Film Festival!		Self-Assessment #3 on Blackboard due by end of day Dec. 9.