

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION REL 100.002 FALL 2019

LECTURES: TR 9:30AM – 10:45AM AT BEVILL 1000
GEOLOGY BUILDING

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Course Website

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-100-002-introduction-to-religious-studies-2/>

Description

As a general introduction to the academic study of religion, REL 100 focuses in detail on the problem of defining religion, and identifies the theories of religion's function or purpose implicit in each, and the practical implications (that is, social, economic, political) of defining it in this or that way. Examples where this is applied will also be chosen from ancient Greece.

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.

Objectives

In this course students will be able to:

1. Describe scholars and schools of thought relevant to the academic study of religion.
2. Define key concepts in the study of religion.
3. Distinguish essentialist, functionalist, and family resemblance definitions of religion.
4. Identify an emic and an etic viewpoint.
5. Compare and analyze between theological and anthropocentric approaches to the study of religion.

Books

The course has only one required book, that can be purchased at the University Supply Store, local book stores, or at such sites as amazon.com or bn.com; used copies are also available:

McCutcheon, Russell (2019). *Studying Religion: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Readings

Further PDF readings will be available through the Blackboard site. The schedule below provides a list of the readings that you will be responsible for on any given day. Doing all of your assigned readings well in advance of class is important because our lectures and discussions all presume that you have the necessary background knowledge provided by these readings.

Excused Absences for Quizzes, Tests and Exams

If you miss a quiz, test or exam, you must contact the professor immediately to explain your absence. There will be 10 quizzes throughout the semester, if you miss a quiz for what the professor

considers to be a legitimate reason, the portion of that grade will transfer to the remaining quizzes; make-up tests are not an option in this course; instead, for test absences that the professor deems legitimate, the portion of the grade dedicated to the missed test will be completely transferred to the next test. Missing both tests for what the professor sees as a legitimate reasons means a student's final exam will count for the full portion of the course's tests and exams. Students who miss the final exam for a legitimate reason must speak with the professor before the end of the examination period about the possibility of a final alternate assignment.

Requirements

1. Attendance

Regular attendance, purchasing the course book, and adequate preparation for each day's readings are expected and required to do well in this course. See the schedule, below, for each day's readings.

2. 10 Quizzes (20%)

There will be 10 quizzes throughout the course relating to the readings on the day of the quiz (See schedule below). Each pop quiz is worth 2% of your overall course grade and will consist of two questions related to the bolded technical terms and names in each chapter of the course's book.

3. 3 Tests (45%)

There are three multiple-choice tests. The main focus of each test is on understanding (1) the bolded technical terms in our book and (2) scholars who appear in each chapter, all of which is discussed in greater detail in the Glossary and list of scholars at the back of the book. Content from the lectures that is relevant to understanding these technical terms and scholars, is also testable material. Each test is worth 15% of your course grade for a total of 45% of your overall course grade.

4. Course Assignment (10%)

This course has one group assignment (working in teams of 5) requiring independent work carried out in Gorgas Library. This assignment is worth 10% of your course grade.

The instructions for this assignment are as follows:

On **Tuesday August 27** all students must, during class time, work with one other partner to find 5 different definitions of religion in Gorgas Library. (Do not come to class on this day but, instead, meet your partner at the library to work on this assignment). Each of the 5 definitions must be properly quoted in full and also be accompanied by a complete citation to the source of the quotation, in the following style:

From a Book

Author's last name, first Name (year of publication). *Full Book Title*. City of

Publication: Publisher, page number(s).

[e.g., McCutcheon, Russell (2007). *Studying Religion: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 17-18.]

From an Edited Book

Author's last name, first name (year of publication). "Title of the Chapter." In Name of the Editor(s), *Full Book Title*, page number(s). Edition. City of Publication: Publisher.

[e.g., Touna, Vaia (2012). "Redescribing Iconoclasm: Holey Frescoes and Identity Formation." In W. Arnal, W. Braun and R. McCutcheon (eds), *Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion*, 218. Sheffield and Bristol: Equinox.]

From a Journal

Author's last name, first name (year of publication). "Title of the Article." *Title of the Journal* Vol. #: page number(s).

[e.g., Smith, Jonathan Z. (1996). "A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion." *Harvard Theological Review* 89: 387.]

You are required to find definitions only from academic sources (e.g., textbooks, scholarly books, journals, encyclopedias, etc.) will be accepted. **No definitions from dictionaries will be accepted** as we are not looking for examples of popular or common usage but, instead for technical, scholarly usage of the term “religion.” No definitions citing our course book will be accepted. No more than one definition from each source can be cited. Citations of web sources will not be accepted. Students are recommended to browse the BL section of the library (shelved in the basement of Gorgas Library) and also to use resources in the reference section of Gorgas library. Be sure to properly re-shelve any book that you use or leave them in the proper place for Gorgas library staff to find and re-shelve them correctly.

The assignment, bearing the name of each partner on a cover sheet, listed in alphabetical order, is to be stapled and typed, double spaced, with one inch margins, and 12 point Times Roman or Times New Roman font. **It is due in class on Thurs. August 29.**

5. Final Exam (25%)

This course has a cumulative, multiple-choice final examination, which also includes all material included in the previous tests. This cumulative exam is worth 25% of your final grade.

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

General Comments

1. Plagiarism is a serious scholarly offence and amounts to using the intellectual labor of another author without proper quotation, citation, and acknowledgment. If the instructor suspects that a student has copied the work of another author (whether that author is a peer, classmate, or published author), the case will immediately be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.
2. No grades of “I” (incomplete) will be assigned in this course. In my experience, when awarded at the 100-level a grade of “I” rarely leads to the completion of course requirements. Please speak with me well in advance if you are having difficulties satisfactorily completing the course’s requirements on time or if you anticipate your absence from class becoming routine. Although I cannot guarantee that reasonable accommodations can be made for all occasion that may arise, speaking with me before a problem arises will greatly enhance our ability to address the situation in a way that is both fair to your classmates and beneficial to you.
3. Students with documented physical and/or learning disabilities should contact the professor outside of class time as soon as possible to review documentation and discuss accommodations. Also, students should familiarize themselves with the Office of Disability Services at <http://www.ods.ua.edu>.
4. UA’s primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at www.ua.edu. In the event of an emergency, students consult this site for further directions. Also familiarize yourselves with UA’s Severe Weather Protocol at www.prepare.ua.edu
5. The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides a list of reporting channels that can be used to report incidences of illegal discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, sexual violence, retaliation, threat assessment or fraud.

Tentative Schedule

Th Aug. 22	Introduction to the Course
T Aug. 27	Defining Religion No Class: Library Group Assignment (see course requirements)
Th Aug. 29	Introduction: What is the Study of Religion?—Quiz 1
T Sep. 3	Introduction: What is the Study of Religion?
Th Sep. 5	Studying Religion Chapter 1—Quiz 2
T Sep. 10	Studying Religion Chapter 1
Th Sep. 12	Studying Religion Chapter 2—Quiz 3
T Sep. 17	Studying Religion Chapter 2
Th Sep. 19	TEST 1
T Sep. 24	Studying Religion Chapter 3—Quiz 4
Th Sep. 26	Studying Religion Chapter 3
T. Oct. 1	Studying Religion Chapter 3
Th. Oct. 3	Studying Religion Chapter 4—Quiz 5
T. Oct. 8	Studying Religion Chapter 4
Th. Oct. 10	Studying Religion Chapter 4
T. Oct. 15	Studying Religion Chapter 5—Quiz 6
Th. Oct. 17	Studying Religion Chapter 5
T. Oct. 22	Studying Religion Chapter 5—Quiz 7
Th. Oct. 24	TEST 2
T. Oct. 29	Studying Religion Chapter 6—Quiz 8
Th. Oct. 31	No Class Fall Break
T. Nov. 5	Studying Religion Chapter 6
Th. Nov. 7	Studying Religion Chapter 7—Quiz 9
T. Nov. 12	Studying Religion Chapter 7
Th. Nov. 14	Test 3
T. Nov. 19	Studying Religion Chapter 8—Quiz 10
Th. Nov. 21	Studying Religion Chapter 8
T. Nov. 26	No Class
Th. Nov. 28	No Class Thanksgiving
T. Dec. 3	Studying Religion Chapter 8
Th. Dec. 5	Review

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, Dec. 11 → 8:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.