

# **Introduction to Ancient Religions**

## **REL 106.001 Fall 2021**

**Lectures: TR 9:30am – 10:45 am**  
**PRH308**

---

### **Prof. Vaia Touna**

Email: [vaia.touna@ua.edu](mailto:vaia.touna@ua.edu)

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30-1:30 pm via zoom (link available on Blackboard)

Office: Presidents Hall 202 – Department Office: Presidents Hall 212 (348-5271)

### **Course Website**

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-106-001-introduction-to-ancient-greek-religion/>

---

## **I. Description**

As a general introduction to the academic study of ancient religions, REL 106 examines the narratives and practices of what scholars call ancient religion, examining the problem of translating specific ancient terms—from ancient Greece to Rome, to Egypt, to Mesopotamia—as religion and the implications involved in this process. The course also looks at various scholarly approaches to definition with a focus on how “ancient religion” is being defined and then used to describe ancient cultures, and the practical implications (that is, social, economic, political) of such an endeavor.

## **II. Objectives**

In this course students will be able to:

1. Distinguish between essentialist, and functionalist definitions of religion.
2. Identify key concepts and scholars relevant to the academic study of ancient religions.
3. Describe myths and rituals from ancient cultures (Greek, Egyptian, Roman, Mesopotamian).
4. Compare and analyze elements of different scholarly articles in relation to ancient religions.
5. Implement the above knowledge in writing assignments.

## **III. Readings and Blackboard Modules**

This course has not required books but PDF readings. The schedule below provides a list of the readings that you will be responsible for on any given day. Those readings will be available through the blackboard course site’s weekly modules. Doing all your assigned readings well in advance of class is important because our lectures, discussions and writing assignments all presume that you have the necessary background knowledge provided by these readings.

## IV. Excused absences and delays for Quizzes, Tests and Writing Assignments

All weekly work must be completed by the due date/time posted in the Course Syllabus. If you are unable to attend for what the professor considers to be a legitimate reason you will have to work and submit the assignment individually (see below “Requirements”). Quizzes, Writing Assignments and Exams will be available through the blackboard modules the tentative schedule below lists in detail your assignments. **Late work will only be accepted with permission from the professor and only within reasonable time after the due date.** There is no guarantee that late assignments will be accepted—that is up to the professor’s discretion on a case-by-case basis and points may be deducted for late submissions. If an emergency arises, and you foresee having to miss multiple assignments, you must make arrangements with the professor.

## V. Requirements

### 1. Attendance

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

### 2. 10 Quizzes (40%)

There will be 10 quizzes throughout the course relating to the readings and lectures of the week (See schedule below). Each quiz is worth 4% of your overall course grade and will consist of 8 multiple-choice questions related to the readings and lectures of that week and will be available to you on blackboard. These quizzes are meant to provide you with review material for studying purposes and to reinforce certain important pieces of information that you learn each week. Prior to taking each quiz be sure that you have read all materials relevant to that week’s quiz. **The quizzes will be available on Tuesdays and must be completed by the end of the week. Do not click the quiz link unless you have read the instructions and you are ready to begin and complete the quiz at that time.**

### 3. 15 Short Assignments (45%)

Throughout the course each student will have to complete 15 short assignments. Each assignment will worth 3% for a total of 45%. Students will be asked to answer a question reflecting on a reading that will be assigned to them. The reading will be available on Blackboard and students **must have it in class** either as hard copy or access it through their laptops or iPads **NOT** phones. The answer should be between 100-150 words. The assignments will be discussed first in class and then the answer must be uploaded on blackboard by the end of each week.

### 4. Final Exam (15%)

The final exam will be made available on blackboard during the last week of classes. Students must complete it by **Thursday December 9 by the end of the day. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

## VI. 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

## VII. General Comments

1. All University faculty, staff, and students are expected to maintain a commitment to the health and safety of our campus community. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, specific health and safety standards are in place to minimize exposure and community spread on campus. In the interest of your health and safety and that of all UA students, faculty and staff, the University reserves the right to change the mode of instruction or schedule of instruction at any time, based upon prevailing public health and other guidance. While the method of delivery may change, educational instruction and opportunities will continue. As such, the University will not provide a refund of tuition, in whole or in-part, based on any such changes. Detailed information on changes in format or schedule can be found at [studentaccounts.ua.edu](http://studentaccounts.ua.edu) and [financialaid.ua.edu](http://financialaid.ua.edu).

2. UA students, faculty and staff are required to comply with [UA System Comprehensive Health and Safety Task Force](#) guidance regarding social distancing, face coverings and other measures. Face coverings shall be required indoors on all System campuses where social distancing cannot be maintained. **Face coverings are required at all times while in classroom settings**, medical facilities, and medical clinical settings, until otherwise instructed by the University.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to [protect yourself and our herd](#). COVID-19 vaccines are being administered by the [University Medical Center, the Student Health Center](#) and various businesses and healthcare providers. Students who [report proof of their vaccination status](#) will receive Bama Cash as a thank you gift for doing their part.

**3. You are responsible for doing class work in a timely manner during the semester to do well in the course. You are also responsible for monitoring your grade during the semester. Contact the professor if you have any questions regarding class material, grades or if you are struggling with the course. There are NO EXTRA CREDIT opportunities in this course.**

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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>.

7. 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 consult this site for further directions. Also familiarize yourselves with UA's Severe Weather Protocol at [www.prepare.ua.edu](http://www.prepare.ua.edu)

8. The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website ([www.ua.edu/uact](http://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.

## VIII. Tentative Schedule

### **Th Aug. 19 Introduction to the Course**

You are required to read the syllabus and come prepared with any questions you may have.

#### **Assignment 1**

### **Week 1 Aug. 24-26**

Tuesday Some Fundamental Notions

Thursday Some Fundamental Notions

#### **Assignment 2**

### **Week 2 Aug. 31- Sept. 2**

Tuesday Ancient Greek Religion

Thursday Ancient Greek Religions

#### **QUIZ1 and Assignment 3**

### **Week 3 Sept. 7-9**

Tuesday The History of the word Religion

Thursday The History of the word Religion

#### **QUIZ 2 and Assignment 4**

### **Week 4 Sept. 14-16**

Tuesday Ancient Roman Religion

Thursday Ancient Roman Religion

#### **QUIZ 3 and Assignment 5**

### **Week 5 Sept. 21-23**

Tuesday Essentialism

Thursday Essentialism

#### **QUIZ 4 and Assignment 6**

### **Week 6 Sept. 28 – Sept. 30**

Tuesday Ancient Egyptian Religion

Thursday Ancient Egyptian Religion

#### **QUIZ 5 and Assignment 7**

### **Week 7 Oct. 5-7**

Tuesday Functionalism

Thursday Functionalism

#### **QUIZ 6 and Assignment 8**

**Week 8 Oct. 12-14**

Tuesday Ancient Mesopotamian Religion

Thursday Ancient Mesopotamian Religion

**QUIZ 7 and Assignment 9**

**Week 9 Oct. 19-21**

Tuesday Family Resemblance

Thursday Family Resemblance

**QUIZ 8 and Assignment 10**

**Week 10 Oct. 26-28**

Tuesday Insider/Outsider

Thursday Insider/Outsider

**QUIZ 9 and Assignment 11**

**Week 11 Nov. 2-4**

Tuesday Lost In Translation

Thursday Lost In Translation

**Quiz 10 and Assignment 12**

**Week 12 Nov. 9-11**

Tuesday The Modern Origins of Ancient Religions

Thursday The Modern Origins of Ancient Religions

**Assignment 13**

**Week 13 Nov. 16-18**

Tuesday Rethinking Ancient Religions

Thursday Rethinking Ancient Religions

**Assignment 14**

**Week 14 Nov. 23-25**

Tuesday Rethinking Ancient Religions

Thursday **Thanksgiving – Classes**

**Assignment 15**

**Week 15 Nov. 30 – Dec. 2**

Tuesday Rethinking Ancient Religions

Thursday Rethinking Ancient Religions

**Final Exam due Thursday December 9 by the end of the day. Late submissions will not be accepted.**