

Introduction to the Study of Religion

REL 100.001 Spring 2022

Lectures: TR 9:30 am - 10:45 am Lloyd Hall 328

Prof. Vaia Touna

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Office Hours: Email the professor to schedule a zoom or in person meeting appointment.

GTA (Graduate Teaching Assistant)

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Course Website

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-100-001-introduction-into-religious-studies/>



I. 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.

II. Learning Outcomes

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.

III. Books and PDF Readings

The course has **two required books**, that can be purchased at the University Supply Store, local bookstores, or at such sites as amazon.com or bn.com; used copies are also available:

- McCutcheon, Russell (2019). *Studying Religion: An Introduction*. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge. ISBN #0815353634
- Hughes, Aaron and McCutcheon Russell (eds.) (2017). *Religion in 5 minutes*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing. ISBN #1781794650

The schedule below provides a list of the readings that you will be responsible for on any given day. Further PDF 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. Attendance and Requirements for missed Assignments

Attendance and participation are key to succeed in the course. You are responsible for doing the required readings and assignments in a timely manner. All Quizzes, Writing Assignments and Exams will be available online through the blackboard weekly modules, and they must be completed by the due date/time. **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. Course PowerPoints

To aid in study purposes and to maximize accessibility, all PowerPoints will be made available in Blackboard.

VI. Graduate Teaching Assistants:

Kyle Ashley is working as Graduate Teaching Assistant for this section of REL 100. Kyle is an MA student in the Religion in Culture program and will be assisting with grading and maintaining class records, host review sessions before exams and will be available for any general questions you might have.

VII. Assignments and Grading

1. 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 Thursdays and must be completed by Sunday of that 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.**

2. 10 Discussion Assignments (15%)

You are required to always bring in class the book *Religion in 5 minutes*.

Throughout the course there will be several short writing assignments (see schedule below) that will be related to the readings of this book, that will have to be completed during our class time and will then have to be uploaded on blackboard by Sunday of that week. **Late assignments will not be accepted.** Each assignment is worth 1.5%.

3. 3 Open Book exams (45%)

This course uses open book exams to assess your learning. Exams will be available online through Blackboard during our regular class time (see schedule below)—on the day of the exam you don't have to come to class. There will be 3 open book exams. Each exam worth 15% of your overall grade. They will include open-ended questions that you will have to answer in a critical thinking manner. The exams are

open book which means you are allowed to use reading material and notes while taking the exam but given that each exam will have a time limit in order to do well you are required to have very good knowledge of the required material prior to writing the exam. **Do not click the exam link unless you are ready to begin and complete the exam at that time.**

VIII. 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

IX. General Comments

1. According to University Guidelines [Masks](#) are required in classrooms, regardless of vaccination status.

[Vaccinations and boosters](#) remain strongly encouraged and are available at no cost at the University Medical Center (UMC) and Student Health Center (SHC).

2. 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 throughout 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 after the last week of classes.

3. 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.

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. 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

8. 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.

X. Tentative Schedule

Th Jan. 13—Introduction to the Course

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

Week 1—Jan. 17-21

(T) Introduction: What is the Study of Religion? from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) Introduction: What is the Study of Religion? from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 1 Ch. 64 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*.

Quiz 1

Week 2—Jan. 24- 28

(T) Chapter 1 from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) Chapter 1 from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 2 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*

Quiz 2

Week 3—Jan. 31- Feb. 4

(T) Chapter 2 from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) Chapter 2 from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 3 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*

Quiz 3

Week 4—Feb. 7-11

(T) Exam 1 Review—Come prepared with questions regarding the course material so far.

(Th) Exam 1 on Chapters 1 and 2 from the book *Studying Religion*.

Week 5—Feb. 14-18

(T) Chapter 3 from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) Chapter 3 from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 4 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*

Quiz 4

Week 6—Feb. 21-25

(T) Chapter 3 from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) Chapter 3 from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 5 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*

Quiz 5

Week 7—Feb. 28 - Mar. 4

(T) **Chapter 4** from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) **Chapter 4** from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 6 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*

Quiz 6

Week 8—Mar. 7-11

(T) **Chapter 4** from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) **Chapter 4** from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 7 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*

Quiz 7

Week 9—Mar. 14-18

Spring Break—No Classes

Week 10—Mar. 21-25

(T) **Exam 2 Review**—Come prepared with questions regarding the course material so far.

(Th) **Exam 2** on Chapters 3 and 4 from the book *Studying Religion*.

Week 11—Mar. 28-Apr. 1

(T) **Chapter 5** from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) **Chapter 5** from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 8 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*

Quiz 8

Week 12—Apr. 4-8

(T) **Chapter 6** from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) **Chapter 6** from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 9 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*

Quiz 9

Week 13—Apr. 11-15

(T) **Chapter 7** from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) **Chapter 7** from the book *Studying Religion*.

Discussion assignment 10 from the book *Religion in 5 minutes*

Quiz 10

Week 14—Apr. 18-22

(T) **Exam 3 Review**—Come prepared with questions regarding the course material.

(Th) **Exam 3** on Chapters 5, 6 and 7 from the book *Studying Religion*.

Week 15—Apr. 25-29

(T) **Chapter 8** from the book *Studying Religion*.

(Th) **Chapter 8** from the book *Studying Religion*.