



**REL 100.003**  
**INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

FALL 2022

Instructor: Richard Newton, PhD

Tutor: Oleg Kyselov, PhD

(v. 8/16/22)

**Class Meetings:** Bevill 1000, 9:30-10:45AM Tuesday/Thursday

**Tutorial Sessions:**

**Office Hours:** Dr. Kyselov, By appointment

Dr. Newton—Monday 9am-Noon, Friday 9am-Noon, by appointment (Please email to RSVP).

**Office Location:** Dr. Kyselov

Dr. Newton

**Phone Number:** 205-348-9994 (leave a message)

**Email:** Dr. Newton, [rwnewton@ua.edu](mailto:rwnewton@ua.edu)

Dr. kyselov, [okyselov@ua.edu](mailto:okyselov@ua.edu)

**Prerequisites:** n/a

**Course Description and Credit Hours:**

This Core Humanities course surveys debates in the history of the field, the definition of religion, the 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. Finally, we will consider the ways in which religion's legacy helps and hinders us in observations of the world around us—even and especially in 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**

BIBLIOGRAPHY (available at the SupeStore)

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.

*PRO TIP:* With each unit I provide learning objectives and key terms to help you focus on the most pertinent elements for our course. Take notes accordingly and use them as a checklist for your comprehension.

Aaron W. Hughes and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds. *Religion in 5 Minutes* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2017).

This is a collection of short essays that answer around 80 questions often raised by students in introductory courses in the academic study of religion. You are encouraged to read essays pertaining to your interest as we will not be able to cover all of the questions you or your predecessors have raised in the main of our course. You will also be discussing select essays during your tutorial sessions.

*PRO TIP:* Choose one essay per week to read. I will recommend some that go along with each weekly unit, but follow your curiosity.

## **Class Resources**

### **BLACKBOARD**

This learning management system will house all of our assignments. It is also where you will submit your completed work. 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. To learn how to use Blackboard and assure that your technology is compatible, please consult the links [on this page from UA's Center for Instruction Technology](#) or [contact them directly](#). 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).

*\*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. You'll need to have a steady connection to the internet. Always login through the [Blackboard link](#) (rather than MyBama, which signs you out after a short amount of time.)

### **COURSE OUTLINE:**

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. On Blackboard, the modules are divided by weeks for your convenience. So you will see the assigned reading and/or assignments along with a note about their role in the class. IN refers to our optional Interactive Notebook assignments.

| <b>Unit Focus</b>  | <b>Assignments</b>   |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Unit 0</b><br/><i>Course Orientation</i></p>                     | <p><b>8/18</b></p> <p>Please review the syllabus and familiarize yourself with Blackboard.</p> <p>Begin signup for Tutorial Sessions.</p> <p>*Reading Quiz on “Studying Religion <i>in</i> Culture.” enabled.</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Unit 1</b><br/><i>Religion and the Problem of Definition</i></p> | <p><b>8/23</b></p> <p>Studying Religion <i>in</i> Culture (Required)</p> <p>Martin 1-11 (Required)</p> <p>IN- Religion Before and During Modernity (Recommended)</p> <p>*August 24 is the last day to add a course or drop a course without a grade of “W” for the Fall Full Term.</p> <p><b>8/25</b></p> <p>Martin 12-18 (Required)</p> <p>IN- Religion and Postmodernity (Recommended)</p> <p>*Reading Quiz on Unit 1 enabled.</p> |  |

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| <p><b>Unit 2</b><br/><i>Functionalism and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion</i></p> | <p><b>8/30</b><br/>Martin 19-26 (Required)<br/><br/>IN- Religion and Essentialism (Recommended)</p> <p><b>9/1</b><br/>Martin 26-32 (Required)<br/><br/>IN- Insiders and Outsiders (Recommended)</p> <p>*Reading Quiz on Unit 2 enabled.</p> |  |
| <p><b>Unit 3</b><br/><i>How Society Works: Classification</i></p>               | <p><b>9/6</b><br/>Martin 33-43 (Required)</p> <p><b>9/8</b><br/>Martin 43-50 (Required)<br/><br/>IN- Classification and Social Constructionism (Recommended)</p> <p>*Reading Quiz on Unit 3 enabled.</p>                                    |  |
| <p><b>Units 1-3 Review</b></p>  | <p><b>9/13 No Class</b></p> <p>Exam 1 due by Tuesday 9/13, 11:59pm.</p> <p>Participation Quizzes due by Tuesday 9/13, 11:59pm.</p> <p>Optional Interactive Notebook Assignments due by Tuesday 9/13, 11:59pm.</p>                           |  |

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|   | <p><b>9/15</b></p> <p>Miner, “Body Rituals of the Nacirema”<br/>(Required)</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Unit 4</b></p> <p><i>How Society Works:<br/>Essentialism?</i></p> | <p><b>9/20</b></p> <p>Martin 51-57 (Required)</p> <p><b>9/22</b></p> <p>Martin 57-64 (Required)</p> <p>IN- Non-Essentialism (Recommended)</p> <p>*Reading Quiz on Unit 4 enabled.</p>                    |  |
| <p><b>Unit 5</b></p> <p><i>How Society Works:<br/>Structure</i></p>     | <p><b>9/27</b></p> <p>Martin 65-72 (Required)</p> <p><b>9/29</b></p> <p>Martin 72-83 (Required)</p> <p>IN- Structure, Structure Everywhere<br/>(Recommended)</p> <p>*Reading Quiz on Unit 5 enabled.</p> |  |
| <p><b>Unit 6</b></p> <p><i>How Society Works:<br/>Habitus</i></p>       | <p><b>10/4</b></p> <p>Martin 85-96 (Required)</p> <p><b>10/6</b></p> <p>Martin 96-102 (Required)</p> <p>IN- Kicking the Habit (Recommended)</p>  |  |

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|  | *Reading Quiz on Unit 6 Quiz enabled.  |  |
| <b>Unit 4-6 Review</b>                                   | <p><b>10/11 No Class</b></p> <p>Exam 2 due by Tuesday 10/11, 11:59pm.</p> <p>Participation Quizzes due by Tuesday 10/11, 11:59pm.</p> <p>Optional Interactive Notebook Assignments due by Tuesday 10/11, 11:59pm.</p> <p><b>10/13 -TBD</b></p> |  |
| <b>Unit 7</b><br><i>How Religion Works: Legitimation</i> | <p><b>10/18</b></p> <p>Martin 103-115 (Required)</p> <p><b>10/20</b></p> <p>Martin 115-120 (Required)</p> <p>IN- Too Legit to Quit (Recommended)</p> <p>*Reading Quiz on Unit 7 enabled.</p>   |  |
| <b>Unit 8</b><br><i>How Religion Works: Authority</i>    | <p><b>10/25</b></p> <p>Martin 121-130 (Required)</p> <p>*October 26 is the last day to drop a course with a grade of “W” for the Fall Term.</p> <p><b>10/27</b></p> <p>Martin 130-143 (Required)</p> <p>IN- Author Me (Recommended)</p>        |  |

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|  | *Reading Quiz on Unit 8 enabled.   |  |
| <b>Unit 9</b><br><br><i>How Religion Works: Authenticity</i> | 11/1<br><br>Martin 143-150 (Required)<br><br>11/3<br><br>Martin 150-157 (Required<br><br>IN- The One and Only<br><br>*Reading Quiz on Unit 9 enabled.  |  |
| <b>Unit 7-9 Review</b>                                       | 11/8<br><br>No Class<br><br>Exam 3 due by Tuesday 11/8, 11:59pm.<br><br>Participation Quizzes due by Tuesday 11/8, 11:59pm.<br><br>Optional Interactive Notebook Assignments due by Tuesday 11/8, 11:59pm.<br><br>11/10<br><br>In-Class Film Activity– <i>In His Steps</i> |  |
| <b>Unit 10</b>   | 11/15<br><br>Martin, 159-179<br><br>11/17  |  |

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|                       | <b>No Class</b> – Review and Prepare for Contents<br>Final Submissions  |  |
|                       | No Class Thanksgiving Break   |  |
| <b>Unit 10 cont'd</b> | 11/29<br><br>In-Class Activity– <i>Film I</i> Final Exam<br>Review<br><br>12/1<br><br>In-Class Activity– <i>Film II</i> Final Exam<br>Review<br><br>*December 2 is the last day to withdraw<br>from the Fall. |  |
| <b>Final</b>          | <b>Submit Final Project by<br/>December 5, 10:00am.</b>   |  |

### **Exams and Assignments**

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

#### **PARTICIPATION QUIZZES:**

Learning is an active process that requires preparation, practice, and questioning. While I will not be calling roll in this large-enrollment course, I presume that you are working to develop the content knowledge and skills to a level indicative of success in this course. Prior to each of the exams, I will give you a quiz to help you see where you are. The dates of these quizzes are listed on the calendar. We will take the quiz at the beginning of class and go over the results. This is a completion grade, but you must attempt the quiz by the exam date to receive credit.

## 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. For nearly every reading, I have created an interactive notebook page to help guide you through our course content. Past students have found that these help tremendously on quizzes and exams. Completing them is not required, but if you complete each activity in an exam unit prior to the deadline, you will get full credit for that participation quiz OR 10 points on the related exam grade in the case that you have received full credit for participation (=equivalent to 2pts added to your overall course average). While you are free to take notes in a format that is worthwhile for you and submit these for credit, you must define the words listed and show serious intellectual engagement equivalent to what I've outlined. This is all or nothing, and note that I reserve the right to determine whether an attempted entry constitutes sufficient effort so as to count as "completed." Ask well in advance if you have questions.

## 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 equivalent to our course time. The questions will be a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, 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 you 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.

*\*PRO TIP:* With the various extra credit activities, you can earn over 100 on an exam.

## FINAL PROJECT

The final for this class is your opportunity to demonstrate what you've learned throughout this course. This will be assessed in two ways.

First, you will attend **two** tutorial sessions led by Dr. Kyselov where you will discuss an assigned reading from *Religion in 5 Minutes*. Your active participation in these sessions are required for you to receive any credit for the final.

Second, you will complete a comprehensive exam where you will use what we've learned to analyze a film on religion that we will watch in the final two class meetings. To help you prepare

for this, we will do a practice film study after the third exam, and we will hold in-class prep sessions for the final during the last week of class.

*\*PRO TIP:* If you have a true 90/A- or above in the class after completing Exam III and have attended your two required tutorials, you will have locked in your grade such that your completion of the final can only improve your grade as long as you attend the last week of class.

## EXTRA CREDIT-REL GOES TO THE MOVIES

Throughout the semester, the Department of Religious Studies shows and discusses thought-provoking films as part of the course REL310: REL Goes to the Movies. Students who attend a film viewing and discussion will receive full credit for (1) participation quiz OR 10 points on their lowest exam grade in the case that they have thus far received full credit for participation (=equivalent to 2pts added to your overall course average). Students have found this to be an enriching experience. Make sure you upload a selfie of you at the film within 24 hours to Blackboard to receive credit. See [the REL310 class website](#) for the schedule [6-9 pm in Gordon Palmer 208: Aug 23rd, Sept 13th, Oct 11th, Nov 1st, and Nov 29th].

## GRADES

### *Assignment Breakdown*

| Assignment Type       | Percentage   |
|-----------------------|--|
| Participation Quizzes | 20%  |
| EXAM I                | 20%  |
| EXAM II               | 20%  |
| EXAM III              | 20%  |
| Final Exam            | 20%<br><br>You must attend two tutorial sessions to receive credit for having submitted your final exam. |

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### *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. While I will not be taking attendance, the student learning outcomes for this course presume active class participation. I will release multimedia resources available so that students can stay current with in-class activities and lectures as we move through the course. And please make use of office hours as soon as possible if you are struggling to keep up with course material or just want to solidify your grasp of the material.

#### MISSED EXAMS AND COURSEWORK

Anytime you miss class, you should take the following steps (in this order): (1) work through any supplementary online course materials and notes, (2) schedule an office hours appointment to get clarity on missed activities, (3) study the material and come back ready to actively participate in class, and (4) return to office hours if you have further questions.

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. I implore you to be proactive and keep me posted within in 24 hours of any issue so that I can help you. Tardiness here will leave me less equipped to be flexible.

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. 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. Please email the instructor(s) to schedule an appointment. Do not be afraid to ask for help on 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 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.

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 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.

## **COVID-19**

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).

Getting vaccinated is the best way to [Protect Our Herd](#). COVID-19 vaccines are being administered by the [University Medical Center](#), the [Student Health Center](#) and various businesses and healthcare providers.

## **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.