

Religion 101 Online Course Syllabus
Introduction to Religious Studies
Winter 2013 / 3 Credits

Instructor Information

Chelsea Newton

Office Hours: By appointment.

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Course Description

Explores the nature of religion as experienced historically throughout the world. Examines the nature of religious experience with the divine and the relationship between science and religion. Discusses the roles of language, myths, and symbols in religion.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Recognize and articulate the diverse issues related to religious studies.
- Use analytical and critical thinking to draw reasonable conclusions.
- Demonstrate awareness and insight of other world religions.
- Draw relationships from differing beliefs in a process of self exploration for greater personal understanding.

Learning Activities

Interactive Lecture Commentaries/ Forum Discussions

Watching and Commenting on Film, DVD

Self-directed Reading, Writing, and Research

Prerequisite Course(s):

Reading 90 and Writing 115 or above are *strongly* recommended.

Required Texts:

Kessler, G. E., (2008). *Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases* (3rd Ed.). New York; McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.

Pals, D. L., (2006). *Eight Theories of Religion* (2nd Ed.). New York; Oxford University Press.

Course Requirements

The final grade in this class will be determined by performances on assignments and activities shown below.

- **Reading/ Writing/ Online Participation:**
 - *Forum Discussions / Weekly writing assignments* (10 points per week, 100 points total): **The first week** you will give an introduction to yourself, as well as writing a short essay on the readings and lecture commentaries. **Each following week** you will write a short essay assigned readings and the lecture commentaries. For these weekly assignments, you will answer questions on the material and add your personal thoughts. I may ask you to reply to your classmates' forum discussion post if I choose a forum assignment for that week. Click on the assignment or forum for each week and follow the instructions. **READ EACH WEEK'S INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.**
 - **Weekly Learning Modules can be accessed by 8pm the Friday before (Ex. Week 2 learning modules will be posted by Friday evening of week 1). Assignments and discussions need to be completed by Thursday at 8pm of each week.**
 - **Week one: Your postings and replies are still due (as always) by Thursday at 8pm of that week. You must participate in Week 1 discussions, or you will be dropped from the course.**
- **Exams:** There will be 3 exams, worth 90-110 points each. The final exam will be cumulative. These will be given over the course of the term using a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay-type questions.
- **Research Paper:** Toward the end of the course, a 4-5 page paper will require you to examine one major religion of your choice (outside of your own tradition). The research paper is worth 100 points. Instructions will be posted third week of the course on Moodle.

Grading

Final letter grades will be assigned based on the total number of points earned divided by the total possible points (see chart below). It is possible that the total number of points will change during the term (to include extra assignments, snow days etc.). I reserve the right to curve the grading scale positively if deemed necessary.

Percent	Grade
90% or above	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% or below	F

Work	Points available	Your points
Discussion Forum Work	~100	
Exam 1	~100	
Exam 2	~100	
Research paper final draft	100	
Exam 3 (final)	~ 100	
Extra credit	(+10)	
Total:	~ 500	

Extra Credit (10 points possible – one of each activity)

If you are struggling in the class, and are worried about your final grade, there will be up to 15 points available for extra credit. If you have questions about your choice of activity / program you will use (or, if you have an idea of your own), please do not hesitate to ask me. *I hope you take advantage of the extra credit opportunities offered for this course. This is your chance to experience religion and the ongoing dialogue about religion happening presently in our community -- which can be easily accessed by the curious-minded!*

Attend an event/service (7 points): You may attend a religious service or event (outside of your own tradition or closely related denomination) at any point during the term and write a 2-page, double-spaced paper including your thoughts and impressions on the experience. If you would prefer to attend a lecture about religion (for example, a debate on Jesus hosted by the Socratic Society at OSU would be a great option), I will accept a 2-page, double-spaced paper outlining the main points of discussion and your thoughts on the subject.

Listen to a Podcast (3 points): You may enjoy streaming a radio program or watching a documentary while earning extra credit. I will accept a full 1-page, double-spaced, paper outlining the main points of discussion and your thoughts on the subject.

On Being, hosted by Krista Tippett

<http://being.publicradio.org/>

(Click on *Archive*, pick a program that interests you personally. This is one of my favorite radio programs.)

Philosophy Talk, hosted by Ken Taylor and John Perry of Stanford University

<http://www.philosophytalk.org/>

(Click on *past programs*. These are not all specifically related to religion *per se*, so here are a few that will meet the religion requirement: St.

Augustine; Faith, Reason and Science; Islamic Philosophy; Worship; Challenges to Free Will; Gandhi; Believing in God; The Problem of Evil; Jewish Philosophy; Concept of God; Confucius; Zen; The Existence of God; Religion and the Secular State; and, Has Science Replaced Religion?

Frontline – *The Mormons* (video)

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/>

(Click on *watch online*, scroll down to April 30, 2007, *The Mormons*)

This is a very interesting documentary on the historical and modern Mormon traditions. I wish I could show this in class, but it is quite long. So, if you have an interest in learning about this rapidly growing religion, have at it!

Tentative Course Schedule

Week/Class	Textbook Readings for the Week (in addition to Moodle readings)	Material to be covered: topics / lectures/ documentaries	Important dates: Exams / Research Paper due date
<u>Week 1</u> Jan 7-13	Kessler: Ch. 1, pp. 10-12; Ch. 2, 14-24	Introduction/Syllabus Defining Religion /	
<u>Week 2</u> Jan 14-20	Kessler: Ch. 2, pp. 24-35 Kessler: Ch. 1 pp. 1-3; Handout	Theology & Religious Studies; <i>Hinduism</i> Insider/ Outsider	Research Paper Instructions Posted
<u>Week 3</u> Jan 21-27	Kessler: Ch. 7 pp. 133-138, Ch. 11 pp. 242-246	Orientalism <i>Buddhism</i>	Study guide for Exam posted
<u>Week 4</u> Jan 28-Feb 3	<i>Study for exam 1</i> Pals: Ch. 7 (Evans-Pritchard)	Exam 1 Anthropology of Religion/ Writing for Research	Exam 1
<u>Week 5</u> Feb 4 - 10	Pals: Ch. 3 (Durkheim)	Sociology of Religion/ Writing for Research <i>Judaism</i>	
<u>Week 6</u> Feb 11 - 17	Pals: Ch. 6 (Eliade)	Phenomenology of Religion <i>Christianity</i>	
<u>Week 7</u> Feb 18 - 24	Kessler; Ch. 8 pp 161 and 174-181 The Book of Job (Hebrew Bible)	Philosophy of Religion Theodicy / <i>Kushner</i>	Study guide for Exam 2 posted
<u>Week 8</u> Feb 25 – Mar 3	<i>Study for Exam 2</i> Kessler: Ch. 4 on Myth (read all)	Exam 2 Myth and Ritual/ <i>Campbell</i>	Exam 2
<u>Week 9</u> Mar 4-10	(See Moodle)	<i>Islam</i> New Religious Movements	Extra Credit Papers, Research Papers Due
<u>Week 10</u> Mar 11 - 17	Kessler: Ch. 11, pp. 264-268	Science and Religion Gender and Religion	Study guide for Exam 3 posted
<u>Finals Week</u> Mar 18 - 24	<i>See instructions on Moodle</i>	Final Exam	Final Exam, Cumulative

Class Policies:

Plagiarism: I reserve the right to issue an “F” grade for an assignment or the entire course if a student is found to have willingly cheated or plagiarized. I do not allow students to re-write research papers for a higher grade. All direct quotes *and* information from outside sources must be cited within the text *and* in a bibliography or reference page. Please see the writing lab if you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism.

Inclusive community / constructive discussion: This material is inherently interesting, but it can also be a sensitive subject to discuss. As a class we must welcome participation, open discussion, and insight from all. Please remember to keep an open mind, and be respectful to me as your instructor and to your peers. The field of religious studies is incredibly vast, and although all comments and questions will be duly noted, we may not have time to delve deeply into each topic.

Late work: I do not accept late work (research papers, exams, in-class assignments etc). I do not allow students to re-take exams, or to re-write research papers (this is why the calendar is so specific). Please talk to me in the case of severe medical emergencies.

E-mail: I ask your patience where e-mail is concerned. Although this is the best way to get in touch with me, please keep a few things in mind when e-mailing:

- I will respond to your e-mails within **2 business days**. Please plan accordingly. In other words, read assignments well in advance so you have time to ask questions and receive a response.

College Policies:

Disability Services: Students who may need accommodations due to documented disabilities, who have medical information which the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in an emergency, should speak with the instructor during the first week of class. If you have not accessed services and think you may need them, please contact Disability Services, 917-4789.

Institutional Withdrawal / Waitlist Policy: **Students who do not log on to the course by Tuesday at 12pm may be dropped from the course in order to allow for wait-listed student enrollment.** Also, students who do not participate in week 1’s discussion boards will be dropped from the course. If you are on the waitlist, and wish to take the course you must e-mail me your intent to take the course by Tuesday at 12pm in order to be added if there is room.

Drop Policy: Students are responsible for knowing the last day to drop the course for a full refund. Also, be aware of the last day to officially withdraw from this course for transcripts to show a ‘W.’

Incomplete Grades: You may be eligible for an ‘Incomplete’ grade if you have finished 90% of the class work. Should you receive an ‘Incomplete,’ all course work must be finished by the end of the next term. Please contact the instructor prior to term’s end with appropriate documentation for requesting an ‘Incomplete.’