

**Religion 202 Online Course Syllabus**  
**Introduction to Religious Studies**  
**Fall 2019 / 3 Credits**

**Instructor Information**

Chelsea Nordby

Office Hours: By appointment.

E-mail: nordbyc@linnbenton.edu

**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**

- Articulate an awareness of the varieties of religious expression and the dynamic nature of religious traditions.
- Describe a variety of methodological approaches to the study of religion (e.g. anthropological, philosophical, sociological, feminist, postcolonial).
- Discuss and examine the diverse debates and issues related to the study of religion.
- Practice reflexivity, identifying and critically examining the source and content of one's own cultural perspectives and world-views.

**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* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). New York; McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.

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

## Course Requirements

The final grade in this class will be determined by performances on assignments and activities:

**Reading/ Writing/ Online Participation:** Each week you will write a short essay on the assigned readings and the lecture commentaries. You will be answering questions on the material and adding your own personal thoughts. You will then reply to two of your classmates' forum discussion posts. Forum discussions and weekly writing assignments will end up being a little over 100 points total.

- Weekly learning modules will be posted by 8pm the Friday before each week. Example: Week 2, January 14 - 20, will be opened up January 11.
- Assignments and discussions need to be completed by **11pm on Sunday evening** of each week. Example: Week 2, January 14 - 20 would be due 20 January. This structure includes some overlap, which allows for flexibility in your scheduling.

**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:** During the 6<sup>th</sup> week course, a 4-5 page paper will be due. It will require you to examine one major religion of your choice (outside of your own tradition). The research paper is worth 80 points. Instructions are posted at the top of the course page, under your syllabus.

**Extra credit:** Up to 8 points available. Topics listed on the last page of the syllabus.

## 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
<b>Discussion Forum Work</b>	<b>~100</b>	
<b>Exam 1</b>	<b>~100</b>	
<b>Exam 2</b>	<b>~100</b>	
<b>Research paper</b>	<b>80</b>	
<b>Exam 3 (final)</b>	<b>~ 100</b>	
<b>Extra credit</b>	<b>(+8)</b>	
<b>Total:</b>	<b>~ 500</b>	

## 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
<b>Week 1</b> Sept. 30- Oct. 6	Kessler: Ch. 1, pp. 10-12; Ch. 2, 14-24	Introduction/Syllabus Defining Religion /	Research Paper Instructions Posted below syllabus.
<b>Week 2</b> Oct. 7-13	Kessler: Ch. 2, pp. 24-35 Kessler: Ch. 1 pp. 1-3; Handout	Theology & Religious Studies; <i>Hinduism</i> Insider/ Outsider	
<b>Week 3</b> Oct. 14-20	Kessler: Ch. 7 pp. 133-138, Ch. 11 pp. 242-246	Orientalism <i>Buddhism</i>	Study guide for Exam posted
<b>Week 4</b> Oct. 21-27	<i>Study for exam 1</i> Pals: Ch. 7 (Evans-Pritchard)	<b>Exam 1</b> Anthropology of Religion/ Writing for Research	<b>Exam 1</b>
<b>Week 5</b> Oct. 28- Nov. 3	Pals: Ch. 3 (Durkheim)	Sociology of Religion/ Writing for Research <i>Judaism</i>	
<b>Week 6</b> Nov. 4-10	Pals: Ch. 6 (Eliade)	Phenomenology of Religion <i>Christianity</i>	<b>Research Papers Due – Nov. 10 @ 11pm</b>
<b>Week 7</b> Nov. 11-17	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
<b>Week 8</b> Nov. 18-24	<i>Study for Exam 2</i> Kessler: Ch. 4 on Myth (read all)	<b>Exam 2</b> Myth and Ritual/ <i>Campbell</i>	<b>Exam 2</b>
<b>Week 9</b> Nov. 25- Dec. 1	(See Moodle)	<i>Islam</i> New Religious Movements	<b>Extra Credit Due – Dec. 1 @ 11pm</b>
<b>Week 10</b> Dec. 2-8	Kessler: Ch. 11, pp. 264-268	Science and Religion Gender and Religion	Study guide for Exam 3 posted
<b>Finals Week</b> Dec. 9-15	<i>See instructions on Moodle</i>	<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>Final Exam, Cumulative Finished by Monday Dec. 9 @ 11pm</b>

## **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 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. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism. If you are unsure, please seek help in the writing lab.

**READ ALL *Inclusive community / constructive discussions:*** 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 we simply do not have time to delve deeply into each topic. You are expected to engage positively, and even critically, with the material presented. However, using online class forums to complain or to be consistently negative towards another’s traditions or culture will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to delete posts if necessary.

*Late work:* I do not accept late work (research papers, exams, weekly 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:* Read the e-mail etiquette guidelines posted at the top of the course. I will respond to your e-mails within **2 business days**. Please plan accordingly.

## **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.

*Basic Needs Statement:* Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Roadrunner Resource Center for support ([resources@linnbenton.edu](mailto:resources@linnbenton.edu) , or visit us on the web [www.linnbenton.edu/RRC](http://www.linnbenton.edu/RRC) under Student Support for Current Students). This office help students get connected to resources.

*Institutional Withdrawal / Waitlist Policy:* There is no waitlist for this course. Students who do not participate in week 1’s discussion boards will be dropped from the course.

*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.’

### **Extra Credit (8 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 8 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 (5 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

<https://onbeing.org/series/podcast/>

Pick a program that interests you personally. Please choose a program that coincides with the course material.

**The Religious Studies Project**

<https://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/>

The Religious Studies Project (RSP) is an international collaborative enterprise producing weekly podcasts with leading scholars on the social-scientific study of religion. Pick a program that interests you personally. Please choose a program that coincides with the course material.

**Frontline – The Mormons (video)**

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/mormons/>

(Watch part 1 and part 2) This is a very interesting documentary on the historical and modern Mormon traditions. If you have an interest in learning about this rapidly growing religion, please check it out.

**Have another podcast idea? Please email me – I'm open to new ideas!**