

**University of Calgary  
Faculty of Arts  
Department of Religious Studies**

**RELS 201 L04: World Religions – Western  
Fall 2012**

**Instructor:** Prof. L. Eslinger

**Email:** eslinger@ucalgary.ca; phone: 403-220-3281; office: SS1334

**Pinned virtual office hour:** R: 3:30-4:30; also accessible online during regular work hours in the discussion forum and by email.

**Time and place:** any time, any where -- an online course. All supplied information, discussion groups, and assessment modules will be accessed through the Blackboard course management system (CMS).

**Textbooks and other required readings**

1. Jakobsh, Doris R. (ed.). 2013. *World Religions: Canadian Perspectives – Western Traditions*. Toronto, ON: Nelson Education (purchase from the UC Bookstore).
2. Online versions of mini-lectures and other supplementary readings will be posted in the content modules (IIV) of the RELS 201 Blackboard course page.

**Course description:**

RELS 201 is an introduction to three western world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This online section of the course is comprised of five sections: one introducing the critical perspective in the study of religion; one introducing the historical and cultural matrix of the three western world religions; and one each for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

**Progress through the course** unfolds along the lines of a 13-week lecture-based course. Each week begins with orienting mini-lecture (posted as lecture outlines or audio podcasts sessions). Then, adopting the perspective of the introductory lecture, students read prescribed sections from the textbook or readings posted on Blackboard. Students crystallize their understanding by developing their own notes to synthesize the mini-lecture perspective and readings. In the final phase of each week students begin to build and extend their thinking by independent, ethnographic-styled study of Internet manifestations of the religious traditions. These observations, along with understandings developed from introductory lectures and assigned readings, provide a basis for participation in online discussions. Students bring their understandings and questions to the online discussion of orienting questions (provided by the instructor) and student responses. The discussion forum provides opportunity to extend, refine, and cement individual learning. **The primary objective of the course** is for students to develop an understanding of the nature of religion, generally, and as exemplified by the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) in particular.

After completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Describe the beliefs and practices of Jews, Christians, and Muslims
2. Describe the nature of religion and why practitioners regard it as essential to human well-being
3. Analyze the underlying motives and values of any religious tradition
4. Characterize the similarities and differences among the Abrahamic religions
5. Describe the utility of an objective, academic study of religion

### **Student activities**

1. Read and reflect on the weekly mini-lecture. Apply the perspective to your own consideration of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
2. Read and reflect on the assigned weekly readings.
3. Participate in weekly online discussion groups. Discussions with other students and the instructor are an important part of online learning. Each week the instructor will initiate an online discussion session by posting a few questions arising from the week's mini-lecture or textbook and other posted readings.

### **Graded Activities**

Take note, now, of submission and test deadlines indicated in the course outline. Indicated graded activities are your only opportunity to earn credits toward your final grade. Students who have a valid (documented) excuse for missing a deadline should contact the instructor by the deadline date to inquire about remedies. Results of graded activities will be posted to the Blackboard grade book (accessed from the "My Grades" link in the Blackboard navigation panel). Grades for each activity will normally be posted within one week after any graded activity.

**Grading scale:** A+  $\geq$  96; A  $\geq$  90; A-  $\geq$  85; B+  $\geq$  80; B  $\geq$  75; B-  $\geq$  70; C+  $\geq$  65; C  $\geq$  60; C-  $\geq$  55; D+  $\geq$  50; D  $\geq$  45; F  $\leq$  44.

### **Assessment points**

1. (5%) completion of five "Welcome" module tutorial tasks (must be completed by 16:30, 14 Sep)
2. (70%) five online unit exams:
  1. 05 Oct: critical perspectives unit test
  2. 19 Oct: ancient legacy unit test
  3. 02 Nov: Judaism unit test
  4. 16 Nov: Christianity unit test
  5. 30 Nov: Islam unit test

Exams cover mini-lecture notes, textbook readings, and other assigned readings. Format: multiple choice. Students will have 60 minutes to complete each exam. Exams are accessible for a 36 hour period from the time of posting. Blackboard is accessible 24/7. No alternative exams or availability times will be provided.

*\*There will be no Registrar scheduled final exam for this course.*

3. (25%) weekly participation in on-line discussion groups. Examples of acceptable participation:

1. Expressing opinions or observations. These should be offered in some depth and should be supported by evidence arising from posted course materials.
2. Making a connection between a current and prior discussion questions or posted course materials.
3. Commenting on a prior point in the weekly discussion thread.
4. Synthesizing prior points and adding a question or point that advances the understanding evolving in the discussion thread.

Participation in online discussions requires two actions each week: a) an initiatory response to one of the posted discussion questions; b) two follow-up postings in an unfolding discussion thread. The point of participating in discussions is to advance collaborative learning about these religions. Perfunctory posts such as "I agree" or "ditto" do not move understanding forward and so cannot count toward the participation component of assessment.

### **Academic Honesty**

Students should be familiar with University regulations regarding academic integrity (*University Calendar*, see index item, "Misconduct, academic").

The apparent seclusion of online exams presents a temptation to cheat. Students should be aware that Blackboard has an extensive observational and tracking facility for monitoring students' online activities. Cheating is not tolerated and students caught will receive a failing grade for the course and be referred to the Dean's office for rectification. Students may collaborate for study purposes but credit work must be submitted independently.

### **Academic Accommodation**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than **fourteen (14) days** after the start of the course.

### **Blackboard Help**

Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/computersupport/onlineservices/blackboard> for Student Help and FAQ's about Blackboard. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are available at <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/blackboard/students>. Instructions for using the Digital Drop Box are available here:

[http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6\\_1/student/bbls\\_r6\\_1\\_student/digital\\_drop\\_box.htm](http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6_1/student/bbls_r6_1_student/digital_drop_box.htm).

### **Gnosis**

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: [gnosis@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gnosis@ucalgary.ca) or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

### **Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources**

- Have a question, but not sure where to start? The Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS110, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at [artsads@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre at (403) 220-5881 or visit them on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

### **Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative**

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See [www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds](http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds) for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at [arts1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@ucalgary.ca).

### **Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point**

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at [www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints](http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints). Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

### **Safewalk**

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors 24 hrs/day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.