

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

RELS 201 L01 *World Religions - Western*

FALL 2013

Place and Time: ICT 121, MWF 12:00-12:50pm

Instructor: Dr. David A. Bergen, SS 1308, 403-220-7063, dabergen@ucalgary.ca

Office hours: MW 11:00am-12:00pm (other times available by appointment only).

Textbook: *Religions of the West Today* (2012 second edition; Esposito, Fasching, Lewis; Oxford University Press).

Links to any relevant electronic notes, articles, video clips, blogs, etc. will also be posted in Blackboard.

Course Structure, Content and Objectives: This blended-learning course is structured in two parts, the first part involving self-directed learning from the assigned textbook (60%) and the second part entailing in-class, lecture-based instruction (40%).

Self-Directed Learning: To gain a basic descriptive knowledge of the (reconstructed) religious behaviours and thoughts of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, students will read the assigned textbook in stages and write six online (Blackboard) exams scheduled at regular intervals during the fall term. Each of the six tests (one for each chapter of the textbook) will be comprised of twenty-five questions (true/false and multiple-choice). These six 50-minute tests (non-cumulative and equally weighted) will comprise 60% of the course grade.

Monday and Wednesday Lecture Analysis: The second component of the course will analyze Judaism, Christianity, and Islam within a broad consilient (deep-time) framework to understand how religion functions for evolved and adapted *homo sapiens*. Assessment of lecture learning will take place in a single registrar-scheduled final exam comprised of 10 short-answer questions (see the following paragraph). This final exam will be worth 40% of the course grade.

Friday Review and Collaborative Preparation: Prior to each scheduled Friday review, students will meet online (in Blackboard) to collaboratively compose a question that connects lecture material to lived everyday experience. The instructor will collect and discuss these questions, for the academic betterment of all in attendance. At the end of each review session, the instructor will select the group question that applies best lecture learning to lived reality. Each week's selected question will be included in the test-bank for the final exam. Of the eleven student-generated questions selected during the term, six will appear on the final exam. Four additional questions will be added by the instructor.

NOTE: Students belonging to the group whose question was selected will be awarded individually a 3% bonus to their final-exam grade, provided that they attend the review session and that they contributed substantively to their group's online discussion.

Course Relevance: In coming to understand religious thought and behaviour as the outcome of 3.8 billion years of evolved adaptation, students will realize how intertwined (i.e., how “religious”) are their day-to-day life activities with the lived experience of humans past and present, a vast web of human outpouring whose fundamental purpose has been (and still is) the competitive survival and thrival of naturally selected groups. Such a realization can be profoundly eye-opening, a benefit well worth the cost required (and effort expected) in this course.

However, what if one’s interest in religion or the humanities is more picayune (“I need an easy Arts option,” or “I don’t care about academic learning, so long as it nets me secure employment and a better lifestyle”)? What relevance might this course have? According to a recent news report,¹ corporate employers are most interested in employees with such “soft skill” competencies as collaboration/teamwork, positive attitude, work ethic, communications, continuous learning mindset, innovation/creativity, and leadership. The successful student might note that in RELS 201 s/he was required to:

- 1) **communicate** with clarity and accuracy in a testing environment the knowledge acquired in the lecture component of this course (two-hour final exam);
- 2) **collaborate** within a **teamwork**² situation to **creatively** connect academic knowledge and lived experience (Friday tutorials); and
- 3) exercise a strong **work ethic** and **continuous learning mindset** by sacrificing (a fine religious mode!) significant time and energy for a seemingly disproportionate return on investment (40% of course grade), a trait any employer would be most willing to acquire.

Course Assessments:

Bonus Start-Up Quiz – 5%

During the first two weeks of the term, a start-up quiz will be made available in Blackboard. The purpose of this quiz will be to test the student’s knowledge of basic course elements and structure and to give students an opportunity to detect and rectify any computer and server problems before they begin the course proper. *Those students who achieve a 100% mark in the start-up quiz will be awarded a 5% bonus mark for the self-directed component of the course. Conversely, any student who fails to achieve a 100% or who neglects to write the start-up quiz will be penalized 5%, to be subtracted from the student’s self-directed grade.* The quiz must be written before midnight on Sunday, September 15.

Note: Unlike the regular tests, students will be given multiple attempts to perfect their start-up quiz.

Six Online Tests – 60%

These tests will be based on the *descriptive* material of the textbook (multiple choice and true/false; non-cumulative and equally-weighted). Each quiz will be made available in Blackboard for a 48 hour period, starting at 12:00pm on the following Mondays: Sept 23, Oct 7, Oct 21, Nov 4, Nov 18, and Dec 2.

NOTE:

- Each test is comprised of 25 multiple-choice questions, with a time limit of 50 minutes allotted for test completion. If a student exceeds the 50-minute limit, a penalty of one

¹ See this webpage for further information:

http://www.calgaryherald.com/business/productiveconversations/When+does+university+degree+really/7895261/story.html?_lsa=ca8c-6e13

² Most students groan at the thought of group work, and for good reason (as course lectures will illuminate). However, should any student be considering applying for a one-way trip to Mars, NASA has stated that THE single most important trait sought for when interviewing astronaut candidates is their ability to work with others (<http://interestingthings.info/technology/wanted-people-to-go-to-mars.html>). The tutorials of this course are a way to hone one’s group work skills, even if one prefers never to visit the red planet.

mark per minute (or portion of a minute) exceeding the time limit will be deducted from the score achieved.

- Students will be given two attempts to write each test; however, a student attempting a second writing will not see a test as identical to the first. Should a student opt for a second attempt, the second score will be officially recorded, even if it is lower than the score achieved in the first attempt.
- If for some reason the student experiences a computer, wi-fi, or internet problem in the second attempt, then the student will have to write a corresponding make-up test in person (i.e., not electronically) in the Religious Studies Department, during the final exam period and prior to the registrar-scheduled final exam (Dec. 9-19). Please note: *all make-tests will be closed-book exams comprised of fill-in-the-blank and short-answer questions.*
- *Given that the tests are to be written online (accessible anywhere, anytime) over a generous 48-hour period, no concession or remedial assignments will be granted for missed tests, except for instances of significant illness (adequately described, verifiable with proper medical documentation, and submitted electronically within 24 hours). Travel, work schedule, weddings, funerals, or computer/technical issues are not excusable.*
- Each test is set to "forced completion," which means that a student cannot save and exit the test, then come back later and pick up where s/he left off. Once the test is engaged, it must be completed to the end, regardless if it is the first or the second attempt.

Registrar-Scheduled Final Exam - 40%

This exam will focus on the analytical material of the lectures and will involve ten short-answer questions, six of which will be selected from the pool of questions submitted by student groups during the scheduled Friday review sessions.

Student Responsibilities:

Students should be aware that a blended course requires self-motivation and self-diligence (attention to detail). To succeed, students should:

- *enter* in their personal calendar all deadlines pertinent to the assessments of this course (see schedule in Blackboard);
- *ensure* that their computer and server are fully operational. No exceptions will be made for technical glitches (e.g., server crash, browser freeze-up, wi-fi dropout ... in short, anything between the university's system and the student's computer) other than those problems for which the University is responsible. *It is therefore the student's responsibility as an enrollee in a blended course to ensure that they possess (or have access to) stable equipment and a secure internet signal.*
 - for information on supported browsers and operating systems compatible with Blackboard, please check these webpages:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/computersupport/online-services/blackboard>
<http://kb.blackboard.com/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=57442326>
 - in the event of a computer problem in the second test attempt, students must contact [Information Technologies](#) to confirm that the university system encountered a glitch while the test was in session. This confirmation must then be forwarded to the instructor, who will be able to reset the test for a third and final attempt.
- *read* thoroughly the assigned pages of the textbook prior to each weekly test (see schedule posted in Blackboard, Course Information);
- *check* regularly and frequently for email messages and the Blackboard site for updates, changes, and announcements;

- *study* hard and smart, allotting sufficient time prior to each test for rereading of textbook material.

Additional Important Details:

Please note these important details:

- marks for the tests will be posted in Blackboard within a few days of their completion;
- a passing grade on any of the regular tests or group assignments is not essential for passing the course;
- no external aids (e.g., student notes or textbook) are permitted during the written make-up tests.
- lecture outlines, summaries or notes may be made available in Blackboard only at the discretion of the instructor.
- a passing grade on any of the graded components is not essential for passing the course.
- no external aids are permitted during the written final exam.
- The University Calendar states:
“It is the responsibility of students who have prolonged absences from class because of physical and/or emotional health problems to present to the faculty office offering the course a statement from a physician/counselor attesting to the physical or emotional health of the student.”
- please note that the University of Calgary regulations strictly prohibit the following during written examinations (the penalty for which is suspension or expulsion or such other penalty as may be determined):
 - speaking to other candidates or communicating with them under any circumstances whatsoever;
 - bringing into the examination room any textbook, notebook, or document not authorized by the examiner;
 - leaving answer papers exposed to view
 - attempting to read other student’s examination work.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar. If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor.

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 Student Accessibility Services, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services 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 FAQs 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/bbbs_r6_1_student/digital_drop_box.htm.

Gnosis

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: gno-sis@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. 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 3rd 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 for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at 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. 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.