

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

**RELS 201 L20 *World Religions - Western***

**Spring 2013**

**Place and Time:** Electronic Online Course – All course information (assigned readings, schedule, etc.) and assessments to be accessed in University of Calgary's Blackboard course management system.

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

**Online office hours:** Monday-Friday, 9:00-12:00

**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.)

**Description and Objectives:**

This course describes and analyzes, at an introductory level, the religious behaviours and thoughts of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as (re)constructed in academic scholarship. The course is divided into six sections, following the layout of the textbook. Students are advised to pre-read the textbook Introduction (pp. 3-35) prior to the start of the term, since the first test (based on the Introduction chapter) is scheduled for the first week of the spring term (May 14-17).

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to describe in some detail and with some sophistication:

- the primary thought structures and behavioural patterns of Jews, Christians, or Muslims;
- the humanly-imagined and contested discourses of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, differing in detail when viewed comparatively, yet similar in structure;
- the purpose of religion as a mechanism for social cohesion, ultimately concerned with matters of continuity and discontinuity;
- the elementary difference between truth and truth claims.

**Assessments:**

*Start-Up Quiz - 5% Course Bonus* (Deadline: May 17th, midnight)

In the first week of the term, a basic start-up quiz will test the student's knowledge of basic logistics of the course and the layout of the Blackboard. In addition, this quiz will give students an opportunity to detect and rectify any computer and server problems before they begin the course proper. Unlike the six regular tests on the textbook, students *must achieve a 100% score in the start-up quiz before they can write the regular tests or participate in the discussion groups.* To that end, and unlike the regular tests, students will be given multiple attempts to perfect the start-up quiz. (NOTE: The start-up quiz will be available on May 12.)

Each week of the spring term will unfold in a three-step format:

1. Weekend: reading of assigned textbook sections and preparation for the online test. Schedule

of readings to be posted in Blackboard. (As stated above, the exception to this first step is the first week of the term, when the reading of the Introduction should be completed prior to the start of the term.)

2. Monday-Wednesday: testing of descriptive knowledge of assigned readings in online tests. (Again, as stated above, the first week is an exception; the first regular test will be written Wednesday-Friday.)
3. Wednesday-Friday: assessment of analytical understanding of assigned readings in electronic group discussions. (There will be no group discussion in the first week).

#### *Six Weekly Online Tests - 40%*

The tests will assess the student's reading knowledge of the textbook's description of "western religion." Each test will be multiple choice--all will be equally-weighted and non-cumulative.

#### PLEASE NOTE:

- Each test will be comprised of approximately 30 multiple-choice questions. The time to complete the exam will vary, depending on the number of questions contained in each test. If the test has 30 questions, then the time limit for the completion of the that test will be 60 minutes; if 25 questions, then a 50-minute time limit will be imposed. If a student goes over the time limit stipulated for a test, a penalty of 5% per minute (or portion of a minute) exceeding the time limit will be imposed on the score achieved.
- Students will be given two attempts to write each test; however, a student attempting a second writing will likely not see an identical test as in the first attempt. If, for some reason the student experiences a computer 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 spring-term final exam period (June 27-29). Please note: *all make-tests will be closed-book exams comprised of short-answer questions, rather than the multiple-choice questions of the online tests.*
- *\*There will be no Registrar scheduled Final Exam for this course.*

#### *Five Weekly Group-Work Assignments - 60%*

Each student will be assigned randomly to a small Blackboard discussion group, to discuss a particular question requiring an analysis of the week's readings. The discussion of the assigned question will culminate in a "publishable" paragraph (200 words maximum), concisely written, thoroughly edited, succinctly articulated, grammatically correct, and academically sound. If deemed publishable, the group's paragraph will then be posted to the general class so that all students can compare and learn from the shared outcomes of their peers. (Students will have 48 hours to discuss their assigned group question and to write/polish their paragraph response.)

The grade for the group-work assignments is comprised of two parts, each worth 50%. First, each student receives an individual mark, based on the quality (and secondarily, quantity) of their online contribution to their group's discussion and paragraph response. Second, the mark for the collectively-written paragraph will be assigned to each student of the group as the remaining 50% of the group-work assignment grade.

*Given that this an online course (accessible anywhere, anytime), and, given that the group discussions and test writing take place over two-day periods, no concession or remedial assignments for either discussions or tests will be granted, except perhaps, for cases 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.*

### Student Responsibilities:

Students should remember that spring-term courses are condensed versions of a regular term; it is very easy to lag behind the scheduled pace. Also, students should also be aware that an online course brings added responsibilities--students must be self-motivated in their efforts and self-diligent in their 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, etc.), other than those for which the University is responsible. *It is therefore the student's responsibility as an enrollee in an online electronic course to ensure that they possess (or have access to) the equipment necessary to complete the course.*
  - for information on supported browsers and operating systems most compatible with Blackboard, please check these webpages:  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/computersupport/onlineservices/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 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, allotting sufficient time prior to each test for rereading of textbook material.

### Additional Important Details:

Please note these important details:

- marks for the tests and group assignments 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.

### Grading Scale:

A+ 100-96	B+ 84.9-80	C+ 69.9-65	D+ 54.9-53
A 95.9-90	B 79.9-75	C 64.9-60	D 52.9-50
A- 89.9-85	B- 74.9-70	C- 59.9-55	F under 50

### 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 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 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/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).