

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

**RELS 205 L02: The Nature of Religion
Course Outline: Fall 2012**

Instructor	Irving Hexham
Class day & time	TR 11:00am-12:15pm
Office/office hours	SS 1310, TR 12:30-1:00pm
Telephone	403-220-3280 or 403-220-5886 (Department office)
E-mail	religion205@gmail.com
Web Site	http://people.ucalgary.ca/~uwr/

Course Texts:

Hexham, Irving. 2011. *Understanding World Religions: An interdisciplinary approach*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. This text is available at the bookstore.

Hexham, Irving, 2001, *The Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan. This text will be made available in class at a cost of \$20.

Nature of Religion texts in pdf format are provided on the course Blackboard site and will be posted to the website: <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~uwr/>.

About RELS 205:

This is a Religious Studies "Nature Stream" course with a "205" designation. This means it deals with the study of religion. It is not about Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, or any other major religious tradition, as such. Rather it is about the practical and theoretical study of religion. The course views the world's major religious traditions from the perspective of understanding how scholars approach the study of these traditions. This course provides a basis for further study of what the Religious Studies Department calls "Eastern Stream," i.e. courses on Buddhism, Hinduism, and other Asian religions, as well as "Western Stream," i.e. courses on Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It is designed as an *introductory* course intended to prepare students for more advanced study. If you are a fourth year student fulfilling a requirement you ought to have completed earlier in your career, you must expect this course to be elementary.

Course description:

The University of Calgary Calendar provides the following general course description for RELS 205: "An introduction to the academic study of religion with particular emphasis on the nature of religion and the relationship of religion to contemporary thought and culture." As noted, the emphasis in this particular section of RELS 205 is on "the study of religion" in the context of the world's great religious traditions. Therefore, it discusses various theoretical concepts related to the study of religion in specific historic and geographic settings.

An effort will be made to show how religious ideas relate to social and political life as well as practical pursuits such as modern tourism. The course is based on lectures and course readings.

The course begins with a discussion of various definitions of the term "religion" and an analysis of some key terms in the field of religious studies. This is followed by a discussion

of problems and methods associated with the study of various religious traditions. These discussions lead on to a consideration of “the nineteenth century crisis of faith” and criticisms of religion, particularly Christianity. This section of the course involves discussions of the writings of Tom Paine, Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx.

The course requires approximately 3 hours reading each week. Some weeks the reading will take slightly more than 3 hours, on other weeks it will be slightly less.

Course competencies:

At the end of this course students ought to be able to:

- a) appreciate religious studies as an academic field and its relationship to some associated disciplines;
- b) understand the meaning of some key terms in religious studies such as myth and religion;
- c) think critically about religious arguments;
- d) appreciate the importance of using correct academic methods intelligently;
- e) be able to make informed judgments about the reliability of specific books and texts.

Lectures for this course begin on Tuesday, September 11, 2012

Reading Days are 10-13 November 2012

The last day of lectures for this course is Thursday, December 6, 2012

Course requirements and grading:

Assignment One:

This is intended to engage you with a current issue related to the study of religion and enable you to see the significance of the study of religion in today’s world.

The first part of this assignment involves writing the text for a Tweet that highlights a news story about religion. The text must include a shortened url that takes the reader to the original news story. To shorten the url that takes the reader to either a new report about a current issue or a discussion group use Bitly found at: <https://bitly.com/>.

Then you must write the text of a 250 word mini-blog that discusses the news story in terms of the issues studied in this course. The texts for both of these projects must be written as a Word document and sent by attachment to the email address: religion205@gmail.com.

When we receive the text of your Tweet and mini-blog, we will check that it does not include libellous or other problematic statements, then it will be posted to Twitter using the hashtag: #worldrels

The mini-blog will be posted to the Tumblr site “Understanding World Religions” which you can find using the url: <http://understandingworldreligions.tumblr.com/>.

This assignment may be submitted whenever you discover a good news story on the Internet concerning religion, but must be received **by Sunday 14 October** at the latest. The assignment is worth 15 percent of your final grade.

Assignment Two:

The second assignment is like the first. You must either find another news story or locate an Internet discussion group that deals with the issues discussed in this course. Whichever you decide to do you must once more submit the text of a Tweet, including a shortened url, and the text of a mini-blog discussing the news story or discussion group in terms of the course, to the email address provided above. These texts will be reviewed before being posted as Tweets and mini-blogs.

The last date to submit your work is **Sunday 9 December**. This assignment is worth 15 percent of your final grade.

N.B. Remember when you write your Tweets and mini-blogs they will be posted on the internet and are therefore public posts and can be read by anyone. Be respectful even when you raise questions or make critical comments.

At the end of the texts you write for your tweets and mini-blogs, identify yourself in some way. I suggest that you use your first name plus the first letter of your surname. For example, if I wrote one of these mini-blogs my identity would appear as “IrvingH.”

There will be two in-class tests multiple choice tests:

First test worth 25% of the final grade will be held in week 6, on Thursday **18 October**.

Second test worth 25% of the final grade will be held in week 12, on Tuesday **27 November**. The tests will be based on the readings and lectures.

The final research assignment is worth 20% of the final grade. It is due in class on Thursday 6 December.

Details of the research assignment are given at the end of this outline. Only hard copy papers will be accepted. Do not send them by email.

- * Students must take the test on the assigned day or have a valid medical note.
- * Late papers must have a valid medical note.

***There will be no Registrar scheduled Final Exam for this course.*

Grading

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme, standardized within the Department of Religious Studies:

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

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

Course readings:

Total time for reading assigned texts: 36 hours, or 3 hours per week

Course Outline

Week 1 – 11 & 13 September: Introduction to the history and organization of universities

1. The origins of the university
2. The modern university
3. The structure of the university
4. Tenure and other issues

Basic reading: familiarize yourself with the textbook.

Blackboard papers for week one:

Ninian Smart - "Principals and Meaning ..." 14 pages = 45 min

Ninian Smart - "The Meaning of religion ..." 13 pages = 45 min

Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain, pp. 11-31, 20 pages = 1 hour

Week 2 – 18 & 20 September: The Study of Religion

1. Defining religion
2. How do we study religion?
3. The problem of bias in the study of religion.
4. New religious movements.

Basic readings:

Understanding World Religions, pp. 15-45, 30 pages = 1.5 hrs

Blackboard papers for week two:

Fred Welbourn - "Towards eliminating ..." 15 pages = 45 min

Fred Welbourn – "God and gods ..." 16 pages = 45 min.

Week 3 – 24 & 26 September – Studying African and other oral traditions

1. African and oral traditional religions
2. Witchcraft and sorcery
3. Science and traditional religions
4. New Religions and Independent Churches

Basic readings:

Understanding World Religions, pp. 49-96, 46 pages = 2.5 hrs

Week 4 - 2 & 4 October: Issues in the study of the Hindu Tradition

1. Religion in India
2. The Origins of the Hindu Tradition
3. The classical Hindu Tradition
4. The modern Hindu Tradition
5. Parsees and Sikhism

Basic readings:

Understanding World Religions, pp. 115-159, 233-237; 242-248, 51 pages = 2.5 hrs

Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain, pp. 33-42, 10 pages = 30 min

Week 5 – 9 & 11 October: Issues in the study of Buddhism

1. The Life and Teaching of the Buddha
2. Basic Buddhist Concepts
3. Hinayana
4. The Mahayana

Basic readings:

Understanding World Religions, pp. 179-211; 233-248, 46 pages = 2.5 hrs
Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain, pp. 43-52, 10 pages = 30 min

Week 6 - 16 & 18 October: First Test

No class on 16 October to allow for test preparation.

Basic reading:

Survey your course and reading notes.

Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain, pp. 76-84, 205-217, 20 pages = 1 hour

First in class test Thursday 18 October

This is a multiple choice test.

Week 7 - 22 – 26 October: Issues in the study of Judaism

1. Early Judaism
2. Rabbinic and other Judaisms
3. The Middle Ages
4. Modern Judaism and the challenge of Zionism and the Holocaust

Basic readings:

Understanding World Religions, pp. 251-310, 59 pages = 3 hrs

Week 8 – 30 October & 1 November: How do we study Christianity as a religion?

1. What do we know about Jesus?
2. Forgotten aspects of Christian history
- 3 World Christianity
4. Evangelicalism in the context of world religions

Basic readings:

Understanding World Religions, pp. 325-386, 61 pages = 3 hrs

Week 9 – 5 & 7 November: Approaching the study of Islam

1. Muhammad's Life and Message
2. Basic Concepts and Practices of Islam
3. Muslim traditions
4. Islam and the Modern World

Basic readings:

Understanding World Religions, pp. 399-452, 53 pages = 2.5 hrs

Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain, pp. 57-61; 152-153, 7 pages = 30 min

Week 10 – 13 & 15 November: Arguments for and against belief in God

1. Why believe in God?
2. Traditional arguments for belief in God.

3. Sociological arguments
4. Paley's contribution

Basic readings:

Anselm's ontological argument, pp. 1-4, 4 pages = 15 min
The five ways of Aquinas, 1-2, 2 pages = 30 min
Pearson *On the Creed*, 1-3, 3 pages = 30 min
Paley, the Teleological argument, 1-3, 3 pages = 15 min
Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain, pp. 70-76, 89-91, 120-129, 132- 137, 33 pages = 1.5 hrs

Week 11 - 20 & 23 November: The rise of modern secularism and the Victorian crisis of faith

1. David Hume's criticisms of religion
2. Tom Paine moving beyond rationalism
3. Feuerbach's new tone
4. Marxist analysis

Basic readings:

David Hume, "Critical Arguments," pp. 1-15, 15 pages = 45 min
Tom Paine, "On Religion," pp. 1-10, 10 pages = 30 min
Ludwig Feuerbach, "The Essence of Religion," pp. 1-10, 10 pages = 30 min
Karl Marx, selected readings, pp. 1-10, 10 pages = 30 min

Week 12 27 & 29 November Second Test and Preparation or Final Assignment

1. **Second in class test – Tuesday 27 November**
2. Preparation for the final assignment

Basic readings:

Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain, pp. 137-142; 160-189, 31 pages = 1.5 hours
Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain, additional readings of your choice.

**Week 13 – 4 & 6 December: From traditional societies to the post-European world
Final Assignment due on Thursday 6 December**

- 1 From traditional societies to the European world
- 2 The post European world

Basic readings:

Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain, readings of your choice.

Bibliographic resources

There is an annotated bibliography at the back of *Understanding World Religions*. Additional bibliographies will be posted at: <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~uwr/> where you can also find links to a number of online dictionaries and encyclopedias. Some, like the Jewish and Catholic encyclopedias, are older works, but do not let their date of publication put you off. Many of the articles are still regarded as standard works on the topics discussed. On the same website you can find a collection of older, yet valuable, resources that may be downloaded as pdf files or read online. Thus, a collection of classic works on world religions may be found at: <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~uwr/content/recources.htm>

Instructions for the final assignment:

Demonstrate what you have learnt in this term by illustrating key themes, religious traditions, concepts and figures studied in this course. For example: myth, ritual, the meaning of religion, the influence of King Alfred, Karl Marx, Ninian Smart, or some other figure in relation to places where they lived mentioned in *The Christian Travelers Guide*. All of your information and materials discussed are to be based on the readings used in this course.

Do not use outside readings or Internet sites, like Wikipedia, for this assignment.

When writing the assignment, be careful to define your terms and explain who people are and why they are important. Assume the reader knows nothing about England or religion.

To write the assignment imagine that you are a professor of Religious Studies, a travel agent, or tour company publicist, planning a month long educational tour of Great Britain for students taking an introductory Religious Studies course. In your assignment describe the places you intend to visit and explain how and why they are important for understanding the issues discussed in the course.

Here is an example of what you are expected to do. This illustration describes a visit to Germany:

Worms is the town where Martin Luther was called before an Imperial Diet in 1521. An Imperial Diet was ... According to legend the Emperor Charles the V commanded him to recant his views about the Biblical teaching of justification by faith. Refusing to recant Luther declared: "Here I stand, I can do no other." Whether this story is historically true or not it illustrates a powerful myth that shaped Protestant thought for four centuries. ... A myth is defined as ... In religious studies myths are often closely connected to rituals. Rituals are ...

In completing this assignment write no more than five single-spaced, or ten double, typed pages suitable for use as an advertising brochure. It is also important to ensure that your planned trip progresses in a realistic manner that takes into account the geographic locations of the places visited.

To gain some idea of how to write this assignment visit a travel agent and obtain a couple of brochures outlining European tours and go online to see how educational tours are organized by various universities.

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 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/bbbs_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 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.