

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
RELS 205 L10 - THE NATURE OF RELIGION
SPRING SESSION 2006**

May 11, 2006

Instructor	Irving Hexham
Class time	TWRF / 14:00-16:45
Office/office hours	SS 1310 / T 13:00-14:00 or by appointment.
Telephone	220-3280
E-mail	hexham@ucalgary.ca
Web site	http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/courses.html

Required texts

Hexham, Irving, *Concise Dictionary of Religion*

This is available from the University of Calgary Bookstore.

Hexham, Irving, *The Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain*

Because this book is now out of print it is not available from the University of Calgary Bookstore. A special consignment was ordered. It costs \$20. Details about purchasing it will be given out in class.

The supplementary readings needed for the in-class tests will be posted on the Internet at:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/courses/rels-205.html>

About Rels 205:

This is a Religious Studies "Nature Stream" course with a "205" designation. That means it deals with the study of religion. It is not about Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, or any other major religious tradition. Rather it is about the practical and theoretical study of religion. During the course examples will be used from major religious traditions, particularly Christianity, as well as less known ones. But, if you are looking for a course on Buddhism or Hinduism enrol in an "Eastern Stream" course with the course designation "203." If you want to take a course on Christianity, Islam or Judaism, then you need a "Western Stream" course with a designation "201." 200 level courses are designed as *introductory* courses 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."

The emphasis in this particular section of Rels 205 is on "the study of religion." In this course various theoretical concepts related to the study of religion will be introduced and discussed in specific historic and geographic settings. The setting for this year's course is Great Britain – hence the travel guide.

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, a tutorial, and course readings. The course begins with a discussion of the nature of the university followed by various definitions of the term "religion" and an analysis of some key terms in the field of religious studies. The role of theory in the interpretation of religion will be examined through brief excerpts from the writings of Tom Paine, Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx. Issues of academic scholarship, method and theory in the study of religion will be discussed. Weekly topics are listed in the lecture outline below.

Course requirements and grading:

Lectures begin on Tuesday May 16 and end on Friday June 2
All tests will be based on the readings, lectures and films.

Class participation – worth 10% of the final grade.

One page report on your observations about a place of worship that you have never attended in the past – this assignment will be discussed in class. Due Monday 29 May - worth 10% of the final grade.

**First Test worth 25% of the final grade will be held on Tuesday 23 May
Second Test - worth 25% of the final grade will be held on Friday 2 June**

Short dictionary style article discussing the meaning of one of the following terms: myth, religion, ritual, the sacred, the holy, church, cult or sect. One page in length 1.5 spacing. Due Tuesday 23 May - worth 10% of the final grade.

Research assignment due Friday 9 June - worth 20% of the final grade. Late assignments will not be accepted. Details of the research assignment are given at the end of this outline.

There is no Registrar's Final Examination.

A letter grade will be assigned for the course on the basis of the following number and letter grade scheme:

		A	100 – 90	A-	89 – 85
B+	84 – 80	B	79 – 75	B-	74 – 70
C+	69 – 65	C	64 – 60	C-	59 – 55
D+	54 – 50	D	49 - 45	F	44 – 0

Course competencies

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

- a) appreciate the field of religious studies and 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 judgment about the reliability of specific books and texts.

Academic honesty

Students should be familiar with the University regulations regarding academic honesty. See current University Calendar. See also:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/study/plag.html>

Academic Accommodation:

If you are a student with a disability who requires academic accommodation and you have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. Once registered, please discuss any upcoming tests/examinations with the instructor **two weeks** before the scheduled date.

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>.

Lecture Outline

Lectures 1.1: The Nature of the University

No Readings

Lecture 1.2: How Universities Work

No Readings

Lecture 2.1: Defining religion?

Readings: *Concise Dictionary* on "religion" and "Towards a Definition of Religion," "Meaning in and Meaning of Religion" found on the Website. All website references are found at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/courses/courses.html>.

Lecture 2.2: Religious Institutions

Readings: *Concise Dictionary* on church, cult, sect, new religious movements and "Institutions" found on the "Website".

Lecture 3.1: Cosmology and Ritual

Readings: *Concise Dictionary* on rituals and "Douglas" found on the Website.

Lecture 3.2: Time and Traditions

Readings: *Concise Dictionary* on tradition and modernity, "Modernity" and "Timeline" on Website.

Lecture 4.1: Religious Traditions

Readings: entries of individual world religions in the *Concise Dictionary* plus "Religions" on Website.

Lecture 4.2: Sacral Sentiments

Readings: "Schleiermacher" on Website and Schleiermacher, Otto and Durkheim in *Concise Dictionary*

Lecture 5.1: The Divine Focus

Readings: ""Anselm", "Aquinas," "Pearson", "Paley"

Lecture 5.2: Why the "Trans-Divine"?

Readings: "Hume" on Website

Lecture 6.1: The Phenomenological Context

Lecture 6.2: A Question of Methods

Readings: "Research Methods" on Website

Lecture 7.1: A human phenomena

Readings: "Childhood in Germany ..." found at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~kpoewe/Webpages/Childhood.htm>

Lecture 7.2: Myth

Readings: "Myths and Mythological Fragments" on Website

Lecture 8.1: Doctrines

Readings: "Creeds" and "Thirty-Nine Articles" on the Website..

Lecture 8.2: Primal Experiences

Readings: "Primal Experiences"

Lecture 9.1: Religious truth

Readings: "Paine" on Website

Lecture 9.2: Feuerbach:

Readings: "Feuerbach" on Website.

Lecture 10.1 Karl Marx

Readings: "Marx" on Website.

Lecture 10.2 Christian responses

Readings: "Newman", Maurice" "Groen van Prinsterer" and "Kuyper" on the Website.

Lecture 11.1 Existential religions

Lecture 11.2 Alternate Visions

Readings: "Smith", "Pratt", "Buddhism" and "Hinduism" on the Website.

Lecture 12.1 Turning East

Readings: "Turning East" and "Blavatsky" on the Website.

Lecture 12.2 Evangelical Religion Today

Readings: "Evangelical links" found at:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb/links/evanglks.html>

Research assignment:

Illustrate the key concepts studied in this course, such as myth, ritual, conversion, religious experience, primal religions, the meaning of religion, etc. in relation to places mentioned in *The Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain* only using that book and the texts from this course. Please note the book *is not a textbook*. It is a resource that you are to use in conjunction with the *Concise Dictionary of Religion* and the readings posted on the website to help clarify your thinking about the way concepts used in the study of religion take form in concrete situations. Do not use any other sources. You do not have to provide references but rather you are expected to write a creative essay that shows you have thought about the issues raised in this course.

To do this imagine that you are a professor of Religious Studies, a travel agent, or tour company publicist, planning a two week educational tour of Britain for students taking an introductory Religious Studies course. In your answer describe the places you intend to

visit and explain how and why they are important for understanding concepts like myth, ritual and the meaning of religion, etc. In planning your trip check the map of Britain in the book to make sure that your tour follows a reasonable travel pattern.

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

Worms is the town where Martin Luther was called before an Imperial Diet in 1521. 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. In Religious Studies a myth is defined as ...

In completing this assignment write no more than five (5) typed pages, 1.5 spacing, suitable for use as an advertising brochure. Do not embellish your writing with pictures. This assignment will not be returned to the student. This project will also be discussed in detail in the class.