

The University of Calgary  
Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Religious Studies

05/01/03

Religious Studies 205-03  
The Nature of Religion

Winter 2005  
MWF 11:00-11:50

Instructor  
Office  
Office Hours

Dr. Tinu Ruparell  
SS1320  
M 15:00-16:00 or by appointment  
(please make individual appointments to see TAs)

Telephone  
Email

220-7069  
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Teaching Assistants:

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**Required Texts:**

Peterson M. et. al. ed. *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Oxford: OUP. 2001

Martel, Yann. *The Life of Pi*. Toronto: Vintage Canada. 2002.

Johnson, W. J. trans. *The Bhagavad Gītā*. Oxford: OUP. 1994

Other articles may be used during the course, copies of which will be made available at student expense during the semester.

**Course Description:**

This course introduces students to issues in the academic study of religion as well as some of its central questions. We will be concerned with questions such as the definition of, subjective/objective perspectives on and comparisons of religion. Additionally we will consider a few of the central questions and problems which have more recently exercised philosophers of religion in the west, such as religious experience and language, the problem of evil and religious diversity and truth. The course will proceed thematically rather than historically and we will not generally limit ourselves to any one particular tradition, though many of the thinkers we will be reading are western. Central issues in the philosophy of religion will be illustrated through a reading of Yann Martell's *The Life of Pi*. The aim of the course is to give students an understanding of the problematic nature of religion and its study.

**Core Competencies:**

Committed students in this class will have the opportunity to reflect on central issues in the academic study of religion and in so doing gain critical reading and analytic skills. Some of these skills will be put to use in considering a recent piece of literature. Additionally, students will begin to acquire abilities in forming clear, concise and cogent arguments, develop their writing and communications skills and broaden their perspectives on the place of religion in contemporary societies. Skills acquired in this course will have relevance in upper level courses in the humanities as well as in wider social settings. Knowledge acquired in this course will help

students reflect more clearly and critically on the nature of religion in society and their own religious narratives.

**Course Requirements**

There will be three assessments for this course:

Assessments	Date	Weight /100%
Assessment 1 Format TBA in class	18 Feb 2005	30%
Assessment 2 Format TBA in class	13 Apr 2005	40%
Responses to <i>Life of Pi</i>	Weekly (10% completion, 10% first assessed response, 10% second assessed response)	30%

**There will be no registrar-scheduled final exam.**

**Weekly responses:**

A significant part of this course will be the Friday discussion sessions where students will be given some opportunity to engage with the material and their fellow students through considering a piece of literature. Friday sessions will begin January 28<sup>th</sup>. The class will be divided into three groups and each student will be expected to participate fully in the discussions. Weekly 1 page, single-spaced typed responses are required to assigned questions and are due at the beginning of class, each Friday as indicated on the syllabus. The responses element is graded as follows: 10% for submitting all of the required responses. Of your submitted responses two will be chosen at random to be assessed, each counting for a further 10%.

**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:

A+	100 - 96	A	95 - 90	A-	89 - 85
B+	84 - 80	B	79 - 75	B-	74 - 70
C+	69 - 65	C	64 - 60	C-	59 - 55
D+	54 - 53	D	52-50	F	Under 50

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

**NB. POLICY WITH REGARDING MISSED ASSESSMENTS**

**Assessment dates are firm. Without acceptable documentation (i.e. medical certificate, police report, bereavement notice, confirmation of religious observance, or court summons) or without PRIOR arrangement with the instructor, missed assessments will be awarded an 'F'.**

**This policy is intended to encourage diligence and integrity among students as well as to uphold principles of fairness and equality with respect to other students in the class. Excuses other than those listed above will receive little attention.**

**Syllabus:**

A complete syllabus will be made available in the first week of class.

**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:**

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.

**Withdrawing from courses:**

Please note the information regarding withdrawals and fee refunds in the Academic Schedule of the current University Calendar.

**Recording of lectures:**

Recording any part of any lectures in any form must be first approved by the instructor in writing and is for individual private study only. See current Calendar, Tape recording of Lectures.

**Safewalk Programme:**

"You don't have to walk alone...." Call 220-5333 and a member of the Safewalk Team will walk you to your car, the LRT, or any destination on campus. Safewalk is available to all students, staff and faculty any time of the day or night. Look for the Campus Security Help Phones located throughout the University. Please don't hesitate to call!

**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>.