

University of Calgary  
Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Religious Studies  
Winter 2006

06/01/02

**Religious Studies 205 L91**

**Lecture:**

The Nature of Religion

**Instructor:**

T 6:30 pm-9:20 pm

**Office:**

Dyron Daughrity, PhD

**Office Hours:**

SS 1322

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By appointment.

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220-3285

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**Textbooks:**

Daniel L. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*

Michael Guillen, *Can a Smart Person Believe in God?*

Michael Shermer, *How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God*

**Course Description:**

Religion seems to be a fundamental part of human societies. Why are humans religious? Is religion a creation of the human psyche or is it a coping mechanism stemming from childhood fears? Is it a mechanism for upper classes to keep lower classes under control? Is it a projection of our fantasies, dreams, and hopes? Why do humans seem hard-wired for religion? This course has been designed to introduce students to the academic study of religion. We will be asking a variety of questions to explore the phenomenon of human religiosity. Sociological, anthropological, and psychological analyses of religious belief will be investigated throughout the term.

**Competencies:**

The student should acquire and develop a number of skills such as critical reading, analytical interaction with academic writing, in-depth appraisal of arguments and theories, and the clear expression of ideas.

**Course Format:**

The pedagogical format for this course includes lectures, discussions, use of video, and critical reflection on various themes through writing and discussion. Being an introductory-level course, the student will acquire skills that will prepare her/him for upper-level academic study, particularly in the area of religion. It is important to note that while the course involves readings and lectures, **neither should be regarded as a substitute for the other**. In other words, examinations will include material from both.

**Important Note:**

Each class period will introduce new themes and concepts that may be unfamiliar to the student. Therefore, it is important that students do all readings on time and come carefully prepared to engage the readings through discussion and interaction with the class. **All readings should be carefully engaged and reviewed; they will be incorporated into the exams.**

**Course Requirements:**

Mid-Term Exam on Pals text- (March 7)	40%
Position Paper- (Due class time, April 4)	30%
Final Exam on Shermer text- (TBA by Registrar)	30%

### Position Paper:

The position paper should be 4 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. font. It will be based on the Guillen text. After reading the book and understanding the author's thesis, students will formulate their own thesis that either confirms or critiques the author's. We will discuss this assignment at length in class.

If you are new to writing a paper, you should seek help from the University Affective Writing Centre or consult University web resources such as:

<http://hist.ucalgary.ca/write/main.html>

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/writing/>

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/Web/efwr/wcentre.html>

*Grading of the book analysis will be based on the following criteria:*

- 1) There are two criteria which are absolutely necessary. **First**, your paper must articulate what you believe to be the author's thesis. **Second**, your paper must have a thesis. Your thesis is the primary interpretive idea that you use to analyze this book. Your thesis should engage, critique, or challenge the author's thesis. **\*\*You must explicitly state the author's thesis as well as your own thesis at the very beginning of your paper.**
- 2) Has the student read the book carefully?
- 3) Are the introduction and conclusion clear?
- 4) Does the student understand the book's central arguments and suppositions?
- 5) The paper must be clear, organized, and demonstrate an understanding of the material.
- 6) The paper must be free of grammatical and structural errors.

*\*All late papers will lose an automatic 10% per day unless arrangements have already been made with the instructor. Academic integrity is expected, particularly in regard to plagiarism.*

### 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.

### 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>.