

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

**COURSE OUTLINE – WINTER 2014**

**Course** RELS 205 L01 – The Nature of Religion  
**Time** MWF 12:00-12:50 pm  
**Instructor** Jonathan Napier  
**TA(s)** None  
**Office** SS1334  
**Office Hours** W 1:00-2:00pm  
**E-mail** janapier@ucalgary.ca  
**Telephone** 403-220-5886 (main office)

**Required Text(s)**

- Peterson, Michael, et.al., *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings, Fourth Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Additional readings may be posted on Blackboard.

**Optional Text(s)**

None

**Course Description**

This course will serve as an introduction to the academic study of religion. Utilizing a philosophical approach, it will be structured thematically to analyze what is meant by the contested term *religion*. Throughout this course questions concerning the development of the study of religion, major theoretical problems, and contemporary challenges for religious traditions will be considered. Various religions from around the world will be studied in light of these themes while maintaining an awareness of current events. Students will be encouraged to recognize the issues that arise when attempting to define and understand what “religion” means in a definitive or comprehensive manner. The aim of the course will be to give students a general awareness of the diverse nature of religion, an appreciation for the variety of constructions of religion, and an understanding of some of the important challenges to religion today.

**Online elements for this course**

Announcements and marks will be posted on Blackboard.

**Core Competencies**

Students in this class will have the opportunity to reflect on central issues in the academic study of religion. Students will be expected to develop critical reading and thinking skills as well as how to take part in class discussions. They will also have the opportunity to pursue clear and concise writing, research, and communication abilities. The course will teach one to understand and recognize the diversity of religious traditions as they are practiced in society today. Knowledge acquired in this course will help students reflect and converse more clearly and critically on the diverse nature of religion in society. Ultimately, this course will promote research, writing, and critical thinking skills.

**Course Requirements**

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)	Required pass/fail
Ongoing	Participation	10%	No

February 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Midterm Exam	35%	No
March 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Reading Response	20%	No
(Registrar scheduled)	Final Exam	35%	No

**Participation:**

Students will be expected to come to class having completed the assigned reading for that day, prepared to discuss the material. On Fridays, in small groups and as a class, students will discuss focus questions based on that week’s reading. Missing class or a lack of participation in these discussions will affect the student’s participation mark.

**Reading Response**

For this assignment students are expected to write a response to one of the course readings. Papers should be approximately 1000-1200 words in length. Grading will be based on content and form and will be discussed in class. The papers will be due March 28<sup>th</sup> in class. Late papers will lose 10% a day.

**Exams**

Both the midterm and the final exam will not be cumulative. Each is designed to test the student’s knowledge of readings and course lectures. They will be composed of both short answer and long answer questions. Answers will be graded on content and form.

**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 – 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.

**Policy with regard to missed assignments/assessments**

Exam and assignment dates are firm. Missed examinations or assignments must be accompanied by proper documentation (a medical certificate, police report, bereavement notice, confirmation of religious observance, or court summons) and prior arrangement with the instructor. Late Reading Responses will lose 10% a day. Otherwise missed exams and assignments will be awarded an 'F'.

**Expectations for student conduct in this course**

Students are expected to arrive to class on time for each class. Students are expected to be prepared to fully participate in discussions on course material in a respectful manner. Finally, students should familiarize themselves with the university’s Academic Honesty policy and complete all assignments as presented in the Course Outline.

**Internet and Electronic Communication Device Policy**

Laptops are permitted only for the purpose of taking notes and for assignments. No electronics devices are allowed to be used in class for emailing, facebook, videos, texting, games, etc. Students that distract other students or the instructor with unauthorized use of electronic devices will be asked to leave the classroom.

**Syllabus**

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

## **References and Bibliography**

The Department of Religious Studies uses the most recent edition of the Chicago Manual of Style and requires references and bibliographies to adhere to the Chicago citation system. You can find a quick guide here: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Alternatively please consult with the library staff for help and advice using the Chicago citation style.

## **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 (section K, which can be found here: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>. )If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor, librarian staff or the Chicago manual of style.

## **Writing Support**

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

## **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 Student Accessibility Services, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services 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/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).

**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](http://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.