

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

COURSE OUTLINE – WINTER 2014

Course: RELS 205: The Nature of Religion
Time: T-Th 11-12.15
Location: ENA 103
Instructor: Irving Hexham
TA(s): TBA
Office: SS1310
Office Hours: SS 1310, T 1-1.45
E-mail: relgion205@gmail.com
Telephone: 403-220-3280

Required Text(s):

Available from the bookstore and student book store:

Hexham, Irving. 2011. *Understanding World Religions: An interdisciplinary approach*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan (\$43.99)

The following texts is out of print and will be sold in class:

Hexham, Irving, 2001, *The Christian Travelers Guide to Germany*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan (\$20).

A number of Nature of Religion texts in pdf format are provided on the "Articles" section of the *Understanding World Religions* website: http://people.ucalgary.ca/~uwr/academic_articles.html

Optional Readings:

You will also find various supporting materials, including a free download of *The Concise Dictionary of Religion* in pdf format, videos, and chapter summaries on the *Understanding World Religions* website at: http://people.ucalgary.ca/~uwr/study_aids_uwr.html

A word about textbooks

Traditionally professors have always used their own textbooks, for example, Ninian Smart wrote and used *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (1969) while Edward Conze did the same with *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (1961). So I am following in the tradition of my mentors which is what they encouraged me to do.

My books were published by Zondervan, the largest publisher of religious books in America. They are a subsidiary of Harper & Row and major textbook publisher. As such the books underwent both peer and editorial review before publication. Since then they have received excellent endorsements by leading scholars as well as equally good reviews. Two other things need to be noted. When *Understanding World Religions* (2011) was first published it was around half the price of equivalent textbooks issued by other publishers. Further, it was the only Religious Stud-

ies textbook to take African religions seriously thus ending the implicit racism of most other works in this field.

Course Description:

In our increasingly multi-cultural and multi-religious society a basic knowledge of various religious traditions is essential for anyone wishing to interact with their neighbours and society generally. This course provides an introduction to the study of religion by examining the ways we various religious traditions such as African; Buddhist; Islam; as well as the growth of rationalism and anti-religious movements are understood and studied.

This 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.

Online elements for this course:

Web Site <http://www.understandingworldreligions.com/>

Student Mini Blog <http://uwreligions.wordpress.com/>

Core Competencies:

- 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.

Course Requirements:

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)
Details given in class	Mini-Blog	25
Tuesday 25 February	First Test	25
Thursday 27 March	Second Test	25
Thursday 10 April	Research Paper	25

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:

* Students must take the test on the assigned day, have a valid medical note, or prove exceptional circumstances. Late papers are accepted, but will be automatically deducted 10% per day that they are overdue. This rule also applies to anyone who requests to sit the test on a different date without a doctor's note or other external evidence of necessity; i.e., if you are allowed to write the test at a later date, the penalty will be 10% for each day that passes between the original date of the exam and the date on which it is written.

Expectations for student conduct in this course:

Power Point slides

Due to copyright restrictions not all power point slides can be posted to the web. Those that do not include limited us materials will be posted to:

http://people.ucalgary.ca/~uwr/study_aids_uwr.html

It is your responsibility to pay attention and write down any relevant information or your own comments. This must be done during lectures.

Class etiquette: remember you are not the only student in the class. Please make every effort to arrive on time and not to leave before the class ends. You are expected to pay attention to the lecture and not distract other students. In other words concentrate on your studies and do not disturb other students.

MP3 Computers and other devices: while attending class the wearing of earphones or similar devices is not permitted nor are computers to be used for watching videos or playing computer games. Cell phones must be turned off and not taken out in class for texting or any other purposes.

Recording of lectures: Recording any part of any lectures in any form, including through a computer, is not permitted. Nor will the power point slides or lecture notes be posted on the web for the same reason. Photographing power point lectures with a cell phone or other device is not permitted. These restrictions are due to copyright issues and are strictly enforced.

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. 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 es-

says/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.

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.