

The University of Calgary
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Religious Studies
University of Calgary
Fall 2006

August 18, 2006

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 309 L01
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

INSTRUCTOR: Anne White, Ph.D.
COURSE DAYS AND TIME TR 12:30 – 1:45 p.m.
OFFICE: SS 1322
OFFICE HOURS: 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
TELEPHONE: 220-3285
E-MAIL ADDRESS: awhite@ucalgary.ca
WEBSITE ADDRESS: Blackboard

REQUIRED TEXT:

Terrence Reynolds, *The Phenomenon of Religious Faith*, (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2005).

Suggested reading (not mandatory):

James C. Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*, (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2001);
Michael Peterson et al. *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will introduce the student to the study of religious experiences which include ideas taken from philosophy, rituals, altered states of consciousness, mysticism, and belief in religious/supernatural encounters with the divine. This broad selection of material will provide insight and understanding into the power, complexity, function, and relevancy of religious experience. In addition to this, the grounds for belief, both subjective and objective, will be examined. From mystical deliberations, to the wide spectrum of religious experience within a socio-cultural context, this course will identify the nature and function of religion as a vehicle for human expression, comfort, and contact with someone/something greater outside of the physical world. Finally, an analysis of Cantwell Smith's "theology and the world's religious history" will be utilized to

provide a broad spectrum of approaches by which to understand the phenomenon of religious experience.

CORE COMPETENCIES:

Students will work on the following skills: critical appraisal of arguments and theories, application of theories and concepts presented in course readings and lectures, library research, essay organization and writing skills. The essay assignment will require students to select an account of a religious experience and critically apply one of the theories explored in the course. All essay topics must first be approved by the professor.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

October 24 - Midterm Test	20%
November 16 - Video review (1,000 words)	10%
December 7 - Essay: (2,500 words)	30%
Registrar's Office Scheduled Final Exam TBA	40%

Essay specifications: 2500 words. Pages to be numbered. Chicago style format. Footnotes or endnotes. If you have extensive footnotes, factor that in to the page count. Endnote page is not part of the page count. Separate annotated bibliography. Bibliography - at least six sources Two academic/scholarly website sources permitted.

GRADING:

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. Following the final examination, a letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme: percentage grades are calculated as follows:

A+ 96-100	A 90-95	A- 85-8
B+ 80-84	B 75-79	B- 70-78
C+ 65-69	C 60-64	C- 55-59
D+ 50-54	D 45-49	F 44 or less

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.

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>.

Course Reading Schedule:

The Phenomenon of Religious Faith (PRF).

Plus webnotes.

September

12 - 14 Introduction. The religious experience. What is religion?

PRF p x Defining religions. Overview of religious typologies –

Webnotes. characteristics. Key terms.

19 – 21th Ways of studying religions. Understanding the sacred and

PRF the holy. Concepts and key terms

pp 383 - 401 What is holy? How is it identified and described?

Webnotes. Handout.

26 – 28 Symbol, ritual, myth and text.

Webnotes. Cultural and social experiences of ritual. How religious communities create identity and cohesion. Scriptures and doctrines. Written text and sacred orality.

October

10 – 12
PRF
Pp 2-7
223 240
Webnotes.

What is faith? Informed liberation versus oppressive indoctrination.
Faith and reason? Are they always compatible?

17 - 19
Webnotes.

Coping mechanisms or signposts for living?
Encountering evil. Differing explanations.

24

MIDTERM EXAM – worth 20 percent.

26

View Video.

November

Oct. 31 –
Nov 2
PRF
Pp 438 – 460

Religious experience and religious belief.
Humankind's encounter with the sacred.
Reductionism or irrational subjectivity.
Understanding without understanding.

7 – 9
PFR
Pp .141-151,
163-168
Webnotes.

Blaise Pascale's *Wager* and relating ideas.
Handout.

READING DAYS

16
PRF
Pp 240-253,
261-283.
Webnotes.

VIDEO REVIEW TO BE HANDED IN – worth 10 percent
Faith, religious experience, and the rationality of religious faith.

21 – 23 Mysticism and contemplation.
PRF Mysterium Tremendum – Rudolf Otto's *Idea of the Holy*
Pp 403-422 versus William James.
28 – 30
Webnotes.

December

5 – 7 **ESSAY TO BE HANDED IN BY DECEMBER 7TH.**
PRF The meaning of life. The religious traditions and their interpretation.
Pp 31 - 45 Salvation/soteriology/liberation. Key words.
Webnotes.

REGISTRAR'S OFFICE SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM - TBA