

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION
COURSE OUTLINE**

**RELS 338.01 – ATHEISM
FALL TERM 2015**

Instructor: Irving Hexham
Class time: TR 9.30-10.45
Office hours: SS 538, T 11-12, or by appointment.
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Course description:

Karl Marx declared that “the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism.” This course examines the criticism of religion concentrating on its development in Western society over the past two hundred years. This includes the development of modern agnosticism, atheism, and in recent times the ‘new atheism.’

Organization of the course:

The lectures will concentrate on what historians call “the Victorian crisis of faith” because it is in this period that the arguments used by critics of contemporary religion were developed into their modern forms. The course begins by examining traditional Christian beliefs and then looks at the rise of anti-Christian, and later anti-religious arguments and movements beginning with the work of Tom Paine. It pay particular attention to the change from earlier rationalist attacks on religion, such as those initiated by Paine to sociological and psychological critiques developed by Ludwig Feuerbach and people influenced by him like Karl Marx. Throughout the course these issues are linked to these social and political movements. Finally, the impact of such arguments on non-Christian religions are discussed throughout the course.

Teaching/Learning Style:

This is a traditional university course that emphasizes reading and individual research by the student.

Core competencies

At the end of this course students ought to be able to:

- a) appreciate the relationship between religion and politics
- b) understand why some scholars, like Eric Voegelin, Roger Griffin and Emilio Gentile, talk about “political religions.”
- c) think critically about religious and political arguments
- d) appreciate the importance of concepts like myth in the discussion of politics and religion
- e) make informed judgments about specific instances where religions impacts politics.

Textbooks:

Irving Hexham *Understanding World Religions* available from the bookstore.
 Irving Hexham, ed., *Understanding Modern Agnosticism and Unbelief: A Book of Readings*. This will be made available in pdf format on D2L and is available for free.

Online resources for this course:

The website www.understandingworldreligions.com provides extensive supporting materials for this course.

Course Requirements

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)	Required
Blogs			
27 September	First mini-Blog	15%	
25 October	Second mini-Blog	15	
29 November	Third mini-Blog	15%	
Tests			
15 October	First test	25%	
19 November	Second test	30%	
No final exam			

Tests:

There are two multiple choice tests in this course. Both are based on the lectures and course readings. The first test is worth 25% of the final grade. The second test is worth 30% of the final grade. This makes the tests worth 55% of the final grade.

Assignment mini-Blogs:

For this course you must write three mini-blogs. Each blog is worth 15% of the final grade making the blogs worth 45% of the final grade.

The object of this assignment is to engage you with a current issue related to the study of religion and the criticism of religion as well as enabling you to see the significance the study of religion in today's world. For this you must write three mini-Blogs according to the following format. Instructions for writing the blogs will be discussed in class and posted on D2L. These blogs will be posted anonymously on the course blogsite at: <https://uwreligions.wordpress.com/>

Grading:

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. A rubric for the blog assignments will be posted on D2L.

Policy with regard to assignments: students must take tests 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 to show that this is necessary.

Expectations for student conduct in this course:

Attendance: students are expected to attend most 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.

Computers and other devices: while attending class the wearing of earphones or similar devices is not permitted nor can computers 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 lectures: for copyright reasons 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. All of these restrictions are due to copyright issues and are strictly enforced. Some power point slides, i.e. those that do not include limited use materials, will be posted to D2L. It is your responsibility to pay attention and make your own lecture notes.

Syllabus: a complete syllabus will be made available on the course website during the first week of term.

Final examination: there will be no Registrar scheduled final examination.

Electronic Device Policy: recent evidence shows that students who use computers in class learn significantly less than those who write their own notes. You are encouraged to write your own notes. The wearing of earphones or similar devices is not permitted nor can 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 without a note from a doctor or Student Accessibility Services. 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.

Academic honesty:

Students should be familiar with the University regulations regarding academic honesty. See University Calendar, p. 51. See also:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/study/plag.html>

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Desire 2 Learn (D2L) Help

Go to <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students> for Student Help and FAQ's about D2L. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are also available on this website.

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>.

Classics Student Society

Classics Student Society is the Greek and Roman Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: classsoc@ucalgary.ca or visit <http://grst.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate/classics-students-society>.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources

- For program planning and advice, students in the Faculty of Arts will contact The Arts Students' Centre (ASC). Drop in at SS102, call at 403-220-3580 or email at ascarts@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 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.