



**FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION  
COURSE OUTLINE  
Fall 2020**

**COURSE NUMBER:** RELS 338 L01

**COURSE NAME:** Atheism and Atheistic Thought

**PRE/CO-REQUISITES:** None

**CLASSROOM LOCATION:** Online

**CLASS DAYS & TIMES:** Asynchronous – modules will be posted weekly.

**INSTRUCTOR NAME AND CONTACT INCLUDING UCALGARY EMAIL & PHONE:**

Instructor: Irving Hexham. Phone: (403) 220-3280. Email: rels338.atheism  
Please contact by email if you need to set up a Zoom appointment

**INSTRUCTOR EMAIL POLICY:** Please note that all course communications must occur through your@ucalgary email, and I will respond within 48 hours.

**NAME & EMAIL CONTACT OF TEACHING ASSISTANT(S):** TBA

**COURSE CALENDAR STATEMENT:**

A consideration of various historical and thematic critiques of religion, including the development of modern agnosticism, atheism and in recent times, the 'new atheism.'  
Course Hours: 3 units; (3-0)

**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. It includes discussions of the development of modern agnosticism, atheism, and concentrates on the way a new atheism developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that continues to shape religious and atheistic thought today.

**LEARNING RESOURCES**

**Required readings:**

Irving Hexham, ed., *Understanding Modern Agnosticism and Unbelief: A Collection of Readings*. These texts will be made available in pdf format in the **Required Readings** folder on the D2L section of this course.

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe: "On Myth," extract from *New Religions as Global Cultures* this is also available on the course D2L in the **Required Readings** folder.

Through the University of Calgary's Library website, you need to can find and download the following academic journal articles in pdf format:

Walter Fisher, "Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case for public moral argument," this is found in the academic journal *Communication Monographs*, March 1984, 51, pp.1-22.

Walter Fisher, "Clarifying the narrative paradigm," this is found in the academic journal *Communication Monographs*, March 1989, 56, pp.55-58.

### **Original Source Texts**

All of the required readings compiled by Irving Hexham are drawn from books that contain far more material than you need to read for this course. Nevertheless, for those who are interested the original source texts plus some other related works will be posted in the **Source Texts** folder found on the D2L for this course.

### **Additional online resources for this course:**

The website Understanding World Religions provides extensive supporting materials for this course. It is found at:

[www.understandingworldreligions.com](http://www.understandingworldreligions.com)

All of the above items are either in the public domain or, as in the case of the Popper article, used with permission.

N.B. Occasionally additional readings may be added if events make them relevant to the course.

### **LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES AND REQUIREMENTS**

There is a D2L site for this course. It contains the required readings identified above as on D2L plus other relevant class resources and materials:

Students taking online, remote and blended learning courses, including this course, students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security, and malware updates;

A current and updated web browser;

Webcam (built-in or external);

Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone;

Current antivirus and/or firewall software enabled;

Broadband internet connection.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

Online study period begins on 8 September and ends on 9 December 2020.

The course has the following basic outline:

Sep 08-Week 1      Introduction to the course

Sep 13-Week 2      Changing Worldviews

Sep 20-Week 3	The Dynamics of Belief
Sep 27-Week 4	The Christian Enemy
Oct 04-Week 5	The Beginning of Criticism
Oct 11-Week 6	Tom Paine's <i>Age of Reason</i>
Oct 18-Week 7	Biblical Criticism
Oct 25-Week 8	Feuerbach and the New Left
Nov 01-Week 9	Karl Marx and the Criticism of Religion
Nov 08-Week 10:	Nietzsche, Freud, and the Radical Right
Nov 15-Week 11	Bradlaugh's political atheism
Nov 22-Week 12	Besant and New Religions
Nov. 29-Week 13	Beatrice Webb and the Reluctant Atheist
Dec 06-Week 14	Summing up

The study period ends on Wednesday 9 December

N.B Small adjustments may be made to this outline as the course progresses if new issues arise.

### EXAMINATIONS

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)
Wednesday 7 October	First Test	25% of the Final Grade
Wednesday 28 October	Second Test	30% of the Final Grade
Wednesday 18 November	Third Test	30% of the Final Grade
Wednesday 8 December	Fourth Test	15% of the Final Grade

The use of aids such as textbooks, course notes or electronic devices will not be permitted during midterm or final examinations.

### ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

This course relies entirely on multiple-choice and similar class tests which may or may not include a written component.

### MISSED TESTS:

If students miss or are unable to take a test on a particular date, they must contact the instructor in writing within 24 hours to discuss alternative dates. If there is a long delay the stated date of the test and the time the student eventually takes it then their grade may be reduced by one grade point for each day the test is delayed.

### GRADING

Tests will be marked according to the department's grading scheme which is:

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
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Details about the universities grading scheme is found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-1.html>

Unless otherwise stated on the test paper, each correct answer in a multiple-choice test will be worth 1 grade point. The grading of the tests will be cumulative and out of a final possible mark of 100.

### **EXPECTATIONS FOR WRITING**

There are no writing expectations in this course only tests.

### **ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION**

The sections below are optional but recommended to provide additional clarity to students regarding the course – please delete if not relevant.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS**

The big advantage of this is that you can arrange your work to suite your own schedule. This means that if you are a night owl you can begin your work at 1 am if that is a good time for you.

The disadvantage is that there is no compulsory time when you must attend classes or participate in any session except when you take the scheduled tests which allow you considerable leeway as when you can write them.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the beginning of the semester you draw up your own timetable and keep as closely to it as possible. To help you with this you will be provided with weekly course modules and other materials, including audio files, that allow you to better organize your time.

Please treat these components of the course as you would and in-class course by setting aside either two 75-minute or three 50-minute sessions and work through these basic course materials. Then set aside another 12 hours per week to complete the assigned readings, note taking, etc. In this way you ought to be able to complete the course without difficulty and do well in the tests.

### **CONDUCT**

As members of the University community, students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### **GUIDELINES FOR ZOOM SESSIONS**

Video conferencing tools such as Zoom may used as supplementary learning experiences during the course. For those of you who are unfamiliar with Zoom it is a video conferencing program

that will allow us to meet at specific times for a “live” video conference, so that we can have the opportunity to meet each other virtually and discuss relevant course topics as a learning community.

To help ensure Zoom sessions are private, do not share the Zoom link or password with others, or on any social media platforms. Zoom links and passwords are only intended for students registered in the course. Zoom recordings and materials presented in Zoom, including any teaching materials, must not be shared, distributed or published without the instructor’s permission.

The use of video conferencing programs relies on participants to act ethically, honestly and with integrity; and in accordance with the principles of fairness, good faith, and respect (as per the Code of Conduct). When entering Zoom or other video conferencing sessions (such as MS Teams), you play a role in helping create an effective, safe and respectful learning environment. Please be mindful of how your behaviour in these sessions may affect others. Participants are required to use names officially associated with their UCID (legal or preferred names listed in the Student Centre) when engaging in these activities. Instructors/moderators can remove those whose names do not appear on class rosters. Non-compliance may be investigated under relevant University of Calgary conduct policies (e.g Student Non-Academic Misconduct Policy). If participants have difficulties complying with this requirement, they should email the instructor of the class explaining why, so the instructor may consider whether to grant an exception, and on what terms. For more information on how to get the most out of your zoom sessions visit:

<https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/guidelines-for-zoom/>

If you are unable to attend a Zoom session, please contact your instructor to arrange an alternative activity for the missed session (e.g., to review a recorded session). Please be prepared, as best as you are able, to join class in a quiet space that will allow you to be fully present and engaged in Zoom sessions. Students will be advised by their instructor when they are expected to turn on their webcam (for group work, presentations, etc.).

Zoom class sessions may be recorded for the purposes of supporting student learning in this class – such as making the recording available for review of the session or for students who miss a session. Students will be advised before the instructor initiates a recording of a Zoom session. These recordings will be used to support student learning only and will not be shared or used for any other purpose.

### **COURSE EVALUATIONS AND STUDENT FEEDBACK**

Student feedback will be sought at the end of the course through the standard University Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) and Faculty course evaluation forms. A midterm evaluation may also be included to provide students an opportunity to provide feedback, for the instructor to adjust their approaches to teaching and learning, and to continuously improve the course. Students are welcome to discuss the process and content of the course at any time with the instructor.

## **UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY POLICIES AND SUPPORTS**

### **ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

Academic Misconduct refers to student behavior which compromises proper assessment of a student's academic activities and includes: cheating; fabrication; falsification; plagiarism; unauthorized assistance; failure to comply with an instructor's expectations regarding conduct required of students completing academic assessments in their courses; and failure to comply with exam regulations applied by the Registrar.

For information on the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure please visit:

<https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-academic-misconduct-policy.pdf>

<https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-academic-misconduct-procedure.pdf>

Additional information is available on the Academic Integrity Website at:

<https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>.

### **ACADEMIC ACCOMODATION**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures listed below. The Student Accommodations policy is available at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/access/prospective-students/academic-accommodations>.

Students needing an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf>). 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.

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/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/)

### **INSTRUCTOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

Course materials created by instructors, including recorded audio lectures, posted notes, labs, and exams etc. are and remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited and illegal.

Discussing course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time is allowed but course materials must not be shared because all genuinely enrolled students will have equal access to it.

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY**

Student information will be collected in accordance with usual classroom practice. Students' tests will be accessible only by the authorized faculty and teaching assistant. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

### **COPYRIGHT LEGISLATION**

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright-policy.pdf>

And the requirements of the copyright act:

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>

This is to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorised sharing of course materials, including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc. Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>.

### **SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY**

The University recognizes that all members of the University Community should be able to learn, work, teach and live in an environment where they are free from harassment, discrimination, and violence. The University of Calgary's sexual violence policy guides us in how we respond to incidents of sexual violence, including supports available to those who have experienced or witnessed sexual violence, or those who are alleged to have committed sexual violence. It provides clear response procedures and timelines, defines complex concepts, and addresses incidents that occur off-campus in certain circumstances. Please see the policy available at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/sexual-violence-policy.pdf>

### **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Please visit the Registrar's website at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines>

For additional important information on the following see:

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success
- Student Ombuds Office
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk