

University of Calgary
Faculty of Arts - Department of Religious Studies
Winter Term 2013
RELS 341 L01 – New Religious Movements

Instructor Irving Hexham
Class time and room TR 15:30-16:45, MS 211
Office/office hours SS 1310, T 14:00-15:00 or by appointment.
Telephone 403-220-3280 or Dept. office 403-220-5886
E-mail hexham@ucalgary.ca
Web site <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham>

Textbooks:

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, *Understanding Cults and New Religions*

Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to New Religious Movements*

Journals:

Many journals carry articles on the new religions. In particular you should look at - *Sociological Analysis/Sociology of Religion*, *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, and *NovaReligio*.

Other readings:

In addition to reading all the textbooks students are encouraged to read as widely as possible. A list of lecture topics and additional readings will be provided at the beginning of the course.

Course description:

This course examines the intellectual background and social background to the rise of the new religious movements (cults) and attempts to gain an understanding of their appeal to their members. It attempts to place the beliefs of new religions within the context of the great religious traditions and examines the mythologies which give rise to new religions.

Course competencies:

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

- a) discuss in an informed manner cults, sects and new religions;
- b) critically evaluate books on cults and new religions;
- 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.

Assignments and grading:

Assignment One	15%
Assignment Two	15%
First Test	25%
Second Test	25%

Final Essay 20%

First Assignment: Tweet and Blog - worth 15% of the Final Grade

This is intended to engage you with a current issue related to the study of religion and enable you to see the significance of the study of religion in today's world. For these assignments you must write a tweet and a mini blog.

For the first part of the assignment you must find a good news story about religion. Then write a Tweet about the story that can be read by following a url that you provide in shortened form. Do not post the Tweet.

Then you must write, but not post, the text of a 250 word mini-blog that discusses the news story in terms of the issues studied in this course. Do not post the mini-blog.

Once these are both written in a Word document, send them by email attachment to the email address: uofcrels341@gmail.com.

On the top of the assignment write your name and student number. Then give yourself a Web name that can be used when the Blog is posted to the Web. I suggest you use your first name, a nickname, or your initials so that you cannot be identified by other readers. In this way I will be able to identify your Blog after posting.

After I receive the text of your Tweet and Mini-Blog they will be checked for problems and if approved, posted to the Web. If they are not approved they will be returned to you for revision. The Tweet will be posted to Twitter using the hashtag: #worldrels. The mini-blog will be posted on the Web at: <http://uwreligions.wordpress.com/author/uwreligions/>

People whose surname begins with a letter from A-J must submit their Tweet and Mini-Blog by **Sunday 17 February** at the latest. Everyone else must submit it by **Sunday 31 March**.

Second Assignment: Comments – worth 15% of the Final Grade

Once the Tweets and Blogs are posted for the first group of students, with surnames A-J, then the remaining students, with surnames K-Z, must post three comments on different Mini-Blogs discussing what was said and relating it to what they have learnt in the course.

After the second set of Tweets and Blogs are posted by students with surnames K-Z, the remaining students with surnames A-J must write at least three comments on different Mini-Blogs. Thus every student writes a Tweet, a Mini-Blog and three comments on blogs by other students.

In writing your Mini-Blogs and comments be respectful and do not slander anyone. Remember these can be read by anyone with Internet access which is why they are anonymous except for the identifying name you give yourself.

First and Second Tests:

There will be two in-class multiple choice tests each worth 25% of the Final Grade.

The first test will be held in week 6, on Tuesday 12 February.

Second test will be held in week 12, on Tuesday 2 April.

The tests will be based on the readings and lectures.

Test results will be posted on Blackboard.

Research assignment - worth 20% of the Final Grade

This is due in class on Tuesday 16 April

N.B. A detailed lecture schedule, list of recommended weekly readings, and instructions for completing the final assignment will be posted on Blackboard at the beginning of the first week of term.

- * Only hard copy papers will be accepted. Do not send them by email.
- * Late papers will lose 10 points per day.
- * Students must take the test on the assigned day or have a valid medical note.
- * Late exams and papers must have a valid medical note.
- * N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

**There will be no Registrar scheduled final exam for this course.*

Grading

A letter grade will be assigned for the course on the basis of the following number and letter grade scheme, standardized within the Department of Religious Studies:

A+	100 - 96	A	95.9 - 90	A-	89.9 - 85
B+	84.9 - 80	B	79.9 - 75	B-	74.9 - 70
C+	69.9 - 65	C	64.9 - 60	C-	59.9 - 55
D+	54.9 - 53	D	52.9-50	F	Under 50

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

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/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 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.