

University of Calgary
Faculty of Arts - Department of Religious Studies
Winter Term 2015
RELS 341.01 – New Religious Movements

Instructor	Irving Hexham
Class time and room	TR 9.30-10.45 ST129
Office	SS 538
Office Hours	T 11:00 – 12:00, or by appointment.
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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

Required Textbooks:

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

This book is available for free as a pdf download from my website:

<http://understandingworldreligions.com/books.html>

Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, eds., *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* and *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, and *Nova Religio*.

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 Requirements:

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)
Mini-Blogs		
31 January	First mini-Blog due	15%
28 February	Second mini-Blog due	15%
31 March	Third mini-Blog due	15%
15 March	First Assignment	25%
15 April	Second Assignment	25%
Class participation		5%

First mini-Blog and Tweet - 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 the study of religion in today's world. For this assignment you must write a mini blog.

For the first part of the assignment you must find a good news story about a new religion or new religious movement. Then you must write, but not post, the text of a 350 word mini-blog that discusses the news story in terms of the issues studied in this course.

You do not post the Mini-Blog. What you do is write it up as Word document that you send by email attachment to the email address:

religion341@gmail.com

N.B. You will also use this email address for submitting your two other assignments.

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

After we receive the text of the mini-Blog we will check it for problems and if approved post it to the Web. If it is not approved it will be returned to you for revision.

Once you see that your mini-Blog is posted on the course website you then send out a Tweet to tell the world about your blog post. You should post it to Twitter using the hashtag: #uwrels. The mini-blog will be posted on the Web to the blog site at:

<http://uwreligions.wordpress.com/author/uwreligions/>

Second mini-Blog - worth 15% of the Final Grade

For this assignment you repeat the process followed for the first assignment using a different news story.

Third mini-Blog - worth 15% of the Final Grade

For this assignment you repeat the process followed for the first assignment using a different news story.

Rubric:

A mini-Blog Rubric will be posted on D2L

Optional involvement:

Once the Blogs are posted you are encouraged to engage with the material by sending out a Tweet about your mini-Blog and writing a comment on one of the Blogs other than the one you posed. To do this go to the blog site listed above and read through the blogs for this course. Then choose one to comment on.

You write your comment on the blog on the blog site itself and we simply approve it if it is not libellous.

Explanation of the procedure followed:

The reason for sending copies of the mini-Blog in a Word documents to the course email is to allow us to mark them because on the blog site you are to remain anonymous.

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 assignment:

Choose a new religious movement from the list we will distribute. Then write a description of it following the template that will be posted on D2L.

Final assignment:

Prepare a Power Point presentation about the new religion you wrote about in the first assignment. In creating your presentation, only use pictures that are in the public domain. Therefore, you need to take them from places like Wiki Commons and check that they are available under a creative commons licence.

N.B. Unless you object in writing the description of the NRM you write about and your Power Point presentation will be posted to the course website at: <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb/> These web postings will contain your initials but not your name and will be available for others to read and use under a creative commons copyright license. This process will be explained in more detail in class.

N.B. A detailed lecture schedule, list of recommended weekly readings to D2L at the beginning of the first week of term.

- * Late assignments, including blogs, must be accompanied by a valid medical note.
- * N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

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 Classics and Religion:

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

Test results will be posted on D2L.

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 (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, or librarian staff.

Academic Accommodation

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services 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.

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.

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.