

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
WINTER TERM 2008 - RELS 439.01 L01**

December 20, 2007

**ADVANCED STUDIES IN THE NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS:
*Method & Theories in the Study of New Religions***

Instructor	Irving Hexham
Class time and room	R 14:00-16:45 and as arranged with the class
Office	SS 1310
Office hours	T 11:00 – 11:45 or by appointment
Telephone	220-3280
E-mail	hexham@ucalgary.ca
Web Site	http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham

Course website:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/courses/courses-2008/courses-2008.htm>

Objectives of the Course:

This is a highly innovative, experimental, seminar that will introduce students to the study of new religious movements with a particular emphasis on research methods and theories used to understand them. It involves a weekly seminar discussion of assigned texts and a regular on-line discussion, using Eluminate, to link students and faculty at a number of other universities.

Course competencies

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

- a) use a variety of methods for the study of new religions and religious movements;
- b) discuss various theoretical explanations for the rise of religious movements;
- c) think critically about the appropriate way to study new religions;
- 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.

Course Details:

The course will proceed as a senior seminar in which participants will present papers and book reviews on different aspects of the study of new religions and religious movements and discuss various theories for the interpretation of such groups. Part of the overall project will be the creation of an ongoing research network.

Each participant is required to have an e-mail account at their host institution and join the e-mail discussion group Nurel-I (for details see the Nurelweb Home Page at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb>). Members of the seminar are expected to participate in the weekly discussions, regularly contribute to the online sessions, and establish personal contact, outside of the seminar itself, with at least two students and one professor at different participating institutions. A record is to be kept of all individual discussions. The seminar itself will keep a central record of both written and oral/visual discussions. Eventually selections from the discussion may be posted on a website associated with the proposed research network.

Required reading:

Research Methods Reading Set from the University of Calgary Bookstore
Richard Evans, *Lying About Hitler*
Richard Evans, *In Defense of History*
Research Methods Crib – to be distributed electronically
Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology* – to be distributed electronically
Various articles to be distributed electronically

Background readings:

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe:	<i>New Religions as Global Cultures</i>
John Walliss	<i>Apocalyptic Trajectories</i>
Kenneth Newport	<i>The Branch Davidians and Waco</i>
Douglas Cowan	<i>Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet</i>
Hans G. Kippenberg	<i>Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age</i>
Em Griffin	<i>A First Look at Communications Theory</i>
Steven Tipton	<i>Getting Saved from the Sixties</i>
Chrissie Steyn	<i>Worldviews in Transition</i>
Michael York	<i>The Emerging Network</i>
Rodney Stark, Roger Finke	<i>Acts Of Faith</i>
G.R. Elton	<i>The Practice of History</i>

Course requirements and grading:

Lectures begin on January 15 and end on April 17.

Reading week is February 17-24.

1. Two book reviews, 1500 words in length, on books to be assigned during the course. These reviews will be posted to the seminar for discussion and should provide the background for the final assignment. Worth 30% of the final grade. They will deal with issues of method and theory in the study of new religions.
2. A theoretical term paper of 3,500 words on a topic to be agreed upon with the course tutor. This paper will discuss research issues relating to the study of a particular new religion and is due at the end of the course. Worth 50% of the final grade.

3. Class participation 10%
4. Internet seminar participation 10%

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

A letter grade will be assigned for the course on the basis of the following grade scheme:

		A	100 – 90	A-	89 – 85
B+	84 – 80	B	79 – 75	B-	74 – 70
C+	69 – 65	C	64 – 60	C-	59 – 55
D+	54 – 50	D	49 - 45	F	44 – 0

Unless you object in writing to the instructor, grades will be posed on a Blackboard list according student id number. Unless someone knows your student id they will not be able to identify you or know your grade.

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>

Academic accommodation

It is a student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Center, please contact their office at 220-8237. Your academic accommodation letters should be provided to your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the commencement of this course. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Center are not eligible for formal academic accommodation.
 (DRC web address is: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/Others/DRC/>)

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>.