

**University of Calgary  
Faculty of Arts  
Department of Religious Studies  
Fall 2010**

**RELS 605.03/705.03 L01 *Nature of Religion***

**Time and place**

M 1:00-3:45pm, room: SS 1332

**Instructor**

Lyle Eslinger

Email: eslinger@ucalgary.ca

Phone: 403-220-3281

Office: SS 1334; consultations by appointment.

**Text book**

Wade, Nicholas. 2009. *The Faith Instinct: How Religion Evolved and Why it Endures*. New York: Penguin Press.

**Orientation**

This session of RELS 605/705 provides an entry point into the history of and current developments in the naturalistic study of religion. The course will also provide an occasion for reflection on the debate regarding the degree to which human culture (and religion as an element of culture) is anchored in or has transcended biology. Readings from the textbook will be supplemented by selections from Aristotle, Scott Atran, Ernest Becker, Pascal Boyer, Charles Darwin, Émile Durkheim, Ludwig Feuerbach, Stewart Guthrie, David Hume, Thomas Malthus, Arthur Schopenhauer, Benedict Spinoza, Yi-fu Tuan, George C. Williams, and E.O. Wilson.

**Credit Work**

**1. (40%) Seminar participation**

- All seminars require preparation (advance readings and reflection); seminar time will be devoted to discussion in which active participation is required and assessed.

**2. (60%) Research project**

- The project provides an opportunity to develop a critical analysis of the nature of religion. Projects must incorporate some element of the perspectives on the nature of religion surveyed in the course. Projects will have two primary components: a) an application of some aspect of the naturalistic perspective on religion; b) with reference to a particular example from the history of religion (text or documented behaviour).

- Oral presentation (10%). Students will present a survey of their project and findings in designated seminar sessions in the latter half of November (to be assigned in an early class)

- Written submission due [in class] 06 Dec (50%). Length: 4000 words.

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

## Grading

A letter grade will be assigned to each component of the course according to the University's Graduate Studies Calendar 2010-2011:

Grade	Grade Point Value	Graduate Description
A+	4.0	Outstanding
A	4.0	Excellent – superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter
A-	3.7	Very good performance
B+	3.3	Good performance
B	3.0	Satisfactory performance Note: The grade point value (3.0) associated with this grade is the minimum acceptable average that a graduate student must maintain throughout the program as computed at the end of each registration anniversary year of the program.
B-	2.7	Minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies Note: A student who receives a B- or lower in two or more courses will be required to withdraw regardless of their grade point average unless the program recommends otherwise. Individual programs may require a higher minimum passing grade.
C+	2.3	
C	2.0	
C-	1.7	
D+	1.3	
D	1.0	
F	0.0	

All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted toward Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements. A student who receives a grade of F will normally be required to withdraw unless the program recommends otherwise.