

REL 101: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Section G001, UW Stevens Point at Wausau, North/South Hall 243
11:00 am – 12:15 pm, Monday and Wednesday

Section J001, UW Stevens Point at Marshfield, Fine Arts 319
10:35 am – 11:50 am, Tuesday and Thursday

Instructor: Dr. Ryan T. O’Leary

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Office Hours: by appointment



Description: There are many ways in which scholars study religion and its place in the world. This course will introduce students to two of the most important methods in the academic study of religion and will provide the opportunity to apply these methods to diverse expressions of the religious life.

Content-Related Learning Outcomes: Having taken this course students will be able to:

1. identify key features of Western monotheism, Eastern religions, and religion in America;
2. understand two classic theoretical approaches to the study of religion;
3. apply theoretical approaches to issues of religion and culture.

Skills-Related Learning Outcomes: Through this course students will have opportunities to:

1. broaden their overall cultural awareness;
2. practice and improve their college-level reading skills;
3. develop their ability to apply theoretical models to concrete phenomena.

Attendance Policy: In this class attendance and participation are extremely important. Each absence beyond the third will result in three points being deducted from the student's final score. Please note that the attendance requirement includes the expectation that students will attend the entire class period for which they are marked present.

Late Work Policy: Late assignments will be accepted with a penalty of 1 point per day the assignment is late deducted from any points the assignment earns.

Note on Readings: Over the course of the semester we will be reading two books that have had a strong influence on the field of religious studies. You will be asked to reflect on these books, understand key passages, and apply the theories they present. For these reasons, it is crucially important that students keep up with the reading assignments and come to class prepared to discuss them.

Note on Electronic Items: Computers, tablets, and cell-phones are not permitted in this class. Exemptions to this rule will be made only with official documentation of a disability requiring the use of electronic devices. Students will need to print electronic reserve readings to bring them to class. Recording devices are permitted.

UW Colleges Inclusive Learning Statement: The UW Colleges are committed to building diverse and inclusive learning, living, and working environments. We value mutual respect for all and do not tolerate discrimination on our campuses or within our programs and activities. We view this as both a moral imperative consistent with an intellectual community that celebrates individual differences and diversity, as well as a matter of law. If you encounter discrimination or harassment based on your age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, marital status, medical status, military status, national origin, pregnant or parenting status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, please contact the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at <http://inclusion.uwex.uwc.edu/> or file a report a report at <http://uwc.edu/students/report-bias>.

UW Colleges Title IX Syllabus Statement: UW Colleges faculty and staff are committed to supporting our students and upholding the UW Colleges policies and federal laws as outline by Title IX. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects individuals from discrimination based on sex and gender in any educational program or activity operated by recipients of federal financial assistance. Sexual violence, such as sexual harassment and sexual assault, are prohibited by Title IX.

If you or a friend experience an incident of sex or gender based discrimination, we encourage you to report it. There are many resources available to assist you. If a student chooses to confide in a UW Colleges faculty or staff member regarding an issue of sexual violence or discrimination, as a “Responsible Employee” the faculty or staff member will need to share this information with the UW Colleges’ Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Deputy Coordinator will assist the student in connecting with all possible resources both on and off campus. You can reach Kristine McCaslin, the Title IX Deputy Coordinator at (715) 261-6212 or kristine.mccaslin@uwc.edu.

If you would like to speak with someone who is not required to report to the Title IX Deputy Coordinator, the campus counselor is a confidential resource for you. You can contact the counselor by calling (715) 261-6235 and ask to schedule an appointment with the campus counselor. For more information regarding your rights and resources, please refer to the UW Colleges’ Title IX website: <https://tinyurl.com/UWCTitleIX>

UWC Academic Integrity Statement: Academic Integrity is an expectation of each UW Colleges student. Our campus community members are responsible for fostering and upholding an environment in which student learning is fair, just, and honest. Through your studies as a UW Colleges student, it is essential to exhibit the highest level of personal honesty and respect for the intellectual property of others. Academic misconduct is unacceptable. It compromises and disrespects the integrity of our university and those who study here. To maintain academic integrity, a student must only claim work which is the authentic work solely of their own, providing correct citations and credit to others as needed. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and/or helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. Failure to understand what constitutes academic misconduct does not exempt responsibility from engaging in it. For more information please read the Academic Misconduct Guide located here: <https://tinyurl.com/uwc-academic-integrity>.

READING LIST

For Purchase

Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*

Other Required Readings (found on D2L)

Genesis, chapters 1 – 12

The Gospel of Mark

The Qur'an, sura 2

"Civil Religion in America," by Robert Bellah

Selections from the *Bhagavad Gita*

The Land of Bliss Sutra

"What is Enlightenment," by Immanuel Kant

Recommended Supplemental Readings (found on D2L)

Isaiah 1 – 6

John 1 – 8, 18 – 21

Acts 1 – 9

Selections from *The Book of Shadows*, by Gerald Gardner

"America's Grace," by David E. Campbell and Robert D. Putnam

"Becoming an Atheist in America," by Jesse M. Smith

"Civil Religion in American Schools," by Adam Gamoran

"Creation In And Creation Of Norse Poetry," by Kevin J. Wanner

"General Introduction" to *Shamanism*, by Graham Harvey

"Islam in America: Separate but Unequal," by Geneive Abdo

"Letter from a Birmingham Jail," by Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Putting the Blood back into Blot," by Michael Strmiska

"Religion, Religions, Religious," by J. Z. Smith

"Secularism and Its Discontents," by Nikki R. Keddie

"The Heart of Practice" from *Being Peace*, by Thich Nhat Hanh

"Where Do They Get These Ideas? Changing Ideas of Cults," by Joseph Laycock

"Witchcraft for Sale," by David Waldron

EVALUATION

Grading for this course has three elements totaling 100 possible points.

Religion in the News: Using the newspaper databases available through the UW-Colleges Libraries, research religion in the news. (Go to www.uwc.edu/library, click on "Databases A to Z," then change the "All Database Types" dropdown menu to "Newspapers." The Access Newspaper ARCHIVE and LexisNexis Academic databases are recommended.) Bring together three or more articles from reliable news sources which deal with any one issue having to do with religion in today's world. Write a unified summary of these three articles, including an analysis of the issue discussed in them. Give the full citations for the articles you use.

Total: 10 points

Close Reading Worksheets: Seven times throughout the semester you will be given close reading worksheets asking guiding questions about the reading for that week. (These will not be announced in advance; they will be given in class on the week they are due. It is worth your effort to keep up with the assigned readings.) With these worksheets, you will do 3 things: (1) Refer to the assigned reading and fill out the worksheet. (2) Type your responses and submit them on D2L *before the next class period*. (3) Bring the worksheet with you to the next class to help guide in-class discussion. Each worksheet submission will be worth up to 5 points; the lowest score will be dropped.

Total: 30 points

Exams: Three exams will be given via D2L throughout the semester. Each exam is designed to assess students' engagement with readings and lecture material. Each exam will include (a) 20 multiple choice, true-false, or fill-in-the-blank questions worth 1/2 point each, and (b) an essay worth 10 points, for a total of 20 points per exam. Essays will ask you to draw on material from reading and from previous assignments; you will be given a copy of the essay assignment in advance.

Total: 60 points

GRADING

The course will be graded according to a standard 100-point distribution, based on points earned.

97 - 100 = A+

93 - 96 = A

90 - 92 = A-

87 - 89 = B+

83 - 86 = B

80 - 82 = B-

77 - 79 = C+

73 - 76 = C

70 - 72 = C-

67 - 69 = D+

63 - 66 = D

60 - 62 = D-

0 - 59 = F

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART ONE

PHENOMENOLOGY OF RELIGION; WESTERN MONOTHEISM

Week 1 (Sept. 3 – 7)—Introduction; Creation in Hebrew Scripture

Genesis, chapters 1 – 12

No class on Thursday, September 6

Week 2 (Sept. 10 – 14)—Prophets & Messiahs: An Introduction to Christianity

The Gospel of Mark

Week 3 (Sept. 17 – 21)—Introducing Eliade & Phenomenology of Religion

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*: "Introduction" and Chapter I

Week 4 (Sept. 24 – 28)—History & Theology

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*: Chapter II

Week 5 (October 1 – 5)—Introduction to Islam, Ancient & Modern

The Qur'an, sura 2

Exam 1 due October 5

PART TWO

PHENOMENOLOGY OF RELIGION; HINDU & BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHIES

Week 6 (Oct. 8 – 12)—Introducing Hinduism

Selections from the *Bhagavad Gita*

Week 7 (Oct. 15 – 19)—Introducing Buddhism

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*: Chapter III

Week 8 (Oct. 22 – 26)—Engaged Buddhism

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*: Chapter IV

Week 9 (Oct. 29 – Nov. 2)—Pure Land Buddhism

The Land of Bliss Sutra

Exam 2 due November 2

PART THREE

SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION; RELIGION IN AMERICA

Week 10 (Nov. 5 – 9)— Introduction to Berger; Introduction to Religion in America

Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*: “Religion and World-Construction”

Week 11 (Nov. 12 – 16)— Civil Religion in America

“Civil Religion in America,” by Robert Bellah

Religion in the News assignment due November 16

Week 12 (Nov. 19 – 23)—The Social Contract

“What is Enlightenment?” by Immanuel Kant

Thanksgiving Recess—No Class November 21 - 22

Week 13 (Nov. 26 – 30)—Cultural Contact & The Immigrant Experience

Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*: “Religion and World-Maintenance”

Week 14 (Dec. 3 – 7)—American Evangelicalism & the Culture Wars

Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*: “The Problem of Theodicy”

Week 15 (Dec. 10 – 14)—Freedom of Religion & American Exceptionalism

Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*: “Religion and Alienation”

Finals Week

Final Exam due December 19