

Introduction to the Study of Religion

(Rel 202: 3 CR. HUM).

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"I may be a member but I wouldn't identify myself as 'religious.'"

Course Description:

We live in a world filled with religion, and it is our job as friends, relatives, coworkers, professionals, American citizens, and members of a global community to be able to engage this powerful aspect of human life. This task of understanding matters regardless of our own personal relationships to a specific religious tradition. Equipping you for the beginning of this journey is the goal of this course. This class introduces students to the comparative study of religion, an academic discipline within the modern university. In this discipline we seek to UNDERSTAND how religion functions in the lives of individuals and communities and to ANALYZE the complex interrelationships between religion and other aspects of culture. During this semester we will examine the basic tools and vocabulary employed in the academic study of religion.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN AND HOW YOU WILL LEARN IT. **You will leave this class able to begin to answer these “big questions”:**

Why is religion such a powerful force in human life?

How does one go about understanding the religious perspective of another person or group of people?

What can the study of religion teach you about yourself?

You will fulfill the following learning outcomes:

- **GEP Humanities 1:** Read closely, think critically, and write effectively about texts or cultural artifacts that reflect on perennial questions concerning the human condition (such as the search for truth and meaning, the confrontation with suffering and mortality, or the struggle for justice, equality, and human dignity).
- **GEP Humanities 2:** Investigate and thoughtfully respond to a variety of ideas, beliefs or values held by persons in situations other than one’s own.
- **RELIGIOUS STUDIES:** Demonstrate the ability to interpret, describe, and compare religious phenomena as they intersect with diverse historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Assessment of learning outcomes:

Achievement of these learning outcomes will be measured through the following:

Canvas quizzes that assess your knowledge of key terms and key information (GEP 2, Religious Studies).

Short answer questions that ask you to apply specific religious studies ideas to a particular example (GEP 1 and 2, Religious Studies).

Interactive Class Activities such as synchronous Zoom discussions, polls, discussion forum posts, and modalities such as Flipgrid (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, Religious Studies).

3-Step Worksheets (details will be explained during course) that teach you to bracket your own initial response to religious/cultural difference and engage in interpretation using religious studies ideas (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, Religious Studies).

Essay questions that will ask you to construct your own analysis of a religious situation using ideas and methods from a Religious Studies framework (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, Religious Studies).

Explanation of Alignment with Learning Outcomes

Religions, almost by definition, center on "perennial questions concerning the human condition" because at their root religions help people to deal with being alive (GEP Humanities 1, Religious Studies). You will learn specific Religious Studies methods for encountering, analyzing, and responding to a diverse set of religious situations (GEP Humanities 2, Religious Studies) in a way that demonstrates an awareness of the importance of placing a specific example in its specific historical, social, and cultural context (Religious Studies).

Grading and Student Expectations

Canvas quizzes: 20%

Short Answer Questions: 10%

Graded Discussion Forums: 5%

3-Step Worksheets: 10%

Unit 1 Essay: 10%

Unit 2 Essay: 10%

Unit 3 Essay: 10%

Final Essay: 10%

Participation: 10%. You must actively participate in our class at least 20 times during the semester. Active participation is defined as one of the following:

- Attending synchronous Zoom sessions and participating in discussions with other students.
- Contributing to class Flipgrids or assigned discussion forum threads.
- Writing a relevant, thoughtful paragraph-length comment in your Canvas Discussion Group workspace.

At the end of the semester you will need to upload a self-evaluation about your participation in this course. This will function as your own self-evaluation of the participation grade you feel you deserve for the semester. I will then take this self-evaluation into account when determining your participation grade.

Percentage to Letter Grade Conversion

A: 94-100, A-: 90-93, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+: 77-79, C: 73-76.
C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 65-66, F: 64 or lower.

Course Structure

This course is delivered entirely online through Canvas and related tools such as Zoom. This syllabus does ***not*** contain the actual topic and assignments of the course. Under the Important Course Materials module in Canvas you will find an outline of the structure of this course. Week-by-week assignments are found within Canvas modules (e.g. Week 1 Module, Week 2 Module). Materials should be prepared BEFORE the date of the class for which they are assigned. Actual assignments will appear on the Canvas calendar at least a week in advance of their due date.

Office Hours

Office hours will be through Zoom at the following times: Monday 3-5, Friday 1-2, and by appointment. Let me know when you would like to meet (either during an office hour or at another time) and I will send you a Zoom invitation.

Text Rental

The Religion Toolkit by John Morreal and Tamara Sohn.

Text Purchase

Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia by Dennis Covington. Da Capo Press, 2009. **ISBN-10:** 0306818361; **ISBN-13:** 978-0306818363. Other editions (including digital) are fine but be sure to check whether the page numbers match.

Course Policies

Assignment Submission and Late Work Policy

All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Canvas unless otherwise instructed. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested *before the due date*. Be sure to pay close attention to deadlines—there will be no make-up assignments or quizzes, or late work accepted without a compelling reason and instructor approval. If such a reason exists, please let me know as soon as possible and we will figure it out together. **I am always ready to work with students who are struggling.** Without instructor permission, late or missing assignments may affect the student's grade.

Course Technology Requirements

- View this website to see [minimum recommended computer and internet configurations for Canvas](#).
- You will also need access to the following tools to participate in this course.
 - Laptop, tablet with keyboard, or desktop computer
 - webcam
 - microphone
 - printer
 - a stable internet connection (don't rely on cellular)

Protecting your Data and Privacy

UW-System approved tools meet security, privacy, and data protection standards. For a list of approved tools, visit this website.

<https://www.wisconsin.edu/dle/external-application-integration-requests/>

Tools not listed on the website linked above may not meet security, privacy, and data protection standards. If you have questions about tools, contact the UWSP IT Service Desk at 715-346-4357.

Note: in our course we will be using the programs Flipgrid and Padlet, which fall into this category.

Here are steps you can take to protect your data and privacy.

- Use different usernames and passwords for each service you use
- Do not use your UWSP username and password for any other services
- Use secure versions of websites whenever possible (HTTPS instead of HTTP)
- Have updated antivirus software installed on your devices

This course requires posting of work online that is viewable only by your classmates. None of the work submitted online will be shared publicly. Some assignments require account creation for online programs. The instructor of this course will not share your academic records (grades, student IDs). Confidentiality of student work is imperative, so you should not share the work of your peers publicly without their permission. By participating in these assignments, you are giving consent to sharing of your work with others in this class and you recognize there is a small risk of your work being shared online beyond the purposes of this course. Examples of additional risks include data mining by the company providing the service, selling of your email to third parties, and release of ownership of data shared through the tool. If you elect to not participate in these online assignments due to confidentiality concerns, then an alternate assignment will be offered to you. **[UWSP Handbook Chapter 9 Section 5]**

Technology Support

- Visit with a [Student Technology Tutor](#)
- Seek assistance from the [IT Service Desk](#) (Formerly HELP Desk)
 - o IT Service Desk Phone: 715-346-4357 (HELP)
 - o IT Service Desk Email: techhelp@uwsp.edu

Help Resources

Tutoring	Advising	Safety and General Support	Health
Tutoring and Learning Center helps with Study Skills, Writing, Technology, Math, & Science. 018 Albertson Hall, ext 3568	Academic and Career Advising Center, 320 Albertson Hall, ext 3226	Dean of Students Office, 212 Old Main, ext. 2611	Counseling Center, Delzell Hall, ext. 3553. Health Care, Delzell Hall, ext. 4646

Inclusivity Statement

My goal in this course is to create and maintain a learning community that feels welcoming to students from all different kinds of backgrounds and experiences. Diversity (of sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture) makes our learning better, but only if our class feels like a safe space for learning and growth. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

If you have experienced a bias incident (an act of conduct, speech, or expression to which a bias motive is evident as a contributing factor regardless of whether the act is criminal) at UWSP, you have the right to report it using this [link](#). You may also contact the Dean of Students office directly at dos@uwsp.edu.

Incomplete Policy

An incomplete will only be assigned if extenuating circumstances prohibit normal completion of the course and it must be completed within the following semester. If necessary, I will refer the student petition to the Dean of Students office.

Netiquette Guidelines¹

Netiquette is a set of rules for behaving properly online. Your instructor and fellow students wish to foster a safe online learning environment. All opinions and experiences, no matter how different or controversial they may be perceived, must be respected in the tolerant spirit of academic discourse. You are encouraged to comment, question, or critique an idea but you are not to attack an individual. Working as a community of learners, we can build a polite and respectful course community. The following netiquette tips will enhance our learning:

- Do not dominate any discussion.
- Give other students the opportunity to join in the discussion.
- Do not use offensive language. Present ideas appropriately.
- Be cautious in using Internet language. For example, do not capitalize all letters since this suggests shouting.
- Popular emoticons such as 😊 or / can be helpful but do not overdo or overuse them.
- Never make fun of someone's ability to read or write.
- Share tips with other students.
- Keep an "open-mind" and be willing to express even your minority opinion. Minority opinions have to be respected.
- Think and edit before you push the "Send" button.
- Do not hesitate to ask for feedback.
- Using humor is acceptable.

Religious Beliefs Accommodation

It is UW System policy ([UWS 22](#)) to reasonably accommodate your sincerely held religious beliefs with respect to all examinations and other academic requirements.

You will be permitted to make up an exam or other academic requirement at another time or by an alternative method, without any prejudicial effect, if:

- There is a scheduling conflict between your sincerely held religious beliefs and taking the exam or meeting the academic requirements; and
- You have notified your instructor within the first three weeks of the beginning of classes (first week of summer or interim courses) of the

¹ Adapted from: Mintu-Wimsatt, A., Kernek, C., & Lozada, H. R. (2010). *Netiquette: Make it part of your syllabus*. Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 6(1). Retrieved from http://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt_0310.htm and Shea, V. (1994). Netiquette. Albion.com. Retrieved from: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/>.

specific days or dates that you will request relief from an examination or academic requirement.

- Your instructor will accept the sincerity of your religious beliefs at face value and keep your request confidential.
- Your instructor will schedule a make-up exam or requirement before or after the regularly scheduled exam or requirement.
- You may file any complaints regarding compliance with this policy in the Equity and Affirmative Action Office.

Title IX

UW-Stevens Point is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and institutional policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In the event that you choose to disclose information about having survived sexual violence, including harassment, rape, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, and specify that this violence occurred while a student at UWSP, federal and state laws mandate that I, as your instructor, notify the Title IX Coordinator/Office of the Dean of Students.

Please see the information on the [Dean of Students webpage](#) for information on making confidential reports of misconduct or interpersonal violence, as well as campus and community resources available to students. For more information see the [Title IX page](#).

Other Policies

Absences due to Military Service

As stated in the UWSP Catalog, you will not be penalized for class absence due to unavoidable or legitimate required military obligations, or medical appointments at a VA facility, [not to exceed two \(2\) weeks](#) unless special permission is granted by the instructor. You are responsible for notifying faculty members of such circumstances as far in advance as possible and for providing documentation to the Office of the Dean of Students to verify the reason for the absence. The faculty member is responsible to provide reasonable accommodations or opportunities to make up exams or other course assignments that have an impact on the course grade. For absences due to being deployed for active duty, please refer to the [Military Call-Up Instructions for Students](#).

Academic Honesty Policy & Procedures

Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures

UWSP 14.01 Statement of principles

The board of regents, administrators, faculty, academic staff and students of the university of Wisconsin system believe that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the university of Wisconsin system. The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions.

UWSP 14.03 Academic misconduct subject to disciplinary action.

- (1) Academic misconduct is an act in which a student:
 - (a) Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
 - (b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
 - (c) Forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
 - (d) Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
 - (e) Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; or
 - (f) Assists other students in any of these acts.

- (2) Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to: cheating on an examination; collaborating with others in work to be presented, contrary to the stated rules of the course; submitting a paper or assignment as one's own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another; submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas; stealing examinations or course materials; submitting, if contrary to the rules of a course, work previously presented in another course; tampering with the laboratory experiment or computer program of another student; knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above, including assistance in an arrangement whereby any work, classroom performance, examination or other activity is submitted or performed by a person other than the student under whose name the work is submitted or performed.

Clery Act

The US Department of Education requires universities to disclose and publish campus crime statistics, security information, and fire safety information annually. Statistics for the three previous calendar years and policy statements are released on or before October 1st in our [Annual Security Report](#). Another requirement of the Clery Act is that the campus community must be given timely warnings of ongoing safety threats and immediate/emergency notifications. For more information about when and how these notices will be sent out, please see our [Jeanne Clery Act](#) page.

Commit to Integrity

As a student in this course (and at this university) you are expected to maintain high degrees of professionalism, commitment to active learning and participation in this class and also integrity in your behavior in and out of the classroom.

Confidentiality

Learning requires risk-taking and sharing ideas. Please keep your classmates' ideas and experiences confidential outside the classroom unless permission has been granted to share them.

Copyright infringement

This is the act of exercising, without permission or legal authority, one or more of the exclusive rights granted to the copyright owner under section 106 of the Copyright Act. Each year students violate these laws and campus policies, putting themselves at risk of federal prosecution. For more information about what to expect if you are caught, or to take preventive measures to keep your computing device clean, visit our [copyright page](#).

Dropping UWSP Courses

It is the student's responsibility to understand when they need to consider unenrolling from a course. Refer to the UWSP [Academic Calendar](#) for dates and deadlines for registration. After this period, a serious and compelling reason is required to drop from the course. Serious and compelling reasons includes: (1) documented and significant change in work hours, leaving student unable to attend class, or (2) documented and severe physical/mental illness/injury to the student or student's family.

Drug Free Schools and Communities Act

The Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (DFSCA) requires institutions of higher education to establish policies that address unlawful possession, use, or distribution of alcohol and illicit drugs. The DFSCA also requires the establishment of a drug and alcohol prevention program. The Center for Prevention lists information about alcohol and drugs, their effects, and the legal consequences if found in possession of these substances. [Center for Prevention – DFSCA](#)

Emergency Procedures

- See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.”

Equal Access for Students with Disabilities

UW-Stevens Point will modify academic program requirements as necessary to ensure that they do not discriminate against qualified applicants or students with disabilities. The modifications should not affect the substance of educational programs or compromise academic standards; nor should they intrude upon academic freedom. Examinations or other procedures used for evaluating students' academic achievements may be adapted. The results of such evaluation must demonstrate the student's achievement in the academic activity, rather than describe his/her disability.

If modifications are required due to a disability, please inform the instructor and contact the [Disability and Assistive Technology Center](#) to complete an Accommodations Request form. Phone: 346-3365 or Room 609 Albertson Hall.

FERPA

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) provides students with a right to protect, review, and correct their student records. Staff of the university with a clear *educational need to know* may also have to access to certain student records. Exceptions to the law include parental notification in cases of alcohol or drug use, and in case of a health or safety concern. FERPA also permits a school to disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education records, without consent, to another school in which the student seeks or intends to enroll.

Lecture materials and recordings for Rel 100 Fall 2020 are protected intellectual property at UW-Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.