

## REL 202: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Section M01, UW-Stevens Point at Marshfield  
2:00 – 3:15 PM, Monday and Wednesday

*Instructor:* Dr. Ryan T. O’Leary

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*Office:* Room 311, UW Stevens Point at Wausau

*Zoom Office Hours:* 2:00 – 3:15 PM, Monday and Wednesday



**Description:** This course will introduce students to two of the most important theories in the academic study of religion and will provide students with 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. explain classic theoretical approaches to the study of religion.

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

1. broaden their overall cultural awareness by investigating and thoughtfully responding to a variety of ideas, beliefs or values held by persons in situations other than one’s own;
2. practice and improve their close reading and writing skills;
3. use theoretical models to interpret concrete phenomena.

**Critical Thinking Learning Outcomes:** This course is designed as part of the UWSP Critical Thinking Collaborative. The critical thinking collaborative works with instructors from across the University who are interested in helping their students master critical thinking skills and dispositions. Having taken this course, students will be able to:

1. recognize critical thinking as a process of identifying, analyzing, and constructing reasoning;
2. construct and evaluate their own analyses of different religious texts, artifacts, or phenomena.

**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.

**Video Lectures & Assignments:** Each week, there will be two virtual “class sessions” posted on Canvas before class is scheduled to begin that day. Each session will include one or more video lectures, other video resources, and activities or discussions. To proceed in the class session, you will need to do each task in order. Important course information will also be presented in the video lectures. You will have 48 hours after class-time to finish each online class session.

## READING & FILM LIST

### For Purchase

*The Sacred and the Profane*, by Mircea Eliade

*The Sacred Canopy*, by Peter L. Berger

### Required Readings found on Canvas

Genesis, chapters 1 – 12

The Gospel of Mark

Selections from the *Bhagavad Gita*

"Civil Religion in American Schools," by Adam Gamoran

### Required Films found on Kanopy (<https://uwsp.kanopy.com>)

*To the Land of Bliss*, by Wen-Jie Qin

*The Split Horn*, by Taggart Seigel

### Recommended Readings found on Canvas

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 America," by Robert Bellah

"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

*The Land of Bliss Sutra*

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

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

Qur'an, sura 2

"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

"What is Enlightenment," by Immanuel Kant

"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.**

*Close Reading Worksheets:* Ten 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 distributed on Canvas the day of the exercise. It is therefore worth your effort to keep up with the assigned readings. Sometimes you will need to complete the exercise before you can watch the video lecture; sometimes you will need to watch the lecture to do the exercise. Each worksheet submission will be worth up to 5 points; the lowest 3 scores will be dropped.

**Total: 35 points**

*Discussion Boards:* Ten times throughout the semester you will be given discussion board prompts on Canvas. Discussions will provide space to think about key features of Western monotheism, Eastern religions, and religion in America alongside different theoretical perspectives. Each week marked “Discuss Online” in the schedule, you should do one or both these things: (a) *post* a formal and thoughtful answer to the discussion thread prompt; or (b) *reply* to at least two of your classmates’ posts or replies. Posts will be graded based on engagement with readings, comprehension, and application of important ideas. Replies will be graded on how well they move a conversation forward or spark new avenues of thought. Each post or new prompt will be worth up to 4 points; each response will be worth up to 2 points. Each discussion is worth up to 5 points. The lowest 3 scores will be dropped. And remember, you can always “keep the conversation going” to boost your score up to 5 on a discussion board.

**Total: 35 points**

*Essays:* Three times throughout the semester you will be given an essay assignment asking you to apply a specific theoretical framework to concrete religious phenomena. Essays will ask you to draw on material from assigned readings and from previous assignments. You will be given a copy of the essay assignments one week before it is due. Each essay will be worth 10 points.

**Total: 30 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. 2 – 4)—Introduction**

No reading

##### **Week 2 (Sept. 7 – 11)—Creation & Prophecy in Hebrew Scripture**

Genesis, chapters 1 – 12

Labor Day—No Class Monday

Discuss Online #1

##### **Week 3 (Sept. 14 – 18)—Prophets & the Messiah: An Introduction to Christianity**

The Gospel of Mark

(Recommended readings: John 1 – 8, 18 – 21; Acts 1 – 9)

Discuss Online #2

##### **Week 4 (Sept. 21 – 25)—Introducing Eliade & Phenomenology of Religion**

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

Discuss Online #3

##### **Week 5 (Sept. 28 – Oct. 2)—Introduction to Islam, Ancient & Modern**

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

(Recommended reading: The Qur'an, sura 2)

PART TWO

PHENOMENOLOGY OF RELIGION; HINDU & BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHIES

**Week 6 (Oct. 5 – 9)—Introducing Hinduism**

No reading

Essay 1 due—No Class Monday

Discuss Online #4

**Week 7 (Oct. 12 – 16)—Hinduism to Buddhism**

Selections from the *Bhagavad Gita*

Discuss Online #5

**Week 8 (Oct. 19 – 23)—Time, Nature, & Pure Land Buddhism**

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

(Recommended reading: *The Land of Bliss Sutra*)

Discuss Online #6

**Week 9 (Oct. 26 – Oct. 30)—Peace, Conflict, & Rituals of Initiation**

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

(Recommended reading: “The Heart of Practice,” by Thich Nhat Hanh)

PART THREE

SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION; RELIGION IN AMERICA

**Week 10 (Nov. 2 – 6)—Introducing Sociology & *The Sacred Canopy***

No reading

Essay 2 due—No class Monday

Discuss Online #7

**Week 11 (Nov. 9 – 13)—Sociology & Christianity in America**

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

Discuss Online #8

**Week 12 (Nov. 16 – 20)—American Civil Religion**

“Civil Religion in American Schools” by Adam Gamoran

Discuss Online #9

**Week 13 (Nov. 23 – 25)—Religion & Cultural Contact**

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

**Week 14 (Nov. 30 – Dec. 3)—Nomos & Anomy**

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

Discuss Online #10

**Week 15 (Dec. 7 – 11)—The American Culture Wars**

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

**Finals Week**

Final Essay Due

## THE SACRED & THE PROFANE – FOCUSED READING

*While reading the entire text is optimal, the following selections are essential.  
If you cannot read the entire text, make sure to read these carefully.*

### Introduction

Opening

“When the Sacred Manifests Itself”

### Chapter I: Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred

“Homogeneity of Space and Hierophany”

“Theophanies and Signs”

“The Center of the World”

“Some Conclusions”

### Chapter II: Sacred Time and Myths

“Profane Duration and Sacred Time”

“Templum – Tempus”

“Regeneration Through Relation to the Time of Origins”

“Periodically Becoming Contemporary with the Gods”

“Sacred History, History, Historicism”

### Chapter III: The Sacredness of Nature and Cosmic Religion

Opening

“The Celestial Sacred and the Uranian Gods”

“The Remote God”

“The Religious Experience of Life”

“The Perenniality of Celestial Symbols”

“Terra Mater”

“Other Cosmic Hierophanies”

### Chapter IV: Human Existence and Sanctified Life

“Existence Open to the World”

“Rites of Passage”

“Second Birth and Spiritual Generation”

“Sacred and Profane in the Modern World”

## **THE BHAGAVAD GITA – FOCUSED READING**

*While reading the entire text is optimal, the following selections are essential.  
If you cannot read the entire text, make sure to read these carefully.*

The First Teaching: Arjuna's Dejection

The Second Teaching: Philosophy and Spiritual Discipline

The Third Teaching: Discipline of Action

The Eleventh Teaching: The Vision of Krishna's Totality

The Thirteenth Teaching: Knowing the Field



## CONCERNS & RESOURCES

### Academic Concerns

Being a Pointer means going to class regularly, doing your work outside of class, and asking for help if there are questions or concerns.

*Academic Misconduct:* Copying off someone's test, plagiarism, claiming credit for work that is not yours, and all other forms of academic misconduct are not tolerated at UW-Stevens Point. If a student is confused about what exactly academic misconduct is, there is information available regarding rules and procedures for the [process](#). You can also visit with your faculty or learn how to cite the work of others at the [Writing Lab](#).

*Academic Success:* Your full-time job at UW-Stevens Point is *to be a student*. Being successful depend a lot on how much effort and time you invest. It also asking questions or finding support if you feel lost. We have an amazing [Tutoring-Learning Center](#) if you want to learn how to be a better student or need subject-specific help.

*Disability Services:* UW-Stevens Point is committed to supporting students with disabilities the academic and other accommodations, plus the auxiliary aids necessary to ensure your success. To learn more, check out their [site](#) or visit them in Albertson Hall, room 609 (library building).

### Other Concerns and Resources

Responding to student concerns with care, concern, and resources is critical in supporting the success of our students and campus community. Here is a brief list of helpful resources.

#### Absence from Class

Contact faculty directly or if a crisis/emergency  
Office of the Dean of Students  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

#### Academic Difficulty

Academic & Career Advising Center  
715-346-3226, [uwsp.edu/acac](http://uwsp.edu/acac)

Disability Services & Assistive Technology  
715-346-3365, [uwsp.edu/dtac](http://uwsp.edu/dtac)

Tutoring-Learning Center  
715-346-3568, [uwsp.edu/tlc](http://uwsp.edu/tlc)

Students should visit with faculty of the course in which they are having trouble.

#### Add/drop Class; Withdrawal Questions

Office of the Registrar  
715-346-4301 [uwsp.edu/registrar](http://uwsp.edu/registrar)

Students should visit with their Academic Advisor.

#### Academic Misconduct

Faculty for the specific course or Office of the Dean of Students to discuss process  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

#### Alcohol or Drug Use

Center for Prevention

715-346-3121, [uwsp.edu/dos/aoda-ipv](http://uwsp.edu/dos/aoda-ipv)

#### Bias or Hate Incidents

Office of the Dean of Students to report  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

Diversity and College Access  
715-346-4076, [uwsp.edu/dca](http://uwsp.edu/dca)

#### Concerning Behavior

Office of the Dean of Students  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

#### Employment

Campus Activities and Student Engagement  
715-346-4700, [uwsp.edu/centers/case](http://uwsp.edu/centers/case)

#### Family Crisis or Emergency

Office of the Dean of Students  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

#### Financial Insecurity

Enrollment Services Center/Financial Aid  
715-346-3300; [uwsp.edu/enrollmentservices](http://uwsp.edu/enrollmentservices)

Emergency Grants  
Office of the Dean of Student  
715-346-2611; [Grant Application Form](#)

Financial Coaching Program  
UW-Stevens Point School of Business and Economics  
[Website](#) or email: [fincoach@uwsp.edu](mailto:fincoach@uwsp.edu)

Financial Literacy - Online  
[GradReady Program](#)

Financial Literacy - In Person  
Financial Literacy Association (Student Org.)  
College of Professional Studies, [finlit@uwsp.edu](mailto:finlit@uwsp.edu)

#### **Food Resources**

The Cupboard - Stevens Point campus  
715-346-4700, [uwsp.edu/centers/case](http://uwsp.edu/centers/case)  
[List of food resources in the community in Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wausau](#)

#### **Housing/Roommate Concerns**

Residential Living (your Hall Director first)  
715-346-3511 (central office), [uwsp.edu/resliving](http://uwsp.edu/resliving)

#### **Identity and Difference**

Diversity and College Access  
715-346-4076, [uwsp.edu/dca](http://uwsp.edu/dca)

#### **Involvement**

Campus Activities and Student Engagement  
715-346-4700, [uwsp.edu/centers/case](http://uwsp.edu/centers/case)

#### **Legal Questions**

Student Legal Services  
715-346-4282, [uwsp.edu/dos/sls](http://uwsp.edu/dos/sls)

#### **Loss of Family Member or Friend**

Office of the Dean of Students  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

Counseling Center (confidential services)  
715-346-3553, [uwsp.edu/counseling](http://uwsp.edu/counseling)

#### **Mental Health Concerns**

Counseling Center (confidential services)  
715-346-3553, [uwsp.edu/counseling](http://uwsp.edu/counseling)

Mental Health Crisis Line (outside agency)  
866-317-9362 for after hours mental health support

#### **Missing Student**

Office of the Dean of Students  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

University Police  
715-346-3456, [uwsp.edu/protsv](http://uwsp.edu/protsv)

#### **Non-academic Misconduct**

Office of the Dean of Students  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

#### **Physical Health / Injury**

Student Health Service (confidential resource)  
715-346-4646, [uwsp.edu/stuhealth](http://uwsp.edu/stuhealth)

#### **Procedural Issue or Conflict**

Office of the Dean of Students  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

#### **Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Stalking, or Harassment**

Office of the Dean of Students to report  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)

CAP Services - Stevens Point (confidential advocacy services, outside agency)

715-340-7882, 715-346-4039, 800-472-3377 (toll free), [kpetrick@capmail.org](mailto:kpetrick@capmail.org), [capservices.org](http://capservices.org)

PDC - Marshfield (confidential advocacy services, outside agency)

715-421-1509 or 844-210-8899 (toll free)

The Women's Community - Wausau (confidential advocacy services, outside agency)

715-842-8323 or 888-665-1234 (toll free)

Center for Prevention (confidential services)  
715-346-3121, [uwsp.edu/dos/aoda-ipv](http://uwsp.edu/dos/aoda-ipv)

Counseling Center (confidential services)  
715-346-3553, [uwsp.edu/counseling](http://uwsp.edu/counseling)

University Police and Security Services to report  
715-346-3456, [uwsp.edu/protsv](http://uwsp.edu/protsv)

#### **Title IX**

Haeryon Kim, 116 Old Main, 715-346-3020, [hakim@uwsp.edu](mailto:hakim@uwsp.edu), [Title IX site](#)

#### **Transportation**

[UWSP Rideshare Facebook Page](#)  
[Stevens Point Bus Route](#)  
[Bus connections from Stevens Point](#)

#### **Questions or Concerns Not Listed Here**

Office of the Dean of Students  
715-346-2611, [uwsp.edu/dos](http://uwsp.edu/dos)