

REL 202: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Section M01, UW-Stevens Point at Marshfield
12:30 – 1:45 PM, Monday and Wednesday, Room 320

Section W01, UW-Stevens Point at Wausau
3:30 – 4:45 PM, Tuesday and Thursday, Room 220

Instructor: Dr. Ryan T. O'Leary

Email: roleary@uwsp.edu

Office: Room 311, UW Stevens Point at Wausau

Office Hours: 12:30 – 3:00 PM Tuesday and Thursday, and by appointment



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. understand 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 and communication 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.

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 cellphones 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.

READING LIST

For Purchase

Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*

Other Required Readings (found on Canvas)

Genesis, chapters 1 – 12

The Gospel of Mark

"Civil Religion in America," by Robert Bellah

Selections from the *Bhagavad Gita*

Recommended Supplemental 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 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

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

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

EVALUATION

Grading for this course has two 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 or the next. (These will not be announced in advance; they will be distributed in class. It is therefore 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 or scan your responses and submit them on Canvas *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 two scores will be dropped.

Total: 40 points

Exams: Three online exams will be given 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. Each exam is open-book and cumulative. Essays will ask you to draw on material from reading and from previous assignments. You will be given a copy of the essay assignments 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. 2 – 6)—Introduction

No reading

Week 2 (Sept. 9 – 13)—Creation & Prophecy in Hebrew Scripture

Genesis, chapters 1 – 12

Week 3 (Sept. 16 – 20)—Prophets & the Messiah: An Introduction to Christianity

The Gospel of Mark

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

Week 4 (Sept. 23 – 27)—Introducing Eliade & Phenomenology of Religion

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

Week 5 (Sept. 30 – Oct. 4)—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. 7 – 11)—Introducing Hinduism

Exam 1—No Class Monday or Tuesday

No reading

Week 7 (Oct. 14 – 18)—Hinduism to Buddhism

Selections from the *Bhagavad Gita*

Week 8 (Oct. 21 – 25)—Time, Nature, & Pure Land Buddhism

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

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

Week 9 (Oct. 28 – Nov. 1)—Peace, Conflict, & Rituals of Initiation

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

(Recommended reading: “The Heart of Practice”)

PART THREE

SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION; RELIGION IN AMERICA

Week 10 (Nov. 4 – 8)—Introducing Sociology & *The Sacred Canopy*

Exam 2—No class Monday or Tuesday

No reading

Week 11 (Nov. 11 – 15)—Sociology & Religion in America

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

Week 12 (Nov. 18 – 22)—American Civil Religion

“Civil Religion in America,” by Robert Bellah

(Recommended reading: “Civil Religion in American Schools”)

Week 13 (Nov. 25 – 29)—Religion & Cultural Contact

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

Thanksgiving Break—No class Wednesday or Thursday

Week 14 (Dec. 2 – 6)—Nomos & Anomy

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

Week 15 (Dec. 9 – 13)—The American Culture Wars

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

Finals Week

Final Exam Dates to Be Announced

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

Academic Difficulty

Academic & Career Advising Center
715-346-3226, uwsp.edu/acac

Disability Services & Assistive Technology
715-346-3365, uwsp.edu/dtac

Tutoring-Learning Center
715-346-3568, 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

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

Alcohol or Drug Use

Center for Prevention

715-346-3121, uwsp.edu/dos/aoda-ipv

Bias or Hate Incidents

Office of the Dean of Students to report
715-346-2611, uwsp.edu/dos

Diversity and College Access
715-346-4076, uwsp.edu/dca

Concerning Behavior

Office of the Dean of Students
715-346-2611, uwsp.edu/dos

Employment

Campus Activities and Student Engagement
715-346-4700, uwsp.edu/centers/case

Family Crisis or Emergency

Office of the Dean of Students
715-346-2611, uwsp.edu/dos

Financial Insecurity

Enrollment Services Center/Financial Aid
715-346-3300; 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

Financial Literacy - Online
[GradReady Program](#)

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

Food Resources

The Cupboard - Stevens Point campus
715-346-4700, 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

Identity and Difference

Diversity and College Access
715-346-4076, uwsp.edu/dca

Involvement

Campus Activities and Student Engagement
715-346-4700, uwsp.edu/centers/case

Legal Questions

Student Legal Services
715-346-4282, uwsp.edu/dos/sls

Loss of Family Member or Friend

Office of the Dean of Students
715-346-2611, uwsp.edu/dos

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

Mental Health Concerns

Counseling Center (confidential services)
715-346-3553, 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

University Police
715-346-3456, uwsp.edu/protsv

Non-academic Misconduct

Office of the Dean of Students
715-346-2611, uwsp.edu/dos

Physical Health / Injury

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

Procedural Issue or Conflict

Office of the Dean of Students
715-346-2611, 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

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

715-340-7882, 715-346-4039, 800-472-3377 (toll free), kpetrick@capmail.org, 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

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

University Police and Security Services to report
715-346-3456, uwsp.edu/protsv

Title IX

Haeryon Kim, 116 Old Main, 715-346-3020, 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