

Religion 202: Intro to the Study of Religion (Fall 2019)



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

Dr. Luke Whitmore; whitmor@uwsp.edu
Office (CCC 417) Hours: Wed. 1:30-4:30 and by appointment

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.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course you will have been given the tools to accomplish the following:

- Be able to explain and apply our “Three Step Rules of Engagement” (identifying and bracketing biases, empathetic engagement, analysis and informed response) when encountering diverse forms of religion in the world.
- Be able to identify key elements and features that constitute the category of religion (e.g., myth, ritual, symbol, etc.) and apply these elements and features in the description and empathetic investigation of diverse religions.
- Demonstrate an ability to read carefully, think critically and communicate clearly (in oral and written forms) about religious phenomenon, theories of religion, and the problem of how to define religion.
- Practice civil discourse, meaning to engage in oral and written communication about religion in ways that are accurate, respectful, permit disagreement, and lead to greater understanding.
- Obtain reliable information on different topics related to the study of religion.

Grading and Assessments

Participation and Preparation (includes group presentations and debate-related preparation):10%

3-Step Worksheets: 5%

Pop Quizzes: 20%

4 Short Essays (minimum 600-800 of your own words) -- one can be rewritten for a higher grade @10% each = 40%

Oral Presentations: 10%

Take-Home final (cumulative): 15%

Short Essays

Essay guidelines and a grading rubric will be provided for each assignment. Good essays will demonstrate the following:

- Correct understanding of concepts and methods
- appropriate application of examples to illustrate concepts and methods
- evidence of critical thinking and clear argumentation
- clarity and organization of the essay, grammar, spelling, etc.

Oral presentations:

Each student must give a *3-5 minute oral presentation* on a specific religious phenomenon, keyed to topics such as myth, ritual, gods, religious leaders, symbols.

- There must be at least one specific slide in your presentation that explicitly applies specific religious studies terms to the material you have found.
- Students must obtain reliable information about their topic, using at least three sources *including one source that is drawn from library-based resources*. “Library based” means resources physically found in the library or accessible through the library home page, such as the *Encyclopedia of Religion*.
- Students will present their material in a way that connects with class content and will make use of appropriate visual aids.
- Students will avoid distracting body language, speak clearly, and make eye contact with audience.
- By the beginning of class on the day of the presentation, you must submit a *one-page outline of the presentation, clarifying the main idea of your presentation and including the citations* (in appropriate format) of the sources you used. This document should be typed and grammatically clean. Upload one copy to the Canvas “Oral Presentations” Assignment and paste the text into the discussion forum thread entitled “Outlines of Student Oral Presentations” so others can access your sources if needed.

Pop Quizzes

Pop quizzes will be based on Study Questions. You should begin each class where there has been a study question by writing out your answers to the study questions on a piece of paper that you could potentially hand in. I may or may not collect what you have written on any given day. If the syllabus has specifically directed you to write out an answer to a question and bring it to class then that might replace the pop quiz. Quizzes can only be made up in the case of an excused absence, in which place an alternate assignment will replace the quiz.

Class participation and preparation:

- You should come to class having completed the assignments for the day and ready to actively and thoughtfully participate in class discussions or small group discussions.
- Participation includes bringing the assigned reading to class for reference.
- Students will encourage each other to practice civil discourse during our class discussions.
- This part of your grade includes debate preparation.

Attendance

Regular attendance is expected.

- 2 or fewer unexcused absences (Excellent) = 90-100%
- 3-6 unexcused absences (Good) = 80-90%
- 6-10 unexcused absences (Poor) = 66-79%
- More than 10 unexcused absences = failing grade for attendance.

Absences will be excused only when the excuse is provided (via email or in person) in advance of the class that will be missed. You should also be sure to upload a note/relevant information (including a copy of emails to me) into the "Absence-Related" Assignment on Canvas. Acceptable reasons for an excused absence are illness, family emergency, or school sponsored trip or athletic competition. If you miss class (excused or unexcused) you should complete the assignments, request and review notes from a colleague, and then come to discuss with me any questions you have about the material. **Note: If you miss more than 5 classes I strongly suggest that we meet in person to discuss how things are going. I have found that repeated absence usually means you are struggling with something.**

Required Texts:

Text Rental

Morreall, John, and Tamara Sonn. *The Religion Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Religious Studies*. 1st ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Text Purchase:

Dennis Covington. *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia*, 2009.

The Whalerider by Witi Ihimaera (any edition).

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

Learning Accommodations

UWSP is committed to providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities and temporary impairments. If you have a disability or acquire a condition during the semester where you need assistance, please contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center on the 6th floor of Albertson Hall (library) as soon as possible. DATC can be reached at 715-346-3365 or DATC@uwsp.edu. <https://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx>

Written Assignments

If you are not able to turn in on time due to particularly extenuating circumstances, some flexibility may be possible. If this is the case, you must have asked and received permission from me no later than the day before the assignment is due. Without permission, a grade penalty will be assigned at my discretion or I may not allow you to submit.

Required Readings

If I do not provide photocopies of an assigned reading not in one of our books, you must print out the reading (you will find PDF versions on Canvas) and bring to class.

Electronics

Tablets or laptops for the purposes of note-taking are fine, with permission. If your smart phone use is causing our collective energy to decrease I will let you know. If it continues to be an issue it will impact your grade.

Assignments

Assignments will change. Be sure to check Canvas before EACH assignment.

I will assume you have reviewed the following policies and guidelines.

Mutual Respect

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Student-Conduct.aspx>

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CH17-UWSP-Updated2018.pdf>

<https://catalog.uwsp.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=422#section-1-communal-bill-of-rights-and-responsibilities>

Academic Misconduct

<http://library.uwsp.edu/guides/vrd/plagiarism.htm>

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/AcademicIntegrityBrochure.pdf>

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/UWS%2014-1.pdf>

Emergency Response Guidance:

- In the event of a medical emergency call 9-1-1 or use the closest Red Emergency Phone. Offer assistance if trained and willing to do so. Guide emergency responders to victim.
- In the event of a tornado warning, proceed to the lowest level interior room without window exposure.
- In the event of a fire alarm, evacuate the building in a calm manner.

Active Shooter/Code React – Run/Escape, Hide, Fight. If trapped hide, lock doors, turn off lights, spread out and remain quiet. Call 9-1-1 when it is safe to do so. Follow instructions of emergency responders. See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.”