Conrad Grebel University College
University of Waterloo
RS 260: How to Study Religion
Winter 2018

Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30-3:50pm
Class Location: Room 1300, CGUC
Instructor: Dr. Alicia Batten
Teaching Assistant: Lisa Rachelle Duggan
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10 am-12 pm
Office Location: Room 2116, CGUC
TA Office Location: PAS 1052
Phone: 519-885-0220 x24246
Email: lrduggan@uwaterloo.ca
Email: abatten@uwaterloo.ca

Course Description
An exploration of the nature of religion through: 1) the history of the study of religion, 2) exposure to varying methods and ways of approaching religious phenomena, and 3) consideration of accounts of religious experience.

One might argue that religions is as old as humanity, yet humans have studied religion “scientifically” for approximately 150 years and the discipline of Religious Studies emerged barely fifty years ago. In this course, we engage a range of religious traditions in an attempt to get at some of the fundamental questions in the study of religion: How do we study it? Can we define religion? How do ordinary people experience religion? How might we approach the dynamic interaction between religion and culture? The course introduces students to some of the fundamental questions about and approaches to the academic study of this elusive phenomenon we call “religion.”

Course Objectives
1. To provide a solid foundation for the academic study of religion, including exploration of some of the methods used for studying it, a discussion of major themes in religious studies, as well as attention to why the study of religion is important.

2. To further develop general religious literacy.
3. To enhance critical academic skills, encourage considered reflection of multiple viewpoints, and to enrich life in general through reading, research, writing, and discussion.

Requirements:

1. **Attendance** – Attendance is required. Missed classes will have a negative effect upon the final mark for the course (2% off the final course mark per unexcused absence). If you have to miss a class because of illness or an emergency, please let the instructor know.

2. **In class writing (10%)** – I will ask the class to write a few sentences about the reading assigned for class on a regular basis. Your writing should include a couple of comments about what you learned from the reading, as well as any questions that you may have. These will be marked pass/fail. You can miss one of these but they cannot be made up.

3. **Quizzes (30%)** – There are three in-class quizzes worth 10% each. Missed quizzes cannot be made up except in the case of serious illness or an emergency. The class will have 30 minutes to write each of them and they will consist of short answers (paragraphs) that both identify something or someone then provide some explanation for why the concept or person is significant for the academic study of religion (how does the concept or person enable people to understand religion better?)

4. **Papers (60%)** – There are three 1250-1500 word papers that are worth 20% each. These papers must be handed in in class in hard copy format.

**Required Reading Materials (available at the bookstore):** Please bring to class as appropriate.


3. Various readings on the LEARN page for the course.

**Web Page:** This course will make use of a WATERLOO LEARN website. This site will provide general information for the course, study guides and grades for term tests. Important announcements such as the cancellation of class due to illness will also be posted there, so please try to check the site before each class, just in case.

**Electronics:** Many studies indicate that taking notes using pen and paper leads to better retention and better marks. Using electronics for purposes other than to take notes is distracting to other students and can negatively affect marks in the course.

**Resources:** There are many resources available on religion in the CGUC library (Milton Good Library on the 3rd floor of Grebel), in the St. Jerome’s Library, the Renison Library, and the Dana Porter Library. You can also take out books from Wilfrid Laurier, which has an extensive Religious Studies collection. The library liaison at Porter is Sandra Keys (skeys@library.uwaterloo.ca) (x32279). The subject guide for Religious Studies is available [here](#).
**Written Assignments:** Papers must be submitted in class in hard copy form. They should be typed, double-spaced, in 12 point font with one inch margins. They should each be 1250-1500 words long and please provide a word count at the end of the paper. They do not require a title page but the pages should be numbered. Footnotes or endnotes or author-date citation should be in Chicago format. If there is a bibliography it should be on a separate page in Chicago format. Each written assignment must be accompanied by a UWaterloo AI Acknowledgement Form.

**Revision of Papers:** If you want to revise a paper after you have received a mark, you can do so. I will average the two marks received on the paper. Sometimes revising involves reworking the paper entirely. *No revisions will be accepted after April 2nd.*

**Late Assignments:** Students are required to complete assignments by the due dates indicated and to hand them in in class. Exceptions are made and extensions given only in the case of illness or family emergency, and permission must be sought before the due date. Late assignments with no excuse receive a penalty of 3% reduction per day late.

**Schedule for Handing in Written Assignments:**

- **First paper due:** February 5th
- **Second paper due:** February 26th
- **Third paper due:** March 19th

**Quiz Schedule**

- January 24th
- March 7th
- April 2nd

**Territorial Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River. For more information about the purpose of territorial acknowledgements, please see the [CAUT Guide to Acknowledging Traditional Territory (PDF)](https://example.com).

**Course Schedule**

**Jan 3** – Introductions and Overview of the Course

**Jan 8** – What is Religion?
Reading: Paul O. Myhre, “What is Religion?” (Chapter 1 in Myhre)

**Jan 10** – How is Religion Studied?
Reading: Debra Majeed, “How is Religion Studied?” (Chapter 2 in Myhre)
Jan 15 – Anthropological Approaches

Jan 17 – Sociological Approaches

Jan 22 – Philosophical Approaches; Theology

Jan 24 - FIRST QUIZ
Phenomenological Approaches and Asceticism
Reading: Bernadette McNary Zak, “Ascetically and Mystically Removed and Engaged” (Chapter 11 in Myhre)

Jan 29 – Psychological Approaches
Reading: Excerpts from Sigmund Freud and William James (on LEARN)

Jan 31 – Sacred Stories
Reading: David C. Ratke, “Origin Stories and Religion: How Are Religions Formed?” (Chapter 3 in Myhre)
Optional: Karl N. Jacobson and Rolf A. Jacobson, “Sacred Words, Stories, Writings, and Books” (Chapter 5 in Myhre)

Feb 5 – FIRST PAPER DUE
Sacred Stories cont’d.

Feb 7 - Material Religion

Feb 12 – Religion and Aesthetics
Reading: S. Brent Plate, “An Aesthetic Approach to Religion” (Chapter 6 in Myhre)
Feb 14 – Guest Lecturer: Dr. Donald Saliers, Candler School of Theology at Emory University

Feb 19-23 – Reading Week

Feb 26 – SECOND PAPER DUE
Film: “Daughters of Wisdom” – Introduction to Questions of Ritual and Gender

Feb 28 – Ritual

March 5 – Challenges to Religion: Gender

March 7 – SECOND QUIZ
Religion and Identity

March 12 – Religion and Science
Reading: S. Brian Stratton, “Studying Science and Religion” (Chapter 13 in Myhre)

March 14 – New Religious Movements – Lecture by Lisa Duggan
Reading: TBA

March 19th – THIRD PAPER DUE
Religion and Violence
Reading: Darlene Fozard Weaver, “Violence and Religion“ (Chapter 8 in Myhre)

March 21 - Civil Religion

March 26 – Religion and Truth Claims
Reading: Dianne L. Oliver, “Religion as ‘Truth Claims’” (Chapter 4 in Myhre)

March 28 – Revisiting Definitions of Religion – Lecture by Lisa Duggan
April 2 – THIRD QUIZ - Course Review

UWaterloo Policies

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

Other sources of information for students:

Note for students with learning differences: The AccessAbility Services (AAS) office, located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AAS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Counselling Services: Counselling Services provides free confidential counselling, in both individual and group sessions, with qualified professionals to help registered students, faculty and staff with personal concerns, educational career decisions, and strategies to studies and exams: www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocs, ext. 33528, NH Room 2080.

Accommodation for Illness: A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. More information
can be obtained from Health Services and the form is available in pdf:
https://uwaterloo.ca/health-services/student-medical-clinic/services/verification-illness

The Writing Centre: Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. Make an appointment or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre