

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 \(PDF\)](#).

Conrad Grebel University College University of Waterloo RS 260: How to Study Religion Winter 2019



Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 1-2:20 pm

Class Location: Room 1301, CGUC

Instructor: Dr. Alicia Batten

Office Hours: Mon 10 am-12 pm

Office Location: Room 2116, CGUC

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Teaching Assistant: Ben Szoller

Office Location: PAS 1052

Office Hours: Mon 2:30-3:30; Wed 11:45-12:45

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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 religion 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 the drop box on the LEARN site *before* class starts on the day on which they are due.

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

1. Rodrigues, Hillary and John S. Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.
2. *Courseware Reader: RS 260 – The Study of Religion*. Winter, 2019 (CW)
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 in the LEARN drop box. 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 submit them to the drop box before class begins. 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 6th

Second paper due: February 27th

Third paper due: March 25th

Quiz Schedule

January 28th

March 6th

April 3rd

Course Schedule

Jan 7 – Introductions and Overview of the Course

Jan 9 – Basic Questions in the Study of Religion
Reading: Rodrigues and Harding, 1-17.

Jan 14 – Philosophical Approaches
Reading: Rodrigues and Harding, 18-48.

Jan 16 – Theological Approaches

Reading: Nicholas M. Healy, “What is Systematic Theology?” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11 (2009): 24-39 (in **CW**).

Jan 21 – Anthropological Approaches

Reading: Rodrigues and Harding, 49-66. Horace Miner, “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 503-507 (in **CW**).

Jan 23 – Sociological Approaches

Reading: Rodrigues and Harding, 66-73 (with other excerpts to be distributed in class).

Jan 28 - FIRST QUIZ

Phenomenological Approaches

Reading: Rodrigues and Harding, 74-83.

Jan 30 – Psychological Approaches

Reading: Rodrigues and Harding, 83-103 (with other excerpts to be distributed in class).

Feb 4 – Myth

Reading: Alan Segal, “Myth and Ritual.” Pages 355-66 in John Hinnells, ed., *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005 (in **CW**). **Note that you only need to read to page 366 which is about half way through the article.** In the Bible (you can find one online) read Genesis 1:1-2:3, then Genesis 2:4-3:24.

Feb 6 – FIRST PAPER DUE – *Dr. Jeff Wilson will be with us for the latter part of the class. He has written a book called Mindful America. New York: OUP, 2014.*

Sacred Stories cont’d.

Reading: Thomas King, “‘You’ll Never Believed What Happened’ Is Always a Great Way to Start.” Pages 1-29 from Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2003 (in **CW**).

Feb 11 - Ritual

Reading: Read the rest of Alan Segal’s essay on Myth and Ritual (pp. 366-78) (in **CW**); Amanda Porterfield, “Islamic Salat.” Pages 43-54 from *The Power of Religion: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998 (in **CW**)

Feb 13 – Material Religion

Reading: Colleen McDannell, “Interpreting Things: Material Culture Studies and American Religion,” *Religion* 21 (1991): 371-87 (in **CW**).

Feb 18-22 – Reading Week

Feb 25 – Religion and Aesthetics

Reading: S. Brent Plate, “The Skin of Religion: Aesthetic Mediations of the Sacred,” *CrossCurrents* 62 (2012): 162-180 (in **CW**).

Feb 27 – SECOND PAPER DUE

Film: “Daughters of Wisdom”

March 4 – Challenges to Religion

Reading: Rodrigues and Harding, 104-119.

March 6 – SECOND QUIZ

Challenges to Religion cont’d

Reading: Ursula King, “Is There a Future for Religious Studies as We Know It? Some Postmodern, Feminist, and Spiritual Challenges” *Journal for the American Academy of Religion* 70 (2002): 365-388 (in **CW**)

March 11 – Challenges to Religion – Human Experiences

Reading: “A Faith Too Difficult to Understand.” Pages 61-63 in Bob Abernathy and William Bole, eds., *The Life of Meaning*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007 (in **CW**).

Film: “The Imam and the Pastor”

March 13 – Challenges to Religion

Reading: Rodrigues and Harding, 119-133.

March 18 – Religion and Science

Reading: Michael S. Burdett, “Assessing the Field of Science and Religion: Advice from the Next Generation,” *Zygon* 52 (2017): 747-63. **THIS ARTICLE IS ON THE LEARN SITE FOR THE COURSE**

March 20 – Religion and Identity

Reading: Cathy Holtmann and Nancy Nason-Clark, “Preparing for Life: Gender, Religiosity and Education amongst Second Generation Hindus in Canada,” *Religion and Gender* 2 (2012): 57-79 (in **CW**)

March 25 – THIRD PAPER DUE

Religion and Violence

Reading: Darlene Fozard Weaver, “Violence and Religion.” Pages in Paul Myhre, ed., *Introduction to Religious Studies*. Winona: Anselm Academic, 2009 (in **CW**)

March 27 - Civil Religion

Reading: William T. Cavanaugh, "The War on Terror: Secular or Sacred?" *Political Theology* 12/5 (2011): 685-90 (in **CW**); Pages 99-103 from Appendix B of Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003 (in **CW**).

April 1 – Revisiting Definitions of Religion

Reading: David Chidester, "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock n' Roll." Pages 213-30 in Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey Mahan, eds., *Religion and Popular Culture in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2005 (in **CW**).

April 3 – **THIRD QUIZ** – Conclusions and Review

Reading: Rodrigues and Harding, 134-140.

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.

Arts: [Academic Integrity website](#) University of Waterloo: [Academic Integrity Office](#)

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 ASS 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