



**Renison University College**  
An affiliated college of the University of Waterloo  
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## **Fall 2015**

**Course Code: RS 125**

**Course Title: Introduction to Religion**

**Class Times/Location:** Mondays and Wednesday, 8:30 – 9:50 am/Renison 2918

**Instructor:** Dr. Leah McKeen

**Office space:** Renison 2101 (The Norma and Arthur Brown Seminar Room)

**Office Hours:** Mondays 10 – 11am, or by appointment

**Email:** [l2mckeen@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:l2mckeen@uwaterloo.ca) (the first letter is a lower-case "L")

### **Note on emailing the instructor**

You are encouraged to email the instructor at any time. Emails sent to the address above will be responded to within 48 hours. Students are welcome to contact the instructor using LEARN, but for the fastest response you should email the instructor directly.

### **Course Description**

Taken from the University Calendar, "Using examples drawn from world religions, new religious movements, indigenous religious traditions, and popular culture, this course introduces students to religion as a human and social phenomenon."

This course will push students to consider the following questions: What is the relationship between religion and society/culture? How do major religions impact contemporary society? Is religion essentially a positive or negative force? Or both? Are all religions at their core fundamentally the same or intrinsically different? How do different religious groups respond to challenges posed by contemporary society and how do various groups within contemporary society respond to religions?

### **Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

As students in this course you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and topics of that day. In turn, the instructor will come prepared to lecture and facilitate discussion. Students are strongly encouraged to employ the office hours.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Identify and differentiate major religions:
  - What are the central features of "religion" and what makes one religion different from another?
- B. Intelligently discuss the roles and representations of religion in contemporary society:

- How is religion represented in the news/media? How is religion part of everyday life?
- C. Use the university libraries to access sources for research purposes:
- Where are the reference materials in the library? How do you locate appropriate resources using the library?

**Required Text**

- Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World*. New York: HarperOne, 2010
- Malory Nye, *Religion: The Basics*. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge, 2008.

There are **two required texts** for this course. Both are available for purchase at the bookstore and on library reserve in Renison’s Lusi Wong Library for a three-hour loan period. You are strongly encouraged to bring your textbooks to every class. Any additional readings will be posted to LEARN.

**Course Requirements and Assessment**

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Date of Evaluation</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
Attendance	Throughout the semester	5%
Participation	Throughout the semester	10%
Quizzes	Oct 5, Nov 4, and Dec 2	3 X 15%
Podcast summary	Sept 28	5%
Definitions Paper	Oct 21	15%
Final Paper	Nov 25	20%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

**Attendance (5%)**

Students are required to attend all scheduled classes and attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. Students are allowed one absence without penalty, however each following absence without an acceptable excuse will result in 1 percentage point being deducted from the attendance grade. The following are considered acceptable excuses:

1. Required court attendance – a note certified by the Clerk of the Court must be provided.
2. Away from campus as part of an official university function (e.g., participating on an athletic team – a note from a university faculty or staff member (such as your coach) must be provided PRIOR to the absence.
3. Personal medical issues – a doctor’s note must be provided within one week of returning to class.
4. Death or serious illness in the family – the instructor will attempt to verify deaths or serious illnesses. The student is required to inform the instructor of the death or illness within one week of returning to class.

**Participation (10%)**

It is not enough to simply attend this class. Students are expected to participate in both in-class and in on-line discussion (via LEARN). Students will be given a list of discussion questions for each of the readings and some of the films. The participation grade is based on quality and not just quantity.

Thoughtful and well-sourced engagement in-class and on-line will result in a higher grade.

Read "[Netiquette: Ground Rules for Online Discussion](#)" before engaging in on-line discussions (This link will be posted on LEARN). Notable transgression of these ground rules will result in a reduced participation grade. If this occurs you will be notified by the instructor.

Various spontaneous in-class activities will count towards the participation grade. These activities will be pass/fail (essentially, if you present and follow instructions you should pass).

### **Quizzes (3 X 15%)**

Students will be given 30 minutes at the end of the scheduled day to write the quiz. The quizzes are a combination of multiple choice questions and definitions. There is no final exam for this course.

### **Podcast Summary (5%)**

For this one-page assignment (no more than 300 words), students will choose one of three Religion Bites podcasts to listen to and summarize. Details of this assignment will be discussed in greater detail in-class and instructions (including a grading rubric) will be posted on LEARN.

### **Definitions Paper (15%)**

For this four to five page assignment (1200 – 1500 words), students will collect and compare definitions of a key term in religious studies. Details of this assignment will be discussed in greater detail in-class and instructions (including a grading rubric) will be posted on LEARN.

### **Final Paper (20%)**

For this eight to nine page assignment (2400 – 2700 words), students will research a recent news story of their choice, and discuss how it relates to one religious tradition and one concept in the study of religion discussed throughout the course. Details of this assignment will be discussed in greater detail in-class and instructions (including a grading rubric) will be posted on LEARN.

### Additional information about the written assignments:

#### **Late Work**

Late assignments will not be accepted. If, for any reason, you are concerned that you will not be able to submit assignments by the deadline contact the instructor **as soon as possible**. Requests for extensions after the due date will not be considered.

#### **Turnitin.com**

Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin in this course.

## Course Outline

Week	Date	Topic and Assessments	Readings
1	Sept 14	Introduction	Syllabus In-class activity: The Getting-to-Know-You Survey
	Sept 16	What is "Religion"? What does it mean to study religion?	Nye, Chapter 1, "Religion: Some Basics" pp. 1-22 Podcast: <a href="#">Religion Bites001 Introduction to Religion Bites</a> (link will also be posted on LEARN)
2	Sept 21	Are All Religions the Same?	Prothero, "Introduction" pp. 1-24 In-class activity: Religious Literacy
	Sept 23	Islam	Prothero, Chapter 1, "Islam: The Way of Submission" pp. 25-63
3	Sept 28	Case Study Concept - Gender <b>Podcast Summary Due</b>	Nye, Chapter 4, "Gender" pp.79-104 In-class activity: <i>Me and the Mosque</i>
	Sept 30	Christianity	Prothero, Chapter 2, "Christianity: The Way of Salvation" pp. 65-99
4	Oct 5	Case Study Concept – Belief <b>Quiz#1</b>	Nye, Chapter 5, "Belief" pp. 105-128
	Oct 7	Chinese Religions – Confucianism and Daoism	Prothero, Chapter 3, "Confucianism: The Way of Propriety" pp. 101-130 and Chapter 8, "Daoism: The Way of Flourishing" pp. 279-315
5	Oct 12	<b>Thanksgiving Day</b>	<b>No Class</b>
	Oct 14	Case Study Concept – Power	Nye, Chapter 3, "Power" pp.57-78
6	Oct 19	Indian Religion - Hinduism	Prothero, Chapter 4, "Hinduism: The Way of Devotion" pp. 131-168
	Oct 21	Case Study Concept – Texts <b>Definitions Paper Due</b>	Nye, Chapter 7, "Texts" pp. 152-181 In-Class Activity: <i>Sita Sings the Blues</i>
7	Oct 26	Discussion	No Reading
	Oct 28	Indian Religion – Buddhism	Prothero, Chapter 5, "Buddhism: The Way of Awakening" pp. 169-201
8	Nov 2	Discussion	No Reading In-class activity: <i>The Trap</i>
	Nov 4	Yoruba Religion <b>Quiz #2</b>	Prothero, Chapter 6, "Yoruba Religion: The Way of Connection" pp. 203-241
9	Nov 9	Case Study Concept - Ritual	Nye, Chapter 6, "Ritual" pp. 129-151
	Nov 11	Judaism	Prothero, Chapter 7, "Judaism: The Way of Exile and Return" pp. 243-278
10	Nov 16	Case Study Concept - Culture	Nye, Chapter 2, "Culture" pp. 23-56
	Nov 18	Religion in Contemporary Culture	Nye, Chapter 8, "Contemporary Religions, Contemporary Cultures" pp. 182-211
	Nov 21*	No Class	No Reading
11	Nov 23	Atheism	Prothero, Chapter 9, "A Brief Coda on

Week	Date	Topic and Assessments	Readings
			Atheism: The Way of Reason”
	Nov 25	Atheism Continued <b>Final Paper Due</b>	No reading In-class activity: <i>The Invention of Lying</i>
12	Nov 30	Discussion	No Reading In-class activity: <i>The Invention of Lying</i>
	Dec 2	Wrap-up <b>Quiz #3</b>	Prothero, “Conclusion” pp. 331-340

*\*The loss of a Monday class on Thanksgiving Day (October 12) will be made up by following a Monday schedule on Saturday November 21.*

### Electronic Device Policy

Laptops and tablets may be used in this course for educational purposes only (e.g. note taking). Those who choose to use such devices, except for accessibility reasons, are asked to sit to the side of the room. Off-task use (e.g. social media, gaming, or general use of the internet) may result in you being asked to stow the device in your bag or at the front of the room for all or part of the class, or being asked to leave the classroom. Use of cell phones or smart phones is not permitted in class and may result in your overall grade being reduced by 1% per offence. Phones should be not be visible during the class.

### Accommodation for Illness or Unforeseen Circumstances:

The instructor follows the practices of the University of Waterloo in accommodating students who have documented reasons for missing quizzes or exams.

See [http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/students/accom\\_illness.html](http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/students/accom_illness.html)

### Academic Integrity:

**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, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>.

**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, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures>

[guidelines/policy-70](#). In addition, consult <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-arts-processes> for the Faculty of Arts' grievance processes.

**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, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72>.

**Academic Integrity website**

**(Arts):** [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic\\_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

**Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo):** <http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>

### **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:**

**Note for students with disabilities:** The AccessAbility Services (AS) 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 AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.

### **Cross-listed course:**

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

### **A respectful living and learning environment for all**

1. It is expected that everyone living, learning or working on the premises of Renison University College will contribute to an environment of tolerance and respect by treating others with sensitivity and civility.
2. Harassment is unwanted attention in the form of jokes, insults, gestures, gossip, or other behaviours that are meant to intimidate. Some instances of harassment are against the law in addition to Renison University College policy.
3. Discrimination is treating people differently because of their race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, colour, age, creed, marital status, or other personal characteristics. The Ontario Human Rights Code considers actions and behaviours rather than intentions.
4. If you experience or witness either harassment or discrimination, you may contact the Renison University College Harassment and Discrimination Officer at [c7mcmillan@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:c7mcmillan@uwaterloo.ca) (519-884-4404, ext. 28723).