

**ANTH 311/RS 261**  
**Department of Anthropology**  
**Winter 2020**  
**T, Th 1:00-2:20, ML 349**

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 2:30-4 pm or by appointment

**TA:**

**TA email:**

**Course Description**

This course will introduce you to the anthropological study of religion and its key themes, definitions, and approaches. While religion is normally thought of as a spiritual process or a set of beliefs and practices with clear and identifiable boundaries, in this course we examine religions in their social and political embeddedness. While we will consider the belief-centered approaches to religion, we will primarily attempt to understand “religions in practice,” as they are lived, embodied, felt, gendered, racialized, and politicized. Although our examples will be from a diversity of a number of religious traditions, the aim of this course is not so much to provide an extensive survey of religions in the world. Instead, we will use these examples to reflect critically on the meaning and usefulness of key terms such as “belief”, “religion,” “God,” “magic,” “modernity,” and “ritual.” We will learn about different anthropological approaches that have been used to understand a variety of practices, communities, texts, experiences, languages, and material cultures across the globe. We will discuss the kinds of questions anthropologists ask while studying religion, whether and how anthropology of religion differs from other disciplinary approaches, and how contact, conflict, and exchange among religions have shaped the world in which we live. In short, this course is meant to help you cultivate anthropological ways of thinking about and studying religion.

Please note that our purpose in this course is not theological, but ethnographic. Students taking this course are asked to leave aside their own beliefs about religion (including atheism) and focus instead on what religion means today to the studied individuals and groups, and how it is lived, embodied, and materialized in relation to contemporary forces of modernity.

**Course Goals and Learning Outcomes**

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

- Understand key anthropological concepts on religion and have the ability to apply them to diverse contexts
- Identify and analyze different anthropological approaches to religion and their historical and theoretical context
- Develop anthropologically-oriented critical reading, research, and thinking skills
- Observe and write analytically about religious aspects of culture with which you are familiar and critically engage scholarly sources
- Better understand how religion shapes and is shaped by global communities and cultures and the ethical connections between our own lives and those of others who are marginalized due to their religious affiliations

## Required Readings

The readings are the foundation for our in-class work and your writing projects and assignments this term. You are therefore responsible for completing the readings before class, preparing to discuss the readings before class, and bringing the readings with you so you can refer to them.

- All journal articles and book chapters assigned between Week 1 and Week 11 are available to download from the library website or coursereserves  
<https://www.reserves.uwaterloo.ca/ares/ares.dll>
- The course also requires you to purchase (or borrow) one of the following books to be discussed between Week 11 and the end of the term, and to form the basis of your final paper submission:
  - 1) Mittermaier, Amira. 2019. Giving to God: Islamic Charity in Revolutionary Times. Berkeley: University of California Press.
  - 2) Ramberg, Lucinda. 2014. Given to the Goddess: South Indian Devadasis and the Sexuality of Religion. Durham: Duke University Press.
  - 3) Arkin, Kimberly. 2014. Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic: Fashioning Jewishness in France. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
  - 4) Josephson, Jason Ananda. 2012. The Invention of Religion in Japan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
  - 5) O'Neill, Kevin Lewis. 2015. Secure the Soul: Christian Piety and Gang Prevention in Guatemala. Berkeley: University of California Press.

The books are available at University of Waterloo Bookstore and on course reserves at Dana Porter Library for a one day loan. If access to the books is a problem, please let me know!

Course Requirements and Assessment	Date of submission	Weighting
1) Participation	Week 1—13	10%
2) Midterm	February 11	20%
3) Online Discussion Q. posts (10 in total)	Weeks 1—12	10%
4) Short Essay	March 17	20%
5) Presentation	Week 13	10 %
6) Book Review	April 9	30%
Total		100%

### Participation (10%)

Each class will combine lecture and discussion elements. Many will include interactive student activities (discussions, in-class writing activities, etc.) as well. None of these elements work unless you attend regularly and read the assigned materials. Please come to class ready to analyze and respond to the assigned readings, as well as to the contributions of your fellow students. Your active engagement in all of these exercises is essential. Please note that engagement includes attentive listening as much as speaking. Evaluation of participation will be based on the quality of what you contribute. **Contributions to the discussion might involve answering a question posed by the instructor or fellow students, introducing a topic, examining assumptions, assessing the source and reliability of information and formulating new questions. They might also include statements of where you are confused or questions about the meaning of**

**core concepts; questions about what the author is trying to communicate.** Arriving late or departing early will affect your participation grade if they happen recurrently.

At some point during each lecture, expect to be asked to write down your response to a content-related question in relation to the assigned reading for that lecture. The question may be in the fill-in-the blank or multiple-choice format and will most likely be a general question the theme or topic of the assigned chapter/article. This is to make sure that you do the readings before class time. Your overall performance in these exercises will count towards your participation mark.

### **Midterm Exam (February 11, class time)**

The course is divided into three parts. The first part aims to build the foundations of anthropological approaches to religion and therefore provide the content/context for contemporary debates in the anthropology of religion. It is fundamental for students to have a good understanding of these early approaches. Scheduled prior to the start of the second part on modern debates, the mid-term exam aims to assess whether students have satisfactory foundation to build their critical analysis skills for the rest of the course. It will cover the readings and lectures of the first five weeks including the introductory week. The exam will take place You will be provided with study questions prior to the exam.

### **Online Discussion Posts (10%):** 1% per post from week 1 until the end of week 12)

This course requires each student to submit a total of discussion questions to Learn on the assigned reading(s) of the class before the start of the class. You can choose for which classes (of 20 classes in total) you wish to discuss the assigned reading(s), but you are required to submit 10 of these throughout the term. These should be thoughtful discussion questions not simply emotional/personal reactions to the reading. The objective of the assignment is to improve your skills in formulating good analytic questions. Therefore, the discussion question posts will be evaluated on quality and the originality of your engagement with the text, and not simply completion.

I will try to go over at least some of these questions in class time, but feel free to respond to others' comments online for additional **participation** marks (especially if you feel not comfortable speaking in public). Even though these online responses won't count the same as in-class participation, I will consider them while marking your overall participation. I recommend that those of you who may not feel as comfortable as others to speak in public make use of this option.

### **Short Essay: (March 17 at 1pm)**

Students are asked to choose one of the two options mentioned below to write a short paper.

#### ***Option 1: Photo Assignment***

If you choose this option, you will be asked to take a picture in your surrounding on the theme, "seeing religion in everyday life" and provide an analysis of the picture that explains/discusses:

- what is in the picture
- in what way you think it relates to the course themes and to the general theme of "seeing religion in everyday life"
- if any of the conceptual frameworks that you become familiar with throughout the course help you to analyze the content of the picture

This assignment can be considered as a very small-scale field activity. It aims to help you to apply some of the key concepts in anthropology of religion to primary data and understand religions as lived and connected to other realms of everyday life, that is, beyond the authoritative discourses of religious scholars and texts. The photo could portray/allude to a religious object, site, architecture, practice, food, document, social media image, or any other material that allows you to discuss the presence or absence religion in ordinary life, as well as questions of secularity. Please note that you are not allowed to take photos of individuals for this assignment, and the interiors of places of worship are not considered to be the public sphere and require ethics protocol to be used for this assignment. Further instructions will be provided with regard to the use of human subjects in the pictures.

### ***Option 2: Film Analysis***

Reflect critically on one or two of the films that we have viewed in (or prior to) the course to date. In your essay, be sure to refer to at least two themes addressed in at least two relevant course readings that you will cite.

The detailed guidelines for both options will be provided later in the term. The papers **MUST** be submitted to Dropbox by the deadline. Each paper is to be approximately 1000 words which is not more than 4 double spaced pages (12 Font, Times New Roman, one inch margins on all sides). They must be carefully written reflections and not first drafts or simple stream of consciousness essays. **They must engage at least two course readings that are relevant to the theme of analysis for a passing grade.** They should use the Chicago Manual of Style author-date citation available at [https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html). The content and structure of the argument as well as the writing (spelling, grammar, organization, etc.) will be graded. Best papers are those with a clear argument. Guidelines will be provided at Learn.

### **Presentation and Peer Review**

Group Presentations are complementary to the Book Review Assignment (below) and will be based on the ethnographies listed above. Groups of 5-7 students will be formed after February 13 on the basis of the students' book decisions. Delay in informing me of your book decision will be reflected on your individual group presentation grade. Individual delays **WILL NOT** affect the grades of the other members in the same group.

The presentations will be 10 minute long to be followed by a 5-minute-long Q&A session. Both the presentation and the Q&A session will discuss the presented book on issues ranging from its main arguments, methodological approach, and ethnographic quality to its significance for the anthropology of religion. They can also focus on a collectively chosen theme that runs through the book and speaks to one or more of the course themes. In any case, the presenters are expected to draw connections between the book and the topics or readings covered in the course. While it is important to outline the book's main arguments to the class, students are discouraged to summarize the books in presentation. **Creative, comparative, and interactive approaches are especially welcome.** Those who are not presenting on the date of the week will be assessed based on their feedback and peer review activity. Therefore, it is fundamental for all students to attend the last two classes to receive marks for these activities. Accommodations will be made for those who cannot attend classes these dates only if they provide valid documentation latest on the date of the missed class.

**Book Review (30%) due April 9 at 11:59pm, about 2000 words (approximately 8 PAGES 12 Font, Times New Roman, one inch margins on all sides):**

The goal of this assignment is to explore in more detail a topic that interests you in the anthropology of religion, that is addressed in the ethnography you have chosen to examine by **February 13**. The review is meant to develop your skills of applying the conceptual tools you learned in this class to a more in-depth case-study. **Please note this review is not merely a summary of the content of the book**, but it is a reflection of what are, in your view, the strengths and weaknesses of the book; how it relates to other material you have read in this course; how ‘well’ is written and how poignant are the anthropological themes in religion that it presents. You should cite at least 3 of the articles in the reading list for a passing grade on this assignment (excluding the movies shown in class). Further guidelines and submission details will be uploaded to Learn.

**Note on Grading**

In this course, you will be graded on **how** you think, not **what** you think. In other words, **you will not be graded on your beliefs, opinions, or the positions you advance**. You will be graded on how well you articulate your thoughts and positions, how closely you read the assigned texts, and how much your ability to think **critically and synthetically** about course themes develop throughout the semester.

**Late Work**

If you turn an assignment in late, your mark will be downgraded by 3% per day (including weekends). Feedback may not be provided on late papers.

**Electronic Device Policy**

During classtime you are expected to be fully engaged in the class. This means that the only documents that you should have open on your phone/computer are 1) notes 2) readings 3) class powerpoints. Students who are caught on Facebook, texting, surfing the Web, et. al during class will lose marks for their participation. Please resist the temptation to check email, Facebook, internet browsing during class.

**Attendance Policy**

Arriving late or departing early will affect your attendance grade, if it happens on a regular basis. If you miss a class due to absence, you are still responsible for making up your missed work. You can get notes from a classmate.

Please note that travel plans are NOT considered acceptable reasons for asking extensions on assignments and rescheduling of exams: <https://uwaterloo.ca/registrar/final-examinations/examination-regulations-and-related-matters>

**Cross-listed courses**

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.

**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

[Academic integrity](#) (Arts) [Academic Integrity Office](#) (uWaterloo)

### **Note for Students with Disabilities**

The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 1401), 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. Accessibility related extensions on assignments with fixed deadlines (short essay+book review) should be requested through the AccessAbility Services. The student should make necessary arrangements for the response paper individually given the flexibility provided to students about submission time for that particular assignment. For fairness to all students, it is not possible to submit a response paper after the class is over.

### **Turnitin**

Turnitin.com: Text matching software (Turnitin) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit the alternate assignment.

Alternatives for using Turnitin include:

- an annotated bibliography;
- a draft bibliography identifying and documenting all sources and submitted on a specified date before the due date for the assignment;
- a “scaffolded” assignment where the student submits an outline of their paper in advance and then at least one draft of the paper with their list of resources before the submission of the final paper with a bibliography

### **Writing and Communication Centre**

The Writing and Communication Centre (WCC) works with students as they develop their ideas, draft, and revise. Writing and communication specialists offer one-on-one support in planning

assignments, synthesizing and citing research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or you can drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 25- or 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit [uwaterloo.ca/wcc](http://uwaterloo.ca/wcc). Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

## **Mental Health Support**

### **On Campus**

- Counselling Services: [counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca) / 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
- **MATES**: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from Student Life Centre and can be reached at 519-888-4096.

### **Off campus: 24/7**

- **Good2Talk** is a free confidential help line for post-secondary students.  
1-866-925-5454
- **Grand River Hospital** offers 24/7 emergency care for mental health emergencies. 834 King Street West, Kitchener.  
519-749-4300 x 6880.
- **Here 24/7** is Waterloo Region's Mental Health and Crisis Services team.  
1-844-437-3247
- **OK2BME**: set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213
- In an on campus emergency, call UW Police Services at ext. 22222.
- If you are away from campus and can't come to our offices, please call our phone number 519-888-4567 x32655 and we will do our best to put you in contact with local resources.

Full details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts [website](#)

Download the [WatSAFE](#) app to have access to these contacts on your phone

## **Territorial Acknowledgement**

The Faculty of Arts acknowledges 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 six miles on each side of the Grand River.

## **Academic freedom at the University of Waterloo**

[Policy 33, Ethical Behaviour](#) states, as one of its general principles (Section 1), "The University supports academic freedom for all members of the University community. Academic freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base teaching and research on an honest and ethical quest for knowledge. In the context of this policy, 'academic freedom' refers to academic activities, including teaching and scholarship, as is articulated in the principles set out in the Memorandum of Agreement between the FAUW and the University of Waterloo, 1998 (Article 6). The academic environment which fosters free debate may from time to time include the presentation or discussion of unpopular opinions or controversial material. Such material shall be dealt with as openly, respectfully and sensitively as possible." This definition is repeated in Policies 70 and 71, and in the Memorandum of Agreement, Section 6.

**Note:** The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule over the course of the term in order to better guide the learning process.

**Course Outline**

Week	Date	Topics, Activities, and Questions	Readings and film assignments
1	Jan 7	Introduction and Orientation	- The syllabus
	Jan 9	Q: What is religion? How should anthropology approach religion? How is that approach different from other disciplinary approaches?  <b>In class film:</b> The possibility of Spirits	1) <b>Firth-An Anthropological Approach to the Study of Religion (pages from 1 to 11)</b> 2) <a href="https://tif.ssrc.org/2019/11/14/spirit-vanderveer/">https://tif.ssrc.org/2019/11/14/spirit-vanderveer/</a>
2	Jan 14	<b>Foundations and Approaches</b> - Intellectualist approach (or, religion is how we explain the world)	1) <b>Edward Tylor – Religion in Primitive Culture</b> 2) Evans-Pritchard –The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate events*
	Jan 16	- Functionalist approach (or, religion is the social)	- Definitions: Emile Durkheim + Marx*
3	Jan 21	- <b>Historical-Structuralist ?approach (or, religion is ...)</b> <b>In class film:</b>	- <b>Max Weber – The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</b>
	Jan 23	- Interpretative and symbolic approach (or, religion is a cultural system)	<b>Clifford Geertz – Religion as a Cultural System</b>
4	Jan 28	<b>Symbols, rituals, and religious action</b>	1) Victor Turner- Liminality and Communitas* 2) <b>John Bowen?</b>
	Jan 30		- Tom Bolyston*  Recommended: Niloofar Haeri- The private performance of Salat prayer
5	Feb 4	<b>Genealogical approach: Power and the Problem with Definitions</b>	- <b>Talal Asad- The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category</b> Recommended: Susan Harding- Religion: It is not what it used to be.

	Feb 6		<p>- <b>Tomoko Masuzawa- The Invention of World Religions- Introduction (pages 1-20)</b>  Recommended: Jonathan Smith- Religion, Religions, Religious</p>
<b>6</b>	<b>Feb 11</b>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM !</b>	No reading due!
	Feb 13	<p>Decide on the ethnography on which you will examine and post it on Learn by this date!</p> <p><b>Religion and Globalization</b>  Q: Is ‘modern’ society dominated by a secular view of the world? How does religion manifest itself in the global world? What is the relationship between globalization and religion?</p>	<p>1) Robert Hefner– Multiple Modernities: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism in a Globalizing Age*  2) <b>Film:</b> Wild Wild Country Episode 1</p> <p>Recommended: Girish Daswani</p>
<b>7</b>	<b>Feb 18,20</b>	<b>READING WEEK No Class!</b>	<b>No Reading! But if you find the time, I advise you to listen to the poscasts related the books listed below (Week 11), and skim through the book options to make sure you chose a book that you really want to examine.</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Feb 25</b>	<p>The forming of groups for the presentation  <b>Gender, Sexuality, and Religion</b>  - Exam Review</p>	<b>Queer... Jakobson ?</b>
	Feb 27	<b>Naumescu- film?</b>	<p>- <b>Alice Elliot- Mahmood</b></p> <p>Recommended: Boellstorff- Between Religion and Desire: Being Muslim and Gay in Indonesia</p>
<b>9</b>	<b>Mar 3</b>	<p>Conversion</p> <p>In Class film: New Muslim Cool</p>	<p>Please read the following academic blog posts on conversion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crossing and Conversion: Introduction <a href="https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/04/23/crossing-and-conversion-introduction/">https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/04/23/crossing-and-conversion-introduction/</a></li> <li>- Jewish conversion? Jewish Conversion in a Time of Shattered Boundaries <a href="https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/05/29/who-needs-conversion/">https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/05/29/who-needs-conversion/</a></li> <li>- Armenian Return Conversions in Turkey</li> </ul>

			<a href="https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/06/12/armenia-n-return-conversions-in-turkey/">https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/06/12/armenia-n-return-conversions-in-turkey/</a> - Inheritance and Belief <a href="https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/07/03/inheritance-and-belief/">https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/07/03/inheritance-and-belief/</a>
	Mar 5	Interreligious Interaction	- Veena Das- Inhabiting an Interreligious Milieu* - Netflix Film: Wild Wild Country episode 2
<b>10</b>	<b>Mar 10</b>	Secularism	- <b>Bowen- Secularism and Religions</b> - Netflix Film: Wild Wild Country episode 3
	Mar 12	Religious tolerance	- <b>Dagtas- The Choir of Civilizations</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Mar 17</b>	<b>SHORT PAPER DUE!</b> <b>Ethnography as a genre of writing and a method of study</b> What is the main argument of the book? Which approach does the author seem to take in relation to the broader anthropological literature? What are the specific research sites, and which methods are employed in this study?	The Ethnography you have chosen to read Introduction and/or Chapter 1  Also please listen the following based on the book you chose:  Mittermaier: <a href="https://newbooksnetwork.com/amira-mittermaier-giving-to-god-islamic-charity-in-revolutionary-times-u-california-press-2019/">https://newbooksnetwork.com/amira-mittermaier-giving-to-god-islamic-charity-in-revolutionary-times-u-california-press-2019/</a>  Ramberg: <a href="https://as.cornell.edu/node/%20%2060766">https://as.cornell.edu/node/%20%2060766</a>  Ananda: <a href="https://newbooksnetwork.com/jason-ananda-josephson-the-invention-of-religion-in-japan-university-of-chicago-press-2012/">https://newbooksnetwork.com/jason-ananda-josephson-the-invention-of-religion-in-japan-university-of-chicago-press-2012/</a>  Arkin: <a href="https://www.iheart.com/podcast/256-new-books-in-european-stud-31106086/episode/kimberly-arkin-rhinestones-religion-and-the-47973441/">https://www.iheart.com/podcast/256-new-books-in-european-stud-31106086/episode/kimberly-arkin-rhinestones-religion-and-the-47973441/</a>  O’Neill: <a href="https://www.ucpress.edu/blog/18387/kevin-oneill-interviewed-on-new-books-in-latin-american-studies/">https://www.ucpress.edu/blog/18387/kevin-oneill-interviewed-on-new-books-in-latin-american-studies/</a>

	Mar 19	What does the book tell about the specific religious tradition under its scrutiny and the (historical, geographic, cultural) context in which it is studied?	Chapter 2
<b>12</b>	<b>Mar 24</b>	What are the subthemes and their relationship to the main argument and the book's overall approach to religion?	Chapter 3
	Mar 26	What are the subthemes and their relationship to the main argument and the book's overall approach to religion? Any discussion on the ethnographic writing style and the positionality of the author is welcome at this stage.	Chapter 4
<b>13</b>	<b>Mar 31</b>	Presentations	Chapter 5
	April 2	Presentations	Chapter 6 + conclusion
<b>14</b>	<b>April 9</b>	FINAL PAPER DUE!	