



**Texas A&M**  
UNIVERSITY  
Central Texas

RELS 3300  
*Intro Religious Studies*  
Fall 2019

Class Location: HH 309  
Class Hours: R 6:00-8:45  
Instructor: Floyd Berry, PhD  
Office: HH 204 S  
Office Hours: MTR 2:00-6:00 (please make an appointment)  
Email: (prefer Canvas message) [fberry@tamuct.edu](mailto:fberry@tamuct.edu)  
NOTE: If contacting instructor outside of Canvas, students must use their official TAMUCT emails.

### 1.0 Course Description

Examines religious phenomena from a non-confessional, interdisciplinary academic perspective. Explores the concepts of religion as an aspect of culture in a postmodern, diversified, global community.

### 2.0 Accessing Canvas

This is a lecture course with online components in Canvas. The student accesses Canvas at <https://tamuct.onecampus.com/> or on the TAMUCT website ("MY CT").

### 3.0 Course Objectives

1. Students will be able to discuss concepts related to the academic study of religion.
2. Students will be able to differentiate between the major world religions in regard to beliefs, practices, and social organization.
3. Students will be able to assess the differences in examining religion from a confessional versus an academic perspective.
4. Students will be able to discuss the evolution of the discipline of religious studies.
5. Students will submit prose reactions to material and topics covered in class discussions.
6. Students will gain an appreciation for the academic study of religion, based on readings, commentaries, and class discussions.
7. Students will submit acceptable essays for mid-term and final exams. To be accepted, the student shall discuss all aspects of an essay question, using standard English prose and grammatical construction.

### 4.0 Textbooks

#### 4.1 Required for Course

Capps, W. H. (1995). *Religious studies: The making of a discipline*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

**4.2 List of Unrequired Reading**

- Ames, E. S. (1929). *Religion*. New York: Red Label.
- Armstrong, K. (2006). *The great transformation: The beginning of our religious traditions*. New York: Anchor.
- Bouquet, A. C. (1967). *Comparative religion* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- Davies, B. (Ed.). (2000). *Philosophy of religion: A guide and anthology*. Oxford.
- Durkheim, E. (1912/1965). *The elementary forms of the religious life*. New York: Free Press.
- Eastman, R. (Ed.). (1999). *The ways of religion: An introduction to the major traditions* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford.
- Eliade, M. (1954). *The myth of the eternal return* (W. R. Trask, Trans.). Princeton.
- Eliade, M. (1959). *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion* (W. R. Trask, Trans.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Elide, M. (1978-1985). *A history of religious ideas* (Vols. 1-3)(W. R. Trask, Trans.). Chicago.
- James, E. O. (1950/1973). *The beginnings of religion: An introductory and scientific study*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Kurtz, P. (Ed.). (2003). *Science and religion: Are they compatible?* Amherst, NY: Prometheus.
- Lessa, W. A., & Vogt, E. Z. (1979). *Reader in comparative religion: An anthropological approach* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Livingston, J. C. (2009). *Anatomy of the sacred: An introduction to religion* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Prothero, S. (2010). *God is not one: The eight rival religions that run the world – and why their differences matter*. New York: HarperOne.
- Radin, P. (1937/1957). *Primitive religion: Its nature and origin*. New York: Dover.
- Sharpe, E. J. (1975). *Comparative religion: A history*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Smith, W. C. (1962/1978). *The meaning and end of religion: A revolutionary approach to the great religious traditions*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Strenski, I. (2015). *Understanding theories of religion: An introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Swanson, G. E. (1964). *The birth of the gods: The origin of primitive beliefs*. Michigan.
- Vaughn, L. (2017). *Anthology of world religions: Sacred texts and contemporary perspectives*. New York: Oxford.
- Van der Leeuw, G. (1967). *Religion in essence and manifestation* (Vols. 1-2). Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith.
- Van Voorst, R. E. (2013). *Anthology of world scriptures* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage.
- Wach, J. (1958). *The comparative study of religions*. New York: Columbia.
- Wallace, A. F. C. (1966). *Religion: An anthropological view*. New York: Random House.

**5.0 Course Requirements****5.1 Exams (400 pts)**

The student shall take two exams, a mid-term and a final. The exams are not “open-book,” nor may the student use any notes or messages from cell phones.

The exams are essays, written in a blue book. **Work not done in a blue book will not be graded.** Blue books are available from the bookstore. Each exam is valued at 200 points. The student has a maximum of two hours to take the exam, given immediately after roll call. The exam window closes, however, when two hours have elapsed. The mid-term exam will receive comments from the instructor and will be returned to the student. Students are encouraged to review their work before submission. The following rubric will guide the instructor:

Qualities & Criteria	Poor	Good	Excellent
<b>Content</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elements of topics to be addressed</li> <li>• Information is correct</li> <li>• Coherency</li> </ul> <p><i>(Weight: 70%)</i></p>	Not objective and poorly addresses the issues. Information is unnecessary or insufficient to discuss the issues.	Mostly objective and addresses most of the issues. Information is mostly necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues.	Objective and addresses all the issues. Information is necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues.
	(0-109 pts)	(110-131 pts)	(132-140 pts)
<b>Quality of Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity</li> <li>• Grammar and English usage</li> <li>• Organization and coherence</li> </ul> <p><i>(Weight: 30%)</i></p>	Poorly written and contains flagrant spelling and grammatical errors. Poorly organized, lacks clarity, and is incoherent.	Mostly well-written, without egregious spelling or grammatical errors. Organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways.	Well-written, without egregious spelling or grammatical errors. Well organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways.
	(0-40 pts)	(41-55 pts)	(56-60 pts)

A week before each exam, the instructor will provide students with two exam questions. This practice provides the student with a week's worth of preparation. It is highly recommended that students compose some outline of how they will write their essays and commit those outlines to memory. Blue books must be blank before students may begin their exams. After beginning the exam, however, students may wish to write working outlines on the exam questions page or on the inside cover of the blue book. A simple outline provides coherency and organization for one's essay.

**NOTE:** Upper-level undergraduate students are expected to have adequate knowledge of the essentials of grammar, writing style, and essay organization in accordance with writing manuals. If the student does *not* have adequate knowledge in these areas, then the purchase and use of additional books are highly recommended. The University Writing Center is also available to students. Failure to provide written work in accordance with the essentials of acceptable, English writing style will result in poor grades. Examples of non-standard English usage include, among other things, sentence fragments, run-ons, dangling modifiers, lack of agreement between pronouns and their antecedents or

subjects and verbs, bulleted items, slashes, flagrant misuse of punctuation, slang or abbreviated expressions, “etc.” or “*et cetera*,” and excessive use of metaphorical language. In Modules, there is a Power Point on “Typical Problems with Essay Exams.” Students should review this Power Point.

### 5.2 Class Participation (300 pts)

Students are expected to participate in class discussions, indicating an understanding of the reading material and how to apply it. Students are to read assigned material before class. Students earn a point for full attendance on a specific day (appear on time and do not leave early). Students earn an additional point for participating in class discussions. (No points are awarded on exam days.) Thus, the student earns 0-2 points on each class day (total of 13 days), which correspond to the following grade:

Points	Grade	Points	Grade
22	300	12-13	139
24-25	277	10-11	116
22-23	254	8-9	93
20-21	231	6-7	70
18-19	208	4-5	47
16-17	185	1-3	24
14-15	162	0	0

**NOTE:** If students are tardy (appear in class after roll is called), it is their responsibility to notify the instructor at the conclusion of class (before leaving the classroom that evening), that they arrived in class and would like to receive some credit for class participation. Failure to notify the instructor *may* result in an absence for that day. Cell phone use is forbidden during class, and such behavior is not awarded class participation points.

### 5.3 Academic Integrity Document

During the first week of class, the student is to read the section in the syllabus on Academic Integrity (§ 8.0) and the link provided in that section regarding plagiarism. The student must sign the document (also in Canvas, under Modules) pertaining to Academic Integrity and return a hard copy to the instructor. **NOTE: Students will not be allowed to continue in the course without notifying the instructor of their comprehension of this material (by signing the document and submitting it to the instructor).**

### 5.4 Reaction Comments (300 pts)

At the conclusion of each class (except when exams are taken), students will submit a Reaction Comment (RC), due before midnight. *In Canvas, the student will send an email to the instructor, reacting to material discussed or experienced*

*in class*. A paragraph or two is sufficient. Students express their reactions to something discussed or experienced in class. **A mere summary of material discussed in class, however, is insufficient for credit.** Students should make some comments on assigned readings or discussions, coupled with their reactions. Students shall identify their email with the headings of RC1, RC2, etc., as indicated in the course calendar (§ 7.0). Using headings other than RC1, RC2, etc. may result in no credit. **Obviously, students must attend class before they can react to material presented or discussed in class.** RC's correspond to the following grades:

# of RC's	Grade	# of RC's	Grade
13	300	6	139
12	277	5	116
11	254	4	93
10	231	3	70
9	208	2	47
8	185	1	24
7	162	0	0

## 6.0 Grading Matrix and Conversion

### 6.1 Matrix

	Points
Exams (2 @ 200)	400
Class Participation	300
Reaction Comments	300
Academic Integrity Document	-----
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1000</b>

### 6.2 Conversion to Course Letter Grade

Points	%	Grade
900 – 1000	90 – 100	A
800 – 899	80 – 89	B
700 – 799	70 – 79	C
600 – 699	60 – 69	D
0 – 599	0 – 59	F

**7.0 Course Calendar<sup>1</sup>**

Date	Topic	Readings <sup>2</sup>	Assignments Due
8/29/19	University Writing Ctr Syllabus Academic Integrity Religious Studies	Dr. Bowles (6:00 p.m.)  Syllabus  Academic Integrity/ plagiarism readings (§ 8.0 of syllabus)  Power Point Discussion	RC1 due before midnight
9/5/19	Survey of religious traditions and concepts	Ch 1	Academic Integrity document due before 6 pm (hard copy)  RC2 due before midnight
9/12/19	Survey (cont.)	Ch 2	RC3 due before midnight
9/19/19	Essence	Introduction, pp 1-25	RC4 due before midnight
9/26/19	Essence (cont.)	pp 25-52	RC5 due before midnight
10/3/19	Origin	pp 52-78	RC6 due before midnight
10/10/19	Origin (cont.)	78-104	RC7 due before midnight
10/17/19	<b>Mid-term Exam</b>		<b>Blue Book!</b>
10/24/19	Description	pp 105-128	RC8 due before midnight
10/31/19	Description (cont.)	pp 128-156	RC9 due before midnight
11/7/19	Function	pp 157-180	RC10 due before midnight
11/14/19	Function (cont.)	pp 180-208	RC11 due before midnight
11/21/19	Comparison	pp 267-299	RC12 due before midnight
11/28/19	No class-Holiday		RC13 due before midnight
12/5/19	Comparison (cont.)	pp 299-330	RC14 due before midnight
12/12/19	<b>Final Exam</b>		<b>Blue Book!</b>

<sup>1</sup> Events are subject to minor revision (see § 15.0).

<sup>2</sup> **ch** = chapter, **chs** = chapters, **pp** = pages

**8.0 Academic Integrity**

TAMUCT expects all students to maintain high standards of personal and scholarly conduct. Students guilty of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, self-plagiarism (“recycling”), or collusion. The instructor shall initiate action for each case of academic dishonesty and report it to the Associate Director of Student Conduct. Zero points will be assigned for any course product that violates academic honesty. The student should access this link for more information: <https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html>.

**9.0 Disability Support**

If students believe that this course may present barriers to learning due to a disability, they must contact Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831 in Warrior Hall, Ste. 212. For more information, students may visit their website at <https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html>. Any information that the student provides is private and confidential and will be treated as such. The instructor cannot accommodate students’

disabilities unless they first communicate with Access and Inclusion. The director of Access and Inclusion is Donald Norman.

#### **10.0 Diversity in the Classroom**

Respect for cultural and human biological diversity are core concepts within the social sciences. In this course, each voice in the classroom has value in contributing to class discussion. The student should respect the different experiences, beliefs, and values expressed by one's fellow students and instructor, and refrain from derogatory comments about other individuals, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. In this course we welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, disabilities, education, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender identities, geographical locations, languages, military experiences, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences.

#### **11.0 Classroom Etiquette**

Students shall show respect to other students and to the instructor in all communications, whether verbal or in writing (e.g., online). For example, making rude or threatening remarks or gestures, arguing, complaining, and challenging that is not based on readings, rationality, and the course objectives are all violations of classroom etiquette. Regarding odors, please refrain from bringing smelly foods into the classroom, and please engage in personal hygiene practices. Certain strong odors may be perceived as offensive and may distract other students from their learning experiences.

#### **12.0 Writing Center**

The University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University-Central Texas is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students. The UWC is located in Warrior Hall, Rm 416. One may contact Dr. Bruce Bowles at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu) for more information.

#### **13.0 Late Work**

As a rule, make-up work for exams is not offered. *The mid-term exam may be made up with instructor approval; however, in no instance will that make-up be given later than two weeks from the original exam date. To be considered as a prospect for making up the mid-term exam, the student must contact the instructor within 24 hours of having missed the exam for purposes of making it up.* The final course grade will be posted within a few days of the final exam; therefore, *no incompletes will be awarded for this course.* If students foresee that they will be unable to complete the course, then they should either drop the course or accept the posted grade.

#### **14.0 Student's Expectation of Grades**

If students foresee that their scores in class participation, reaction comments, or essays are unacceptable, they may wish to drop the course. Absences for any reasons, including medical, cannot be used to exempt one from the requirements of the course. For example, students may inform the instructor that they will not or did not make

class(es) for some reason. While the instructor appreciates the information about absences, students should not expect that they will be afforded leniency or a recalculation of grades based on this information. All students in a class must be treated fairly and equally. If students foresee that they will be unable to earn the grade they desire, then they should either drop the course or accept the posted grade.

**15.0 Modification of the Syllabus**

This syllabus may be revised in minor ways at the discretion of the instructor. The student is responsible for noting any changes in the syllabus. More than likely, a change in the syllabus will pertain to typos or events in the course calendar (§ 7.0). If modified, a revised course calendar will be posted on Canvas and will replace § 7.0 of the syllabus.

**16.0 Contact with the Instructor**

The student should contact the instructor via the message feature of Canvas about any topic or issue that pertains to the course. If students contact the instructor through the instructor's official TAMUCT email, they must use their own official TAMUCT email. Many personal emails find their way to the junk folder by default.

**17.0 Announcements**

The student is responsible for checking Canvas for ongoing announcements or messages pertaining to the course. For example, if a class is cancelled due to inclement weather, students would benefit from checking messages about the class cancellation and thus be able to alter their travel schedules.