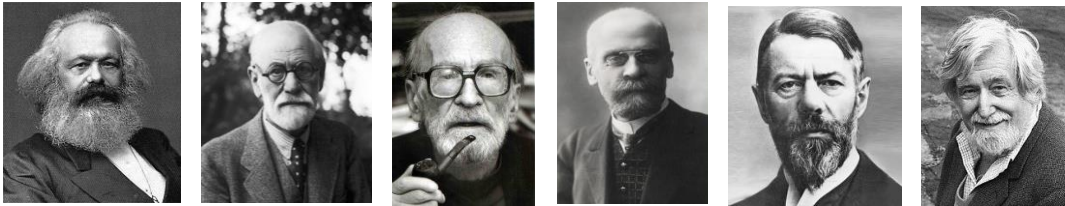


REL 1100 Introduction to the Study of Religion
(Formerly REL 100)
Oakland University
College of Arts and Sciences
Religious Studies
4 Credits
Fall 2018

Professor: Joshua Fleer
Email: jfleer@oakland.edu
Office: 448 Varner
Class Time: Online
Office Hours: by appointment



Course Catalog Description and Rationale:

Critical, comparative study of the human religious experience, as well as an examination of various methodological approaches employed by academic disciplines in the study of religion. (Formerly REL 100)

This course satisfies the requirement for the Concentration in Religious Studies, and the liberal arts Minors in Islamic Studies, Judaic Studies, and Christianity Studies.

Course Objectives:

- 1) For you to possess improved skills in critical reading and analytical writing, and participating in seminar and/or online class discussions.
- 2) For you to recognize the complex issues inherent in studying religion in a public university.
- 3) For you to provide an introductory overview of central methodologies used in the critical study of religious life and practice and operative in the broader public sphere.
- 4) For you to better understand the complex interaction between religious belief and the political, social, economic, cultural, intellectual, and familial context in which religious people inhabit and enact their faith.

Student Responsibilities: As a student enrolled in this course, you agree to do the following:

1) Participate in virtual class. It is essential for you to participate in all class assignments. You should expect to log into the class 3 to 5 times per week, or more. Excused absence includes documented illness, deaths in the immediate family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. Accommodations for these excused absences will be made and will be done in a way that does not penalize students who have a valid excuse. If you have advance knowledge of upcoming excusable absences, you should bring them to my attention in advance.

2) Complete assigned readings, in their entirety, on schedule. You must complete weekly assigned readings by the date and time indicated in the syllabus.

3) Complete all assignments, in a timely manner. I will excuse late submissions of work and permit incompletes only in distressing cases of death or extreme illness. You must bring such cases to my attention promptly. Late papers and exams will be substantially penalized.

4) Contribute to online discussions. You should prepare for class and participate in lively discussions.

5) Obey the OU Conduct Code. The Oakland University Academic Conduct Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the [Academic Conduct Policy](#) and for living up to their pledge to "...practice and uphold standards of academic integrity and honesty. . . . [by] representing oneself and one's work honestly" (Academic Conduct Policy is available at [http://catalog.oakland.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=483#Other Academic Policies](http://catalog.oakland.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=483#Other_Academic_Policies)). Violations of the OU Academic Conduct Policy will result in a student automatically receiving a failing grade for the course. In addition, I will pursue full administrative consequences against any and all cases of plagiarism.

6) Ask for help when you need it. I am always happy to assist students in their attempts to master course materials and successfully complete course assignments. I am available via email, and you can also schedule an office appointment with me on campus. Please contact me if you have questions about readings, lectures, or topics raised in course forums. I also am happy to provide guidance about how to refer to or cite another work in the assignments you complete for this course.

7) Register with Disability Support Services if you need accommodation. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to Disability Support Services; and (2) provide a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week that class meets. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to OU

students with disabilities, contact [Disability Support Services](#), 103A North Foundation Hall, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309-4401; phone: (248) 370-3266; fax: (248) 370-4327; TTY: (248) 370-3268; email: dss@oakland.edu; <http://www.oakland.edu/dss>.

8) Preferred Name Policy. If you do not identify with the name that is listed with the registrar, please notify me so that I may appropriately amend my records. In addition, if you prefer to go by a different pronoun, please inform me.

9) Add/Drop. The University add/drop policy will be explicitly followed. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the University deadline dates for dropping the course.

10) Technical Skills Required. As a student enrolled in this course, you are expected to have access to a computer with internet access. You should be able to operate your chosen computer and internet server with moderate level proficiency, and troubleshooting basic computer problems. Should you experience problems with Moodle, you may seek assistance from OU's e-Learning and Instructional Support. Click here: [OU's e-Learning and Instructional Support](#).

11) Communication: As a student enrolled in this course, you are expected to:

- login to the course 3–5 times per week.
- anticipate email responses from your professor in 1–2 days, or less.
- respond to professor emails within 2 days.
- observe netiquette. For more information on netiquette, please [click here to view netiquette](#)
- seek technical assistance if issues arise with Moodle by contacting the e-Learning and Instructional Support office at: Phone (248) 805-1625 or their help ticket submission website <http://www2.oakland.edu/elis/help.cfm?lms=2>

Required Texts and Technology:

Required books for this course may be purchased at the OU campus Barnes & Noble, at the Textbook Outlet on Squirrel, or online.

- Russell McCutcheon, [Studying Religion: An Introduction](#)
- Daniel L. Pals, [Nine Theories of Religion](#), 3rd ed.

As a student enrolled in this course, you will need:

- a computer with the most updated versions of your chosen web browser. Use of smartphones and tablets is not recommended.
- a backup computer in the event that your computer crashes or internet goes down. We've all been there before; technology can fail. In addition, it is highly recommended that you utilize a cloud solution for saving all of your work instead of relying on your hard drive or USB stick. Have a backup plan for your backup plan.

Course Assignments and Requirements:

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

Your grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

Weekly Reading Quizzes	110 points
Course Discussions	185 points
Course Assignments (see descriptions below)	230 points
Reflective Journal	75 points
Term Paper	200 points
Final Exam	200 points

TOTAL 1000 points

1) Weekly preparation quizzes, each worth 10 points, (110 points total). In order to do well in this course you must keep up with the reading schedule. The preparation component of your grade will be based on your numerical performance on weekly reading quizzes. Starting in week 2, each week will offer you the opportunity to earn 10 points toward your final tally of 110 possible points for preparation.

I give a short quiz on the assigned reading at the start of each week, starting in week 2. These quizzes serve two functions. First, they allow you to demonstrate that you did the assigned reading; second, they highlight central topics to be discussed throughout the week. Each quiz is worth 10 points. Reading quizzes consist of simple short-answer and multiple-choice questions. If you have done the assigned reading you will do well on the quizzes.

2) Course Discussion Forums, worth 185 points total. In addition to preparing for each class, you will be expected to participate in and contribute to class discussion based on your critical reading and comprehension of weekly virtual lectures and videos. You will post a reading Reflection to each discussion forum every week (one per week) by Wednesdays at midnight, and you will post at least two Responses per Reflection prompt to your colleagues' Reflections by Fridays at midnight. The Reflections and Responses will be posted to course discussion boards on our course Moodle site. Your weekly Reflections, due Wednesdays, will critically engage the reading based on Reflection prompts. Your colleague Responses, due Fridays, will engage your colleagues' posts. Reflections are worth 10 points each, and Responses are worth 2 points each. During the first week of class, you will introduce yourself and respond to your colleagues. This Introduction Forum is worth 5 points total.

3) Course Assignments, worth 230 points. Course Assignments have been selected for the purpose of introducing integrative modes of learning and demonstration, focused on a

variety of learning styles. Course Assignments will include:

Definition of Religion (10 points). You will submit your definition of religion during week 1. No outside research is required for this definition assignment. You are to write your definition of religion based upon your understanding at the outset of this course.

Comic Depictions (200 points total). You will depict in comic form the weekly theorists under consideration, from week 3 to week 13 (total of ten). You will create comic strips that depict your analytical interpretation of each theorist. These assignments are intended to tap into visual and kinesthetic learning styles. Your visual images should be created by hand and spatially organized in the layout of a comic strip. You may use a limited amount of words as necessary—perhaps word balloons and/or captions—but you should replace words with pictorial images whenever possible, keeping in mind that this assignment is intended for you to engage a different learning style than the written formats that other course assignments require. Use color and other creative devices as you develop your visual images. If you're an excellent artist, wonderful; if not, do not fret. You will not be graded on your artistic ability but rather on your depiction of the theory through the overall "craft" itself. You might think of this assignment as the creation of a miniature model. Your comic strip may include critiques of the unit. Example comics will be provided. You will upload your comic each week to the course Moodle site for class-wide access to your comic.

4) Reflective Journal, worth 75 points. You will submit a short 2-page reflective journal about your experience after a religious event (the same event that you will write your Term Paper on). For requirements for selecting your event of religious significance, see requirement 5, below. You must confirm your choice with the professor prior to moving forward with the project. Your reflective journal is due before Thanksgiving Recess by the end of the day on Wednesday, November 21.

5) Term Paper, worth 200 points. You will select an event of religious significance to visit (the same event as you went to for the Reflective Journal in requirement 4, above). You will write a 5–7-page paper. The paper will be based primarily on the selected event and it will give significant emphasis to critical analysis based on the assigned readings, course lectures, and class discussions. You may select an event of particular interest to you, or you may consult the professor about potential options that suit your interests and/or career path. Either way, you must confirm your choice with the professor prior to moving forward with the project. The paper is due by December 8th and should be uploaded to the link on the course Moodle site by the end of the day on December 8. Late papers will be penalized 50 points for each day they are late, starting at the end of the day on December 8.

Final Papers are worth 200 points. Papers will be graded according to the following criteria. An A term paper demonstrates not only a factual command of the material but also the ability to construct a coherent and complex argument-driven thesis that is supported by evidence and presented in clear and accurate prose. B grades will be assigned to term papers that possess both an identifiable thesis and adequate factual command, but that lack sufficient detail, or clarity and/or complexity in thinking or writing. Grades in the C range reflect papers that lack a thesis, or that provide minimal

detail or evidence, or that exhibit significant writing problems. D grades will be assigned to papers that are clearly inadequate in content, organization, and writing. For a writing rubric, see:

<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/resources/Teaching/CourseDesign/Assessment-Grading/Rubrics/PhilosophyPaperRubric.doc>

6) Final Exam, worth 200 points total. You will take a final exam. It will include short-answer and essay components covering course readings, lectures, discussions, and other assignments. You will have one hour to take the final exam on Saturday, December 15.

Grading Scale:

Final numerical grades for the course will be assigned according to [OU's Grading System](#) (found here:

http://catalog.oakland.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=483#Grading_System): A (4.0) 930–1000; A- (3.7) 900–929; B+ (3.3) 870–899; B (3.0) 830–869; B- (2.7) 800–829; C+ (2.3) 770–799; C (2.0) 730–769; C- (1.7) 700–729; D+ (1.3) 670–699; D (1.0) 600–669; No credit (0.0) 0–599.

Academic Conduct Policy: Cheating on examinations, plagiarism, falsifying reports/records, and unauthorized collaboration, access, or modifying of computer programs are considered serious breaches of academic conduct. The Oakland University policy on academic conduct will be strictly followed with no exceptions. See catalog under Academic Policies and Procedures. See also, Obey the OU Conduct Code, in Expectations of Students section (no. 6) above.

Special Considerations: Students with disabilities who may require special considerations should make an appointment with campus Disability Support Services. Students should also bring their needs to the attention of the instructor as soon as possible. See also, Register with Disability Support Services, in Expectations of Students section (no. 8) above.

Time Schedule and Topical Outline: The class schedule, below, indicates class dates, exam date, specific topical material to be covered, and reading/homework assignments. The instructor reserves the right to make minor adjustments to this schedule.

WHY STUDY RELIGION?

Week 1, September 5–7: Starting Foundations

Introduction to course themes, requirements, and methodologies

- McCutcheon, “What is the Academic Study of Religion?” (2 pp.)

Friday, September 7: Introduction forum post & responses due

- Submit 1–2 sentence definition of religion

Week 2, September 10–14: What Is the Study of Religion?

The Role of the Scholar

- McCutcheon, “What is the Study of Religion?” (pp. 1–6)
- McCutcheon, “What’s in a Name?” (pp. 7–14)

Wednesday, September 12: Reading Reflections due

Friday, September 14: Reading Responses due

WHAT IS RELIGION?: *How has the field of Religious Studies defined the category of “religion”?*

Week 3, September 17–21: What Is Religion?

Historiography; Comparative

- Pals, Introduction (pp. 1–13)

Wednesday, September 19: Reading Reflections due

Friday, September 21: Reading Responses due;

Müller Comic due

Week 4, September 24–28: What Is Religion?

Animism; Magic

- Pals, E. B. Tylor & James Frazer (pp. 15–44)

Wednesday, September 26: Reading Reflections due

Friday, September 28: Reading Responses due;

Tylor & Frazer Comic due

Week 5, October 1–5: What Is Religion?

Personality; Neurosis

- Pals, Sigmund Freud (pp. 49–76)

Wednesday, October 3: Reading Reflections

Friday, October 5: Reading Responses

Freud Comic due

Week 6, October 8–12: What Is Religion?

Society; the Collective

- Pals, Émile Durkheim (pp. 81–109)

Wednesday, October 10: Reading Reflections

Friday, October 12: Reading Responses

Durkheim Comic due

Week 7, October 15–19: What Is Religion?

Economics; Alienation

- Pals, Karl Marx (pp. 113–138)

Wednesday, October 17: Reading Reflections due

Friday, October 19: Reading Responses due

Marx Comic due

Week 8, October 22–26: What Is Religion?

Economics; Source

- Pals, Max Weber (pp. 143–180)

Wednesday, October 24: Reading Reflection due

Friday, October 26: Reading Responses due

Weber Comic due

Week 9, October 29–November 2: What Is Religion?

Philosophy; Religious Experience

- Pals, William James (pp. 185–222)

Wednesday, October 31: Reading Reflection due

Friday, November 2: Reading Responses due

James Comic due

Week 10, November 5–9: What Is Religion?

Phenomenology; the Sacred Reality

- Pals, Mercia Eliade (pp. 227–259)

Wednesday, November 7: Reading Reflection due

Friday, November 9: Reading Responses due

Eliade Comic due

Week 11, November 12–16: What Is Religion?

Anthropology; Cultural System

- Pals, E. E. Evans-Pritchard (pp. 263–290)

Wednesday, November 14: Reading Reflection due

Friday, November 16: Reading Responses due

Evans-Pritchard Comic due

Week 12, November 19–21: Assignments Due

No new assigned readings

Wednesday, November 21: Reflective Journal due

Wednesday, November 21: Extra Credit assignments due

Thanksgiving Recess: November 22–23

Week 13, November 26–30: What Is Religion?

Anthropology; Symbol

- Pals, Clifford Geertz (pp. 293–321)

Wednesday, November 28: Reading Reflection due

Friday, November 30: Reading Responses due

Geertz Comic due

HOW HAVE PEOPLE LIVED RELIGIOUSLY?

Week 14, December 3–7: Religious Embodiment and Reflexivity

The Religious Person & the Role of the Scholar

- McCutcheon, *Studying Religion* (pp. 15–71)

Wednesday, December 5: Reading Reflection due

Friday, December 7: Reading Responses due
Assignment due
Saturday, December 8: Final Term Paper due

FINAL EXAM: Saturday, December 15