

**Instructor:**

Scott Collins-Jones

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**Course Description:**

This course is intended to familiarize participants with most significant historical and contemporary approaches to the study of “religion”. We will consider perennial themes that all significant and enduring religious traditions deal with: the nature of the divine, what it means to be human, the problem of evil, the hope of the afterlife, religious ethics, etc. In addition to the world’s major historical religious traditions, the beliefs and practices of new religious movements and sects will be given attention and consideration.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Students will develop an understanding and appreciation of various religious traditions.
2. Students will learn to read texts *sympathetically* and *critically*.
3. Students will learn how to better dialogue about ideas and exchange reasons in defense of their own commitments.

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Students are expected to attend and participate in class.** Class participation will make up part of each student’s final grade. Repeated unexcused absences will result in a reduced participation grade.
2. **Students must do the assigned readings in order to fully participate in class.** Not doing the reading completely and carefully prevents you from engaging in the learning process and deprives us all of your potential contribution.
3. There will be several “pop” quizzes” on the reading material. These will come at the instructor’s discretion.
4. Each student will visit two gatherings of different religious communities reflecting two distinct religious traditions. These visits should include a **minimum** of two face to face interviews with religious adherents in these communities. A paper that is at least 5 pages in length will report on the visits, comparing and contrasting the different communities, their beliefs and their practices. This paper will be due on the date of the final examination.
5. Each student will write a 2-3 page essay on a current event that is religious in nature and, analyzing the event in light of course readings and discussions. This essay may be turned in any time throughout the semester.
6. There will be a comprehensive final exam at the end of the semester.

**Grading:**

Quizzes	10%
Participation	10%
Current Event Essay	20%
Interview Paper	30%
Final Exam	30%

**Required Texts:**

Livingston, James C., Anatomy of the Sacred, 5<sup>th</sup> edition.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

(subject to change)

**Part I The Study of Religion****Week 1:**

- Wed. Jan. 16 Introduction. What is Religion? Key Concepts. The Challenge of Defining Religion. Livingston, James, Anatomy of the Sacred (AOS), Chap. 1, pp. 3-18.  
 Fri. Jan.18 Why Study Religion? What Makes People Religious? The Perspective of the Student - Commitment vs. Objectivity.

**Week 2:**

- Mon. Jan. 21 Ways of Studying Religion: Historiography, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, Phenomenology AOS, pp. 19-33.  
 Wed. Jan. 23 More Ways of Studying Religion: Literary Criticism: Textual Criticism, Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism.  
 Fri. Jan. 28 Overview of Studying Religion

**Week 3:****Part II Universal Forms of Religious Experience and Expression**

- Mon. Jan. 31 The Nature of the Sacred: Rudolf Otto - *Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans*. AOS, Ch. 2, pp. 37-45.  
 Wed. Feb 2 Sacred Space and Sacred Time: Mircea Eliade. AOS, Ch. 2, pp. 46-56.  
 Fri. Feb 4 Symbols and the Language of Religion: AOS, Ch. 3, pp. 58-67.

**Week 4:**

- Mon. Feb. 7 Sacred Narratives: The Nature of Religious Myth. AOS, pp. 68-78.  
 Wed. Feb. 9 Religious Doctrine: From Myth and Symbol to Thought.  
 Fri. Feb. 12 Sacred Rituals: Life Cycle Rituals. AOS, Ch 4, pp. 80-94.

**Week 5:**

- Mon. Feb. 15 Sacred Rituals: Seasonal Rituals.  
 Wed. Feb. 18 Ritual as Sacrifice and as Sacrament. AOS, Ch. 4, pp. 95-102.  
 Fri. Feb. 21 Sacred Scripture: The Role, Features, and Authority of Sacred Texts. AOS, Ch. 5, pp. 104-115.

**Week 6:**

- Mon. Feb. 24 The Reception, Uses, and Interpretation of Scripture: Buddhist and Christian

- Wed. Feb. 27 Interpretations. AOS, pp. 116-133.  
 Society and the Sacred: The Social formations of Religion and Types of Religious Communities. AOS, Ch 6, pp. 135-146.
- Fri. Mar. 1 Society and the Sacred: Church, Sect, and Cult. AOS, pp. 147-160.

**Week 7:**

- Mon. Mar 4 The New Religious Movements in America: Transcendental Meditation and the Unification Church.
- Wed. Mar. 7 Overview of Part II

**Part III Universal Components of a Religious Worldview**

- Fri. Mar 9 Deity: Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality. AOS, Ch 7, pp. 163-174.

**March 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Spring Break****Week 8:**

- Mon. Mar. 19 Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality: Dualism, Pantheism, Monism, Monotheism. AOS, pp. 175-192.
- Wed. Mar 21 Cosmogony: Types of Creation; Creation by a Divine Craftsman and Creation *Ex nihilo*. AOS, Ch. 8, pp. 196-212.
- Fri. Mar. 23 The Rejection of Cosmogony and the Creationist Controversy Today. AOS, pp. 213-221.

**Week 9:**

- Mon. Mar 26 Anthropology or Religious Views of Human Nature: Stoicism and Christianity. AOS, Ch. 9, pp. 223-228.
- Wed, Mar 28 Religious Views of Human Nature: Buddhism and Christianity. AOS, pp. 229-244.
- Fri. Mar. 30 Theodicy: The Problem of Evil; Monotheistic Theodicy and the Book of Job. AOS, Ch. 10, pp. 247-257.

**Week 10:**

- Mon. Apr 2 Karmic and Monotheistic Theodicies. AOS, pp. 258-271.
- Wed. Apr 4 Religious Ethics: Virtues and Obligations. AOS, Ch. 11, pp. 273-276
- Fri Apr 6 Religious Ethics: Sources and Norms of Moral Authority. AOS, pp. 276-298.

**Week 11:**

- Mon. Apr. 9 Soteriology: Ways of Salvation and Liberation Through Grace and Devotion,.

Wed. Apr 11 AOS, Ch. 12, pp. 301-319.  
 Soteriology: Action and Obligation  
 Fri. Apr. 13 Soteriology: Meditation and Insight. AOS, pp. 320-325.

**Week 12:**

Mon Apr. 15 Eschatology: Goals of Liberation and Salvation: Resurrection, Immortality and  
 Eternal Life, AOS pp. 326-348.  
 Wed. Apr. 17 Eschatology: Samadhi and Nirvana.  
 Fri. Apr 19 Overview of Part III

**Week 13:****Part IV: The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity**

Mon. Apr. 21 The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity, AOS, Ch. 13, pp. 353-358  
 Wed. Apr. 23 The Fundamentalist Reaction, AOS, pp. 359-379.  
 Fri. Apr. 25 Overview of Section IV

**Week 14:**

Mon. Apr 28 The Clash of Civilizations?:  
 Wed. Apr.30 The Dignity of Difference  
 Fri. May 1 Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt and Certainty

**Week 15:**

Mon May 4 Final Exam Review

**Final Exam Date To Be Announced**

**Note to Students with Disabilities:** Penn State does not discriminate against qualified students with documented disabilities in its educational programs. If you have a learning disability-related need for modifications in this course, contact Sharon Manco, 610-892-1461, 203A Main. If you have a physical disability-related need for modifications in this course, contact Doreen Hettich, 610-892-1331, 210 A/C. This notification should occur by the end of the first week of the semester.

**Academic Integrity:** All students are expected to act with civility and personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights, and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. An environment of academic integrity is essential to respect for self and others and a civil community.

Academic integrity includes a commitment to not engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another person's work as one's own, using internet sources without citation, fabricating field data or citations, "ghosting" (taking an exam in place of another student or having another student take an exam in one's own place), stealing examinations, tampering with the academic work of another student, facilitating other students' acts of academic dishonesty, etc.

Academic dishonesty violates the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and

compromises the worth of work completed by others. A student should avoid academic dishonesty when preparing work for any class. If charged with academic dishonesty, the student will receive written or oral notice of the charge by the instructor. Students who contest the charge should first seek resolution through discussion with the faculty member or the campus Director of Academic Affairs. If the matter is not resolved, the student may request a hearing with the Commonwealth College Committee on Academic Integrity at the campus.