

RELG 3301
Theories and Methods in Religious Studies

University of Central Arkansas
Spring, 2014

Sequence: 27349

Time: 10:50am -12:05pm TTH Room: Har 127

Instructor: Dr. Jim Deitrick
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Office Hours:
MWF 10:00am – 12:00n
TTh 9:45am-10:45am
And by appointment

Course Description

This course surveys major theories and methods in the study of religion and explores the nature of Religious Studies as an academic field of study. Theories and methods from the humanities and social sciences will be covered. This course satisfies the Theory and Method requirement for the Religious Studies major and minor programs. It also satisfies the Upper-Division Critical Inquiry and Communication area requirements of the new UCA Core program.

Course Goals

Students who complete this course will understand

- several major theories of religion from a variety of disciplinary perspectives;
- the ways in which different academic disciplines and individual researchers approach the study of religion; and
- how these disciplines and researchers contribute to the field of Religious Studies to form a coherent whole.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able

- to identify and explain several theories of religion;
- to articulate and defend their own critical ideas about the nature of religion and religious studies; and
- to identify and explain several methods for the study of religion from a variety of disciplines.

Activities of the Course

Students will achieve these objectives through a variety of activities, including lecture, study of important primary and secondary texts, class discussions, and various writing assignments.

Assessment of Student Achievement

Attendance & Participation: Students will be assigned a grade for their attendance and participation in this course. Students' participation will be measured with respect not only or especially to its frequency (although regular participation is required), but more importantly to the contribution it makes to the course by raising important questions or sharing critical

observations. Students are expected to come to class having read and studied all assigned materials for the day and should be prepared to discuss assigned materials critically with others. Lack of preparation may be counted as an un-excused absence. Legitimate excuses for absences include illness and unforeseen personal or familial emergencies. Legitimate excuses must be submitted to the instructor in writing. It is the student's responsibility to find out what was missed in case of absence. Students who arrive late should see the professor after class to make sure their attendance is properly recorded.

Discussion Questions: Students will prepare two questions for each class on the assigned readings that will be used as a basis for class discussions. Questions will be collected each class period.

Essay Exams: Students will take three take-home essay exams. Each exam will consist of two essays of approximately three pages each.

Note: All take-home assignments must be typed, stapled (not paper-clipped), formatted according to an accepted style, and submitted *at the beginning of class* on the date due. Assignments will not be accepted electronically (i.e., via email). Late assignments will not be accepted without prior permission from the professor. Credit for the course will not be given unless all assignments have been completed as required.

Grading:

Attendance and Participation	15%
Discussion Questions	10%
Essay Exams	75% (25%/ea.)

Final grades will be calculated according to the following schedule:

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
below 60%	F

Note: As a general rule, students should be prepared to study two to three hours outside of class for every hour spent in class. As this course meets three hours per week, students should expect to spend six to nine hours per week studying for this course. Students who are unable or unwilling to commit this amount of time should drop the course as they are otherwise liable to fail it.

Statement on Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Statement on Americans with Disabilities Act

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, contact the Office of Disability Support Services at 450-3135.

Building Emergency Plan

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

Student Handbook Policies

Students are responsible to familiarize themselves with the policies listed in the Student Handbook. Special attention should be given to the Sexual Harassment and Academic Policies.

Use of Electronic Equipment

Students may use computers, smartphones, etc. in class to take notes and access the Internet (sparingly) for appropriate, course-related purposes. These devices may not be used in class to check email, surf the Internet, IM, or for any other purpose not directly related to the class. The professor reserves the right to forbid any student from using electronic devices if such use distracts others or otherwise disrupts the course.

Recording Devices

Students may not use audio or video recording devices in class without the professor's permission.

Required Texts

Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: A Selection of Critical Readings, ed. Carl Olson
The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion, ed. Robert A. Segal

Recommended Texts

Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline, by Walter H. Capps

Course Outline and Tentative Schedule

Jan 9	Course Introduction
Jan 14/16	Religious Studies as an Academic Discipline Reading: Olson Chaps. 1 & 2; Segal Introduction
Jan 21/23	Quest for the Origins of Religion Reading: Olson Chap. 3
Jan 28/30	Phenomenology & the Science of Religion Reading: Olson Chap. 4; Segal Chap. 5
Feb 4/6	History of Religions Reading: Olson Chap. 5

- Feb 11/13 Topics in the Study of Religion #1
Reading: Segal TBA
First Essay Exam Due Feb. 11
- Feb 18/20 Sociology of Religion
Reading: Olson Chap. 6; Segal Chap. 8
- Feb 25/27 Anthropology of Religion
Reading: Olson Chap. 7; Segal Chap. 1
- Mar 4/6 Psychology of Religion
Reading: Olson Chap. 8; Segal Chap. 7
- Mar 11/13 Topics in the Study of Religion #2
Reading: Segal TBA
- Mar 18/20 Economics and Literature
Reading: Segal Chaps. 3-4
Second Essay Exam Due Mar. 18
- Mar 25/27 No Class: Spring Break
- Apr 1/3 Philosophy of Religion and Theology
Reading: Segal Chaps. 6 & 9
- Apr 8/10 Feminist Approaches to the Study of Religion
Reading: Olson Chap. 10; Segal Chap. 10
- Apr 15/17 Post-Modern Approaches to the Study of Religion
Reading: Olson Chap. 11; Segal Chap. 17
- Apr 22/24 Topics in the Study of Religion #3
Reading: Segal TBA

Final Essay Exam Due May 1, 11:00 am