

Religion 202: Intro to the Study of Religion (Fall 2018)

Dr. Luke Whitmore; lwhitmor@uwsp.edu

Office Hours: Tues: 3:20-4:00, Wed. 4-5:00; Thurs. 3:20-4:00 and by appointment



"I may be a member but I wouldn't identify myself as 'religious.'"

Description: We live in a world filled with religion, and it is our job as friends, relatives, coworkers, professionals, American citizens, and members of a global community to be able to engage this powerful aspect of human life. This task of understanding matters regardless of our own personal relationships to a specific religious tradition. Equipping you for the beginning of this journey is the goal of this course. This class introduces students to the comparative study of religion, an academic discipline within the modern university. In this discipline we seek to UNDERSTAND how religion functions in the lives of individuals and communities and to ANALYSE the complex interrelationships between religion and other aspects of culture. During this semester we will examine the basic tools and vocabulary employed in the academic study of religion.

By the end of this course you will have been given the tools to accomplish the following:

- Be able to explain and apply our “Three Step Rules of Engagement” (identifying and bracketing biases, empathetic engagement, analysis and informed response) when encountering diverse forms of religion in the world.
- Be able to identify key elements and features that constitute the category of religion (e.g., myth, ritual, symbol, etc.) and apply these elements and features in the description and empathetic investigation of diverse religions.
- Demonstrate an ability to read carefully, think critically and communicate clearly (in oral and written forms) about religious phenomenon, theories of religion, and the problem of how to define religion.
- Practice civil discourse, meaning to engage in oral and written communication about religion in ways that are accurate, respectful, permit disagreement, and lead to greater understanding.
- Obtain reliable information on different topics related to the study of religion.

Grading:

4 short formal essays + 3-Step Worksheets @ 12.5% each = 50%

Midterm (in-class) = 15%

Final Exam (part in-class, part take home) = 20%

Oral report, attendance and class participation = 15%

Note about written assignments:

If you are not able to turn in an essay, test, or project on time due to *particularly extenuating* circumstances, some flexibility may be possible. If this is the case, you must have asked and **received** permission from me no later than the day the assignment is due. Otherwise, a grade penalty will be assigned at my discretion. If there is any confusion about whether or not you have successfully submitted the assignment I will ask that you send me the automatic email confirmation D2L sends you when you successfully upload a document.

Explanation of Graded Assignments

Each essay will focus on application of concepts and methods learned to the understanding and interpretation of the narrative we are reading. Essay guidelines and a grading rubric will be provided for each assignment. Good essays will demonstrate the following:

- Correct understanding of concepts and methods
- appropriate application of examples to illustrate concepts and methods
- evidence of critical thinking and clear argumentation
- clarity and organization of the essay, grammar, spelling, etc.
- typed, double-spaced and approximately 500-750 words.

Midterm (15%) and Final (20%):

The midterm and final will test key terms and concepts presented in class and in assigned materials, and ability to apply terms and concepts to specific contexts. A study guide for each will be provided. The midterm is in-class, closed book. The final is half take-home and half in-class closed book.

Oral Presentation (5%) / attendance (5%) / class participation (5%):

Oral presentation:

- Each student must give a *3-5 minute oral presentation* on a specific religious phenomenon, keyed to topics such as myth, ritual, gods, religious leaders, symbols.
- Students must obtain reliable information about their topic, using at least three sources *including one source that is drawn from library based resources*. "Library based" means resources physically found in the library or accessible through the library home page, such as the *Encyclopedia of Religion*.
- Students will present their material in a way that connects with class content, and will make use of appropriate visual aids.
- Students will avoid distracting body language, speak clearly, and make eye contact with audience.
- By the beginning of class on the day of the presentation, you must submit a *one page outline of the presentation, clarifying the main idea of your presentation and including the citations* (in appropriate format) of the

sources you used. This document should be typed and grammatically clean. Upload one copy to the D2L "Oral Presentations" dropbox and paste the text into the discussion forum thread entitled "Outlines of Student Oral Presentations" so others can access your sources if needed.

Class participation:

- You should come to class having completed the assignments for the day and ready to actively and thoughtfully participate in class discussions or small group discussions.
- Participation includes bringing the assigned reading to class for reference.
- Students will encourage each other to practice civil discourse during our class discussions.

Attendance

Regular attendance is expected.

- 2 or fewer unexcused absences (Excellent) = 90-100%
- 3-6 unexcused absences (Good) = 80-90%
- 6-10 unexcused absences (Poor) = 66-79%
- More than 10 unexcused absences = failing grade for attendance.

Absences will be excused only when the excuse is provided (via email or in person) in advance of the class that will be missed. You should also be sure to upload a note/relevant information (including a copy of emails to me) into the "Absence-Related Info" folder on D2L. Acceptable reasons for an excused absence are illness, family emergency, or school sponsored trip or athletic competition.

If you miss class (excused or unexcused) you should complete the assignments, request and review notes from a colleague, and then come to discuss with me any questions you have about the material. and study any class notes posted on D2L.

Note: If you miss more than 5 classes I strongly suggest that we meet in person to discuss how things are going. I have found that repeated absence usually means you are struggling with something.

Required Texts:

Text Rental

Morreall, John, and Tamara Sonn. *The Religion Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Religious Studies*. 1st ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Text Purchase:

Dennis Covington. *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia*, 2009.

Gita Mehta. *A River Sutra*. Vintage, 1994.

Courtney Bender. *Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at God's Love We Deliver*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 2003.

Percentage to Letter Grade Conversion

A: 94-100, A-: 90-93, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+:77-79, C: 73-76. C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 65-66, F: 64 or lower

Learning Accommodations

UWSP is committed to providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities and temporary impairments. If you have a disability or acquire a condition during the semester where you need assistance, please contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center on the 6th floor of Albertson Hall (library) as soon as possible. DATC can be reached at 715-346-3365 or DATC@uwsp.edu. <https://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx>

Written Assignments

If you are not able to turn in on time due to particularly extenuating circumstances, some flexibility may be possible. If this is the case, you must have asked and received permission from me no later than the day before the assignment is due. Without permission, a grade penalty will be assigned at my discretion or I may not allow you to submit.

Required Readings

If I do not provide photocopies of an assigned reading not in one of our books or the reader, you must print out the reading (you will find PDF versions on our D2L site) and bring to class.

Electronics

Tablets or laptops for the purposes of note-taking are fine, with permission. If your smart phone use is causing our collective energy to decrease I will let you know. If it continues to be an issue it will impact your grade.

Assignments

Assignments will change. Be sure to check the online Schedule of Assignments before each assignment.

Mutual Respect

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf>

Academic Misconduct

<http://library.uwsp.edu/guides/vrd/plagiarism.htm>

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf#page=11>

Emergency Response Guidance:

- In the event of a medical emergency call 9-1-1 or use the closest Red Emergency Phone. Offer assistance if trained and willing to do so. Guide emergency responders to victim.
- In the event of a tornado warning, proceed to the lowest level interior room without window exposure.
- In the event of a fire alarm, evacuate the building in a calm manner.
- Active Shooter/Code React – Run/Escape, Hide, Fight. If trapped hide, lock doors, turn off lights, spread out and remain quiet. Call 9-1-1 when it is safe to do so. Follow instructions of emergency responders. See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.”

Schedule of Assignments

Note: readings are to be done in preparation for the class date on which they are assigned.

Week 1

- Tuesday, September 4, 2018
 - Beginnings
- Thursday, September 6, 2018
 - Covington, Prologue and Chs. 1-2 (Prologue, 1-44)
 - Prof. Keefe's "Three Step Rules of Engagement" (handout; PDF on D2L).
 - Fill out About Me document, upload to About Me dropbox on D2L as a .docx
 - *The Religion Toolkit* ("Toolkit") Ch. 2: 17-22 (Theodicy); 22-26 (Death)
 - Note: Salvation on Sand Mountain Orienting Questions can be found on D2L. You do not HAVE to answer these questions, or even look at them. Use them if they are useful. There is also a brief explanation of how you should approach readings from *The Religion Toolkit*.

Week 2

- Tuesday, September 11, 2018
 - Covington: Chs. 3-6 (45-132)
- Thursday, September 13, 2018
 - Covington, chs. 6-10 (133-240)

Week 3

- Tuesday, September 18, 2018
 - Covington: Afterword (241-249)
 - Toolkit: 26-30 (Order); 30-42 (Social Order and Ritual)
 - Ninian Smart's "Introduction to the 7 Dimensions of Religion" (PDF on D2L: print out and bring to class)
- Thursday, September 20, 2018
 - Essay #1 Due.
 - In-Class Discussion of SOSM and Toolkit with possibility of extra credit

Week 4

- Tuesday, September 25, 2018 (Religion and Migration evening)
 - *A River Sutra* (ARS) 1-13
 - Toolkit: 207-211: Indian Religions Intro
 - Paden: "Religious Worlds" (PDF on D2L; print out and bring to class)

- Thursday, September 27, 2018
 - ARS: 14-41 (The Jain Monk)
 - Pluralism Project Background Reading about Jainism
 - <http://pluralism.org/religions/jainism/introduction-to-jainism/a-hospital-for-birds/>
 - <http://pluralism.org/religions/jainism/introduction-to-jainism/mahavira/>
 - <http://pluralism.org/religions/jainism/introduction-to-jainism/ahimsa-reverence-for-life/>

Week 5

- Tuesday, October 2, 2018
 - Paden "Ritual and Time" (PDF on D2L; print out and bring to class)
 - Oral Presentations: Annual Rituals or Festivals
 - Note: bring SOSM And *A River Sutra* to class. Be prepared to offer your own summary of the reading to parts of the class.
- Thursday, October 4, 2018
 - Paden: "Myth" (PDF on D2L; print out and bring to class)
 - Oral Reports: Myths of Creation
 - Note: bring SOSM And *A River Sutra* to class. Be prepared to offer your own summary of the reading to parts of the class.
 - Essay #2 handed out.

Week 6

- Tuesday, October 9, 2018
 - View: Inside Mecca (available through Films on Demand, accessed through the UWSP library database). This is a direct link but it is better to USE THE LINK ON D2L
<https://login.ezproxy.uwsp.edu/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/OnDemandEmbed.aspx?token=40768&wID=240117&plt=FOD&loid=0&w=640&h=480&fWidth=660&fHeight=530>
 - Oral Reports: Rituals of any type
 - **Come to class ready work on an interpretation of Inside Mecca.**

- Thursday, October 11, 2018
 - **Essay #2 due.**
 - **When you get to class, go to D2L and open the Thursday Oct 11 Assignment document. Have fun!**

Week 7

- Tuesday, October 16, 2018
 - ARS 92-128: Begin The Executive's Story
 - Read Pals on Durkheim (PDF on D2L: print out and bring to class)
 - Oral Reports: Myths about the End of the World
- Thursday, October 18, 2018
 - ARS: 129-148: Finish "The Executive's Story"
 - Read Pals on Eliade (PDF on D2L: print out and bring to class)
 - Oral Reports: Symbols
 - Review Sheet for Midterm Handed Out

Week 8

- Tuesday, October 23, 2018: Review
 - ARS 42-91: The Teacher's Story
 - Midterm review
- Thursday, October 25, 2018
 - **Midterm: In-Class**

Week 9

- Tuesday, October 30, 2018
 - Musician's Story (ARS 191-226)
 - Introduction in class of new Step 3 questions in Three Step Rules of Engagement
 - OPTIONAL: ARS 149-190: The Courtesan's Story - Read for fun.
 - Oral Reports: Symbols
- Thursday, November 1, 2018
 - Minstrel's Story (ARS 227-282)
 - Oral Reports: Sacred Centers/ Sacred Places

Week 10

- Tuesday, November 6, 2018
 - Critical Thinking 1
 - Keown_Buddhism and Elephants (PDF on D2L; print out and bring to class)
 - Is Buddhism a Religion (PDF on D2L; print out a bring to class)
 - Note -- this is actually two readings - read both.
 - Toolkit: 229-237
- Thursday, November 8, 2018
 - Critical Thinking 2
 - Do the "Critical Thinking Online Lesson" (see link on D2L)
 - Take the "Introduction to Critical Thinking D2L quiz (see link on D2L)
 - Fill out 3 Reading Summaries (one for each of the 3 readings from Tuesday, November 6) and bring filled out Reading Summaries to class

Week 11

- Tuesday, November 13, 2018
 - Essay #3 and 3-Steps Worksheet due.
 - In-class Critical Thinking Exercise.
- Thursday, November 15, 2018: Exploring the Sociology of Religion
 - Toolkit: Sociology of Religion (94-96)
 - Reread PALS on Durkheim (see assignment from week 7)
 - Heaven's Kitchen (HK): Preface (vii-xiii), Ch 1 (p. 1-8)
 - Oral Reports: Life Cycle Rituals

Week 12

- Tuesday, November 20, 2018. No physical class.

- HK Chapter 1, 8-24
- Assignment in place of class. This assignment has three parts.

Parts 1 and 2: Upload your answers to these questions in the Heavens Kitchen Chapter 1 Dropbox on D2L.

- **Part 1:** Do a 3-Steps (Metacognitive) analysis on the scene from Chapter 1 where Courtney first visits Heaven's Kitchen. For step 2b be sure to use terms from the term bank from the midterm.
- **Part 2:** Answer the following questions. Answers do not need to be longer than one-two sentences per question.
 - What new interpretive ideas (etic terms) does Bender teach us in this chapter?
 - What does Bender think is the problem with classic sociological approaches to religion in America?
 - How does her focus on "practice" and religion in everyday life represent a break from how earlier sociologists of religion have thought about religion and the sacred?
 - What does visiting the Friend's Seminary Quaker school allow her to see about God's Love We Deliver? What "religious" stuff was present at the Quaker school that was seemingly (but not really, in her argument) absent at God's Love We Deliver?
- **Part 3:** Upload your answer to the following question to the Discussion Forum thread entitled "Heavens Kitchen Chapter 1"
 - Where would Bender find religion/spirituality (we'll talk about how these are overlapping categories) in the lives of UWSP students? Remember that Bender would NOT focus on explicitly "religious" spaces and situations like churches and worship services and scriptural study.

This assignment goes towards the participation and preparations grade — failure to complete the assignment (or completion of the assignment in a quick, thoughtless way) will produce a reduction in that grade.

- Thursday, November 22, 2018: THANKSGIVING

Week 13

- Tuesday, November 27, 2018
 - HK Chapter 2, 25-41
 - HK Chapter 3, 42-61
 - Oral Reports: Material Culture

- Thursday, November 29, 2018
 - HK Chapter 4, 62-89
 - HK Chapter 5 90-115
 - Oral Reports: Experiences of "The Sacred"
 - Essay #4 Guidelines handed out.

Week 14

- Tuesday, December 4, 2018
 - HK Chapter 6 + Conclusion (117-141)
 - Oral Reports: Experiences of "The Sacred"

- Thursday, December 6, 2018
 - Essay #4 due.
 - Begin viewing *Kumare* in-class.

Week 15

- Tuesday, December 11, 2018
 - Finish *Kumare* for class.
 - Prep for in-class discussion/debate about *Kumare*.
 - Use some combination of the following:
 - <http://www.kumare.org/home/>
 - The ATLA religion database (available through the UWSP library)
 - The Encyclopedia of Religion, 2nd edition (available through the UWSP library)
 - The Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism, available in the UWSP library reference room but not online
 - *The Religion Toolkit*
 - Handout of study guide for final exam.
 - Scenario

Student followers of Shri Kumare at UWSP have decided to form a student organization dedicated to the teachings of Shri Kumare. Should they register it as a religious organization? Our class has been asked to offer an expert opinion about whether this is a "religious" organization. We will therefore have a small

debate on the final day of class to settle the matter. Details about the debate will be provide on Tuesday.

- Students in the group have already been surveyed about their own views. Some feel the path of Shri Kumare is "religious," some feel that it is "spiritual," some feel that it is "spiritual and not religious," some feel that it is "spiritual and religious," and some feel that it is simply a deeply useful path of life transformation that has no connection to religion or spirituality. No view predominates, but all agree that if you follow the path of Shri Kumare you are heading towards some kind of "transformation."
- The group is not requesting any funding.
- All are welcome.
- There will be a question on the final exam that is based on this scenario.

--

- Thursday's class will begin with each side stating their positions, in the form of a (SURPRISE) conclusion that makes specific claims (based on interpretive ideas) about specific pieces of evidence that (in the context of the conclusion) function as reasons that the conclusion is valid. These initial statements should be no more than 2 minutes long, and a written version should be placed in the "Kumare" google document for all students to reference.
- The format for Thursday's debate will be as follows
 - opening statements (2 minutes each)
 - (15 minutes to plan rebuttals)
 - rebuttal statements (3 minutes each)
 - 15 minutes to plan
 - concluding statements (2 minutes each)
 - Judges will be welcome to ask clarifying questions.
 - Judges may, at their discretion, render their decision in class. However, their assignment is to render their decision in the form of a (SURPRISE) written conclusion that makes specific claims (based on interpretive ideas) about specific pieces of evidence that (in the context of the conclusion) function as reasons that the conclusion is valid. This conclusion should be posted to the Kumare google document by no later than Friday at 5PM.
- Thursday, December 13, 2018
 - Debate
 - Final Conversations