

SYLLABUS

RELIGION 265 OC CULTS, SECTS, AND NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS Winter 2011

Login page: <https://mylearningspace.wlu.ca/>

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Course Introduction

This course is divided into four learning modules: One: Introduction to New Religious Movements (NRMs); Two: People in New Religious Movements; Three: Controversial Issues in New Religious Movements; Four: New Directions in New Religious Movements. We will begin each module by studying a scholarly account of a different New Religious Movement; specifically, we will study the Church of Scientology, the Bahá'í Faith, the Unification Church, and Osho with the aim of gaining accurate knowledge about some of the history, beliefs, practices, and principles of these groups.

Module one will be the most theoretical of the four modules, since it deals with issues related to the study of NRMs and ways of classifying NRMs. Nonetheless, you should come away from this module with the practical ability to distinguish scholarly accounts of NRMs from other accounts, and the practical ability to categorize NRMs according to different theoretical schemes.

In module two we will move into a more personal dimension of this topic by discussing the people in NRMs; we will look at who joins NRMS, why they join, why they leave, and how they leave. Our aim here will be to find out what empirical research tells us, and what informed theorizing suggests to us, about these matters. We will enhance our comprehension of such theories by trying to apply them.

In module three you will further develop your ability, gained in module one, to recognize different perspectives on NRMs by examining some controversial issues related to NRMs. Specifically, we will look at some “points and counterpoints” with respect to the controversial claims that NRMs use “brainwashing” techniques on their adherents and that they are inherently violent – with the aim of coming to our own *informed* and *reasoned* opinions on these issues.

Module four is based on the premise that New Religious Movements, on account of their newness, possess some novel religious teachings and some novel approaches to religion in general. Consequently, we will look at gender issues in NRMs and the use of the Internet by NRMs. As usual, we will try to find out what scholarly research tells about these matters, and develop our own informed and reasoned opinions.

As a visual introduction to this field of inquiry I have included a film called *In the Name of God: (Part I & Part II)* that profiles a number of different NRMs. I would suggest that you watch this film before commencing with the course work, simply to get

a feel for the type of material we are going to be dealing with during this term. Also, pay special attention to the sections on Scientology, the Unification Church, and Osho.

Marking Scheme

This course consists of twelve units; four related to specific new religious movements (NRMs), and eight related to topics connected to new religious movements in general. Your understanding of the specific NRMs covered will be tested in four on-line quizzes, and your understanding of the eight topics covered will be tested through a combination of “learning activities” (short written assignments) and a final exam. You will also be required to complete one major assignment, due at “midterm,” and to participate in four on-line “discussion-groups.” Following is a more detailed breakdown of the marking scheme.

Quizzes: 15% of final grade

Four on-line quizzes will be given to test your knowledge of the four NRMs we will be studying in this course, i.e. the Church of Scientology, the Bahá'í Faith, the Unification Church, and Osho. These quizzes will be based on the readings, the course video, and/or the lecture notes related to these groups. You will automatically receive a grade out of 15 for each quiz taken. Your final quiz grade (worth 15% of your final grade) will be calculated by averaging your highest 3 quiz grades. To locate the quizzes click on the “Quizzes” heading and then locate the appropriate quiz; the quizzes can be written any time during the four-day window they are scheduled for, and you will have 30 minutes to write them. Please see online Calendar for quiz dates.

Learning Activities: 15% of final grade

A learning activity (a short written assignment) will be given in connection with units 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12. These learning activities will test your knowledge of the theoretical material covered in the lectures and readings of these units. You will be required to submit three learning activities, for a total of 15% of your final grade. Any three of the eight learning activities may be completed, but you may not do both Learning Activity One (LA1) and LA2, both LA3 and LA4, both LA5 and LA6, or both LA7 and LA8. You will not be retested on material covered in the learning activities. All learning activities are to be submitted as attachments via the MyLS Dropbox. Please do not cut and paste your LAs into the assignment area, and do not submit your assignments to the Online Learning Office. Please see online Calendar for due dates.

Midterm Assignment: 35% of final grade

For your midterm assignment you will have four options: 1) a comparative analysis of a new religious movement; 2) a book review, 3) an analysis of Internet usage in a specific NRM, or 4) a research paper. For the comparative analysis you will use Internet resources to compare “competing” perspectives on a NRM of your choice; for the book review you will review a popular or scholarly book selected from a supplied

bibliography; for the Internet assignment you will compare how a particular group uses the Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 technologies; for the research paper you will write on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. Detailed instructions about these three options are available in the “Course Information” section under “Content.” As with the learning activities, please submit your midterm assignment as an attachment through the MyLS “Dropbox.”

Final Exam: 25% of final grade

The final exam will test your knowledge of the theoretical material covered in this course, *that you did not complete a learning activity on*. More specifically, you will be required to answer 5 short essay questions from the material covered in units 2 (studying NRMs), 3 (types of NRMs), 5 (joining NRMs), 6 (leaving NRMs), 8 (the “brainwashing” controversy), 9 (the NRM-violence connection), 11 (gender issues), and 12 (NRMs and the Internet) *if you did not complete a learning activity related to this material*. The numbers of the eight exam questions will correspond with the numbers of the Learning Activities; thus, for example, if you complete Learning Activities 1, 3, and 5, you will answer Exam Questions 2, 4, 6, 7, 8. Each exam question will be worth 5% of your final grade for a total of 25%. The final exam will be held during the final exam period: consult the Online Learning web page for the exam schedule.

Discussions: 10% of final grade

A discussion question, related to each of the eight theoretical topics, will be posted in the “Discussions” section. You will be required to post a response to four of these eight questions. The questions are meant to prepare you for the readings by causing you to think about the questions that our theorists are trying to answer and/or to make you aware of some of your current presuppositions about these matters; therefore, it would be best to answer the questions before completing the lectures and readings. Discussion questions will be posted at the start of each theoretical week, and open for one full week. Discussion grades are self evaluated.

Policy on Late Assignments:

All assignments are to be submitted by midnight of the day they are due. Late learning activities will not be accepted; late midterm assignments will be penalized 5% per day and will not be accepted after one week from the due date. Exceptions will be made on account of documented medical emergencies, or other exceptional circumstances that are discussed with the instructor *beforehand*.

Communications Policy:

Please use the MyLS email function to communicate with me (Grant Martin: gmartin7) about course related matters. I will not respond to emails related to RE265OC at my personal WLU email address.

Course Outline

Module One: Introduction to New Religious Movements (Units I, II, III)

Learning Outcomes: At the end of module one students will.....

- 1) know about the history, beliefs, practices, and social principles of one New Religious Movement (Scientology).
- 2) be able to identify and understand scholarly arguments or theses.
- 3) understand some of the methodological issues in the field of Religious Studies.
- 4) be able to practically distinguish amongst the many different sources of information about New Religious Movements (NRMs) on the Internet.
- 5) understand and be able to apply two different theoretical frameworks for categorizing different types of New Religious Movements.

Unit I: The Church of Scientology (Official Web Site: <http://www.scientology.org/>)

i) Lecture One: The Church of Scientology

ii) Reading:

J. Gordon Melton, *The Church of Scientology, USA*: Signature Books, 2000, 1-64.

iii) On-Line Quiz on Scientology

Unit II: The Study of New Religious Movements

i) Bulletin Board Discussion: Question One

ii) Lecture Two: Representing Cults, Sects, New Religious Movements, and New World Religions.

iii) Readings:

Eileen Barker, "The Scientific Study of Religion? You Must Be Joking!" In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 7-25.

Eileen Barker, "Watching for Violence: A Comparative Analysis of the Roles of Five Types of Cult Watching Groups." In Bromley and Melton (eds.) *Cults, Religion, and Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 123-148. (Course Pack, Reading #1: pp. 124-134)

Religious Movements Page. *Conceptualizing “Anti-Cult” and “Counter-Cult.”*
<http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/cultsect/anticounter.htm>

iv) Learning Activity #1

Unit III: Types of New Religious Movements

i) Bulletin Board Discussion: Question Two

ii) Lecture Three: What Types of New Religious Movements Are There and What Type of Religion is a New Religious Movement?

iii) Readings:

Roy Wallis, “Three Types of New Religious Movement.” In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 36-58.

Lorne L. Dawson, “Chapter One: What are New Religious Movements?” In. Lorne L. Dawson, *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*, Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 1998, 13-40.

Required Reading for Learning Activity #2:

Ian Reader. “Dramatic Confrontations: Aum Shinrikyo Against the World.” In David G. Bromley and J Gordon Melton (eds.) *Cults, Religion & Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, 189-208.

iv) Learning Activity #2

Module Two: People in New Religious Movements (Units IV, V, VI)

Learning Outcomes: At the end of module two students will.....

- 1) know about the history, beliefs, practices, and social principles of a second New Religious Movement (The Bahá'í Faith).
- 2) have gained further proficiency in understanding scholarly arguments.
- 3) know what empirical research, and speculative psychology, says about the types of people who join New Religious Movements and why.
- 4) be able to apply empirical insights about who joins NRMs and why.
- 5) understand, and be able to apply (to a limited degree), a theory about the stages involved in defecting from a demanding NRM.
- 6) have a better understanding of why some people leave NRMs, by studying people who have left NRMs but still feel responsible for their participation in them.

Unit IV: The Baha'i Faith (Official Web Site: <http://bahai.org/>)

i) Lecture Four: The Bahá'í Faith

ii) Reading:

Margit Warburg, *Bahá'í, USA*: Signature Books, 2001, 1-41.

iii) On-Line Quiz on the Bahá'í Faith

Unit V: Joining New Religious Movements

i) Bulletin Board Discussion: Question Three

ii) Lecture Five: Who Joins New Religious Movements and Why?

iii) Readings:

Lorne L. Dawson, "Who Joins New Religious Movements and Why: Twenty Years of Research and What Have We Learned? In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 116-130.

Saul Levine, "The Joiners." In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 131-142.

Required Reading for Learning Activity #3:

E. Burke Rochford, Jr., "Chapter 4: Surrendering to Krishna: Devi's Story." In E. Burke Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1985, 87-122. (Course Pack, Reading #2)

iv) Learning Activity #3

Unit VI: Leaving New Religious Movements

i) Bulletin Board Discussion: Question Four

ii) Lecture Six: Escaping, Disaffiliating, and Apostatizing from New Religious Movements

iii) Readings:

Robert W. Balch, "When the Light Goes Out, Darkness Comes": A Study of Defection from a Totalistic Cult." In Rodney Stark (ed.) *Religious Movements: Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers*, New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1985, 11-63. (Course Pack, Reading #3)

Susan Roth Baum. "Between Two Worlds: Issues of Separation and Identity After Leaving a Religious Community," In David G. Bromley (ed.) *Falling From the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1988, 205-228. (Course Pack, Reading #4)

Required Reading for Learning Activity #4:

Karen Bacquet, "My Life in the Bahá'í Community"
<http://www.angelfire.com/ca3/bigquestions/Bahai.html>

iv) Learning Activity #4

Module Three: Controversial Issues in New Religious Movements (Units VII, VIII, IX)

Learning Outcomes: At the end of module three students will.....

- 1) know about the history, beliefs, practices, and social principles of a third New Religious Movement (The Unification Church).
- 2) be able to understand scholarly arguments and respond to these arguments, and/or the issues they address, in a reasoned manner.
- 3) understand three different perspectives on the controversial issue of “brainwashing” or “coercive persuasion”; be able to form a reasoned opinion about this issue.
- 4) understand, by comparing and contrasting, two historical cases of NRM mass suicide; be able to form a reasoned opinion about what caused these events.

Unit VII: The Unification Church (Official Web Site: <http://www.unification.org/>)

i) Lecture Seven: The Unification Church

ii) Reading:

Massimo Intovigne. *The Unification Church*. USA: Signature Books, 2000, 1-60.

iii) On-Line Quiz on the Unification Church

Unit VIII: The Brainwashing Controversy

i) Bulletin Board Discussion: Question Five

ii) Lecture Eight: Belief, Brainwashing, and Delusion in New Religious Movements

iii) Readings:

Margaret Thaler Singer, “The Process of Brainwashing, Psychological Coercion, and Thought Reform.” In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 147-159.

James T. Richardson, “A Critique of ‘Brainwashing’ Claims About New Religious Movements.” In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 160-166.

iv) Learning Activity #5

Unit IX: Violence in New Religious Movements

i) Bulletin Board Discussion: Question Six

ii) Lecture Nine: Murder, Suicide, and Martyrdom in New Religious Movements

iii) Readings:

John R. Hall. "The Apocalypse at Jonestown." In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 186-207.

Required Reading for Learning Activity #6:

Jean-Francois Mayer. " 'Our Terrestrial Journey is Coming to an End'" The Last Voyage of the Solar Temple." In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 208-225.

iv) Learning Activity #6

**Module Four: New Directions in New Religious Movements
(Units X, XI, XII)**

Learning Outcomes: At the end of module four students will.....

- 1) know about the history, beliefs, practices, and social principles of a forth New Religious Movement (Osho)
- 2) have gained further proficiency in understanding, and forming their own, reasoned arguments.
- 3) understand two different arguments about why women join NRMs, and be able to respond to these with a reasoned argument.
- 4) understand (through study and their own research) some of the ways in which NRMs are using the Internet; be able to form reasoned opinions about some of the issues raised by these uses (of the Internet).

Unit X: Osho (Official Web Site: <http://osho.org/>)

i) Lecture Ten: Osho

ii) Reading:

Judith M. Fox, *Osho Rajneesh*, USA: Signature Books, 2000, 1-51.

iii) On-Line Quiz on Osho

Unit XI: Sex and Gender Issues in New Religious Movements

i) Bulletin Board Discussion: Question Seven

ii) Lecture Eleven: Challenging Social Norms in New Religious Movements

iii) Readings:

Elizabeth Puttick. "Women in New Religious Movements." In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 230-244.

Susan J. Palmer. "Women's 'Cocoon Work' in New Religious Movements: Sexual Experimentation and Feminine Rites of Passage." In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 245-256.

iv) Learning Activity #7

Unit XII: New Religious Movements and the Internet

i) Bulletin Board Discussion: Question Eight

ii) Lecture Twelve: How Are New Religious Movements Using the Internet?

iii) Readings:

Lorne L. Dawson and Jenna Hennebry. "New Religions and the Internet: Recruiting in a New Public Space." In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.) *Cults and New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 271-291.

George D Chryssides. "New Religions and the Internet" *Diskus WebEdition*, Vol. 4, No.2, 1996, http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus/chryssides_3.html

iv) Learning Activity #8

Wilfrid Laurier University Services and Policies

1) The Accessible Learning Centre:

Location: Arts Building 1C11; email 22alc@wlu.ca, telephone 884-0710 ext. 3086, TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf) 884-1141; fax: 884-6570

Students with disabilities or special needs are advised to contact Laurier's Accessible Learning Centre for information regarding its services and resources. Students should review the calendar for information regarding all services available on campus.

2) Laurier Foot Patrol:

Location: Fred Nichols Campus Centre; telephone: 886-FOOT (886-3668) After class call 886-FOOT for a walk or drive home - "No Walk is Too Short or Too Long!"

3) Plagiarism:

Wilfrid Laurier University uses software that can check for plagiarism. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form and have it checked for plagiarism. For further information pertaining to academic privileges and responsibilities please consult the 2010-2011 Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.wlu.ca/calendars/index.php?cal=1&y=44>