

# Religion 101 Spring 2018 Introduction to Religion



## Dr. Lynn S. Neal

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(M-F 8-5, I do not check  
email on weekends)  
OH: WF 12:15-1pm or by  
appointment



## Course Texts:

Myhre, ed., *Introduction to Religious Studies*

Other Readings: SAKAI

**\*Please bring readings to class.**

## Course Description:

Scholar Gary Kessler writes that “the study of religion helps us understand a force that influences, for good or for ill, the lives of practically everyone who is alive” (*Studying Religion*, 10). We know that religion influences our social and political world in profound ways; however, most people know little about the history, beliefs, and practices of their own religions, let alone those of other people. This semester we embark on a journey that will address these issues by cultivating our skills as scholars of religion. We will be asking and examining a variety of questions, including: What is religion? How do we study religion? What does religion offer so many people? How does it influence our lives and our interactions with others? Throughout the semester, this course promises to answer these questions by investigating myth and ritual, sources and stereotypes, identity and aesthetics, and more!

*“If I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in religion because that’s how integrated [religion] is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today.”*

*~John Kerry*

## Advice for Religion 101

To successfully accomplish the course objectives, remember to work hard, ask for clarification when necessary (if something is unclear, *it is your responsibility* to ask me about it!), and keep the following information in mind:

**\*\*All assignments must be completed in accordance with the Wake Forest Honor Code. Failure to abide by the Honor Code will result in failure of the assignment.**

**\*\*Plagiarism is a violation of the honor code.** “To put your name on a piece of work any part of which is not yours is plagiarism, unless that piece is clearly marked and the work from which you have borrowed it is fully identified” (WFU English Department). Plagiarism violations will result in failure of the assignment.

**\*\*If you have a learning disability that requires an accommodation, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) and provide me with the appropriate documentation as soon as possible.**

**\*\*Use your resources, especially Office Hours and The Writing Center!**



### Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

1. Articulate the complexities involved in defining and studying religion, as well as identify and analyze central concepts in the study of religion.
2. Critically interpret and assess various sources of information on world religions and thereby gain both religious and digital literacy.
3. Employ critical empathy—the ability to enter (as much as possible) the religious world of someone else, but also be able to step back and analyze that world using the categories and tools of religious studies.
4. Help build interesting and complicated discussions about religion, which will advance our understanding of the topic and increase your ability to articulate your ideas, as well as hone critical thinking and listening skills.

Course Objectives:	Assessment:
Objective 1	Participation & Professionalism Research Reports Quizzes Design-A-Religion: 1&2
Objective 2	Research Reports Quizzes Religious Literacy Project Participation & Professionalism
Objective 3	Research Reports Participation & Professionalism
Objective 4	Research Reports Religious Literacy Project Participation & Professionalism

*“Successful students estimate spending 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour spent in class.”*

*~Cliffs Notes*



## Course Requirements:

### Participation & Professionalism (15%).

**Attendance at and active contributions to each class is expected.** Studies show that talking about your ideas makes you smarter, and **discussing issues and hearing varying perspectives broadens your thinking and helps sharpen your analytical skills.** Speaking and sharing ideas with each other is a vital part of learning. It also helps you cultivate a variety of professional skills that are important in the workplace—listening and responding to others, expressing your ideas, discussing areas of agreement and disagreement, empathizing with others, etc.

**Expectations:** You enter the class with a “C” for participation. You earn a higher participation grade by **enriching each class with your reading, research, questions, and ideas.** To demystify this process I have created a **Participation & Professionalism Rubric (attached to this syllabus and available on Sakai)** that outlines expectations, and we will periodically be discussing “participation” in class.

To accommodate different positions on the introvert/extrovert spectrum we will be utilizing different types of in-class activities. There will also be other opportunities, such as the Name Quiz and the Before & After assignment, through which you can show your engagement with and participation in the course. **\*\*See Sakai for a list of participation opportunities! \*\***

Disagreement is expected in class, especially in a class about religion. We must learn how to talk with each other to enhance our learning and this includes disagreement. Use disagreement constructively and respectfully by **focusing on the ideas presented.** You can say: “You made a good point about X topic, but I disagree because...” or “I respect this position, but it seems to overlook...”

**Professionalism: Attendance & Sick Days:** The WF Bulletin states that students are “expected to attend classes regularly and punctually.” **As with a job, attendance is the expected norm.** However, occasions of illness or ‘other events’ can at times prevent you from attending. Thus, you are allowed two “sick days” over the course of the semester. More than 2 sick days will lower your Participation & Professionalism grade, and a significant number of absences will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Professionalism: Timeliness and Class Conduct:** To enhance your collective learning and acquisition of professional skills, you are **expected to be on time (3 tardies=1 absence) and to avoid disrupting the class by leaving to get a drink, take a phone call, visit the restroom, etc.** These actions disrupt and distract our learning community and will lower your overall Participation & Professionalism grade

**Learning and Technology:** Studies show that we learn better taking notes by hand, rather than on computers. Studies also show that computers in class, especially when not used appropriately, distract classmates. In addition, studies confirm that we do not read as well online as we do in print. Therefore, **no computers will be allowed in class unless you are directed to bring them or persuade me that you should be an exception to this rule.**

**(RRs) (15%):** I have designed a series of research and reading reports (RRs) that ask you to reflect on the reading, and, at times, watch videos and/or conduct research on web-based sources, and to think about them in relationship to the assigned topic. For example, you may be asked to read a chapter on Origin Stories and then and watch a video about myth. You might then be asked to write about how these sources are similar and/or different and why. Your task is to complete each RR as directed.

**Logistics:** RRs will be posted in Sakai at least two days prior to their due date. RRs should be typed, single-spaced, with 1 inch margins, and they should show evidence of having completed all of the assigned tasks and answering all of the questions in a thorough and thoughtful manner. *\*\*One sentence answers or minimal engagement with the RRs will receive partial, instead of full, credit.\*\**

**\*\*Printers fail, so if you attend class, but are unable to print your RR, you may email it to me twice over the course of the semester.**



Design-A-Religion: 1&2: 25%	Quizzes & Exams: 40%	RLP: 5%
<p><b>Assignment: Part 1 (5%):</b> Using Catherine Albanese's definition, as well as Rodney Stark's theory, design your own successful new religion. Your religion can be inspired by an existing religion, your favorite element of popular culture, or something else. Keep in mind that no religious founder sets out to fail! <b>Detailed directions are posted on Sakai.</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> (1) To examine your own assumptions about religion, (2) To think through and work with definitions of religion, (3) To apply course concepts in an accurate and persuasive manner.</p> <p><b>Part 1 is due Monday 2/5 via email by 5pm.</b></p> <p><b>Part 2 (20%):</b> Using what you have learned over the entire semester, review and revise your newly designed religion by incorporating additional concepts from the course. <b>Detailed directions posted on Sakai.</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> (1) To build and demonstrate a more complicated understanding of religion, (2) To apply course concepts in an accurate, integrated, and persuasive manner.</p> <p><b>Part 2 constitutes your final exam and is due via email by 2pm on Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>.</b></p>	<p><b>5 Online Quizzes (20%):</b> This course gives you the opportunity to learn through shorter, more frequent quizzes. <b>Studies show that more frequent quizzing helps you learn more effectively.</b> Over the semester you will study for and take five Sakai quizzes worth 5%, your lowest quiz score will be dropped. Each quiz will be administered through Sakai and you will have a 36-hour window in which to take it. It is <i>your responsibility to take the quiz in a timely fashion</i>. Each quiz will test your knowledge of the concepts discussed in class and your ability to relate these concepts to material discussed previously. There will be a cumulative element to these quizzes. These open-book/note quizzes require you to take good notes, study, and master the course concepts. They will feature a combination of objective, short answer, and analysis questions. Quiz dates are listed in the Course Outline.</p> <p><b>Cumulative Exam (20%):</b> The quizzes, as well as our classes, will provide you with practice for our exam. This exam will be cumulative and feature various types of questions. We will discuss study strategies and the format of this exam as it approaches. The exam will be held in class on April 13<sup>th</sup>.</p>	<p><b>Religious Literacy Project (RLP): 5%</b> You all have different interests and bring unique skills to the study of religion. This assignment gives you 3 different options to pursue and enhance our class learning about religion. Each option has a different due date and ten available spots.</p> <p><b>Read the directions on Sakai</b> and sign-up for your option when the sign-up sheet is passed around in class.</p> <p><b>Option 1: People-Focused.</b> In this option, you can maximize and strengthen your leadership skills.</p> <p><b>Option 2: Research-Focused.</b> Want to learn more about a specific religion? This is the option for you!</p> <p><b>Option 3: Object-Focused.</b> In this option, you can showcase your analytical skills by researching a religious object.</p>

### **Wednesday 1/17 Welcome!**

*Class Question: What is this class about and what can you expect?*

**SAKAI:** Rich, "Claiming an Education," Leamnson, "Learning (Your First Job)," Ueland, "Everybody is Talented..."

### **RELIGIOUS STUDIES: HOW, WHY, & WHAT**

### **Friday 1/19 Approaching Religion**

*Class Question: How are we studying religion?*

RR#1

**Myhre: Ch. 2**

**101 Project: Videos**

**\*Before & After Assignment due by start of class.**

### **Wednesday 1/24 Defining Religion**

*Class Question: What is religion?*

RR#2

**Myhre: Ch. 1**

**101 Project: Videos**

**SAKAI:** Albanese, "Religion" and "Definitions of Religion"



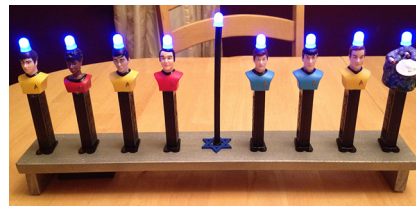
### **Friday 1/26 Examining Our Assumptions about Religion**

*Class Question: What are our assumptions about religion and why?*

RR#3

**SAKAI:** "Seeing with a Native Eye," and "Age, Race, Class, and Sex"

**\*Name Quiz at start of class**



**\*Monday 1/29 Quiz 1 by 12 am**

### **Wednesday 1/31 Testing Definitions of and Assumptions about Religion: A Star Trek Debate**

*Class Question: Is Star Trek a Religion?*

RR#4

**SAKAI:** "Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon," & "Studying the Religious Functions of Popular Culture"

### **Friday 2/2 Analyzing Religious Success**

*Class Question: What goes into making a religion successful?*

RR#5

**SAKAI:** Stark, "How New Religions Succeed"

**\*Monday 2/5 Design-a-Religion Part 1 due via email by 5pm.**

### **RELIGIOUS STUDIES: ORIGINS & OBSTACLES**

### **Wednesday 2/7 Founding Religion 1**

*Class Question: How do religions begin?*

RR#6

**Myhre: Ch. 3**

**101 Project: Videos**

**SAKAI:** "Introduction: The Dimensions of Myth"

### **Friday 2/9 Disputing Religion**

*Class Question: Why do myths matter?*

RR#7

**SAKAI:** "The Scope of the Free Exercise Clause," and "Intelligent Design on Trial"

**\*Monday 2/12 Quiz 2 by 12 am**

### **Wednesday 2/14 Founding Religion 2**

*Class Question: How do religions begin?*

RR#8

**SAKAI:** "Accounts of the Births of Jesus and Buddha"

**Myhre: Ch. 5**



**Wednesday 4/11 Instilling Religious Identity**

*Class Question: What are aesthetics and how do they influence religious identity?*

RR#20

**Myhre: Ch. 6**



**Friday 4/13 In-Class Exam**

*Bring your computers to class! Make sure your computers are charged! You will be typing some of your answers to the exam questions.*

**Wednesday 4/18 Researching Religious Identity**

*Class Question: How do your peers/friends construct religious identity?*

RR#21

**Interview Assignment**

**Friday 4/20 Aesthetics, Technology, and Religious Identity?**

*Class Question: How is technology changing and challenging religion and religious identity?*

RR#22

**Myhre: Ch. 12**

*Bring your computers to class!*

**\*Monday 4/23 Religious Literacy Project Option 3 due via email by 5pm.**

**Wednesday 4/25 Negotiating Religious Identity in a Diverse World: A Christmas Concert Controversy**

*Class Question: How do we balance diverse religious beliefs and commitments?*

RR#23

**SAKAI: "A Christmas Issue"**

**Friday 4/27 Defining Religion: Revisited**

*Class Question: What is religion?*

RR#24

**SAKAI: Lynch, Ch. 8**

**\*Monday 4/30 Quiz 5 by 12 am**

**Wednesday 5/2 Course Wrap-Up**

*Class Question: What have we learned this semester?*

**Bring your computer to class!**

**\*Before & After Assignment: Part 2 due via email by the start of class.**

**FINAL: Design-A-Religion: Part 2 constitutes your final exam. It is due via email by 2pm on Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>.**

**Important Dates:**



1/19 B&A: Part 1 due at start of class.  
1/26 Name Quiz  
1/29 Quiz 1 by midnight.  
2/5 Design-A-Religion: Part 1 via email by 5pm.  
2/12 Quiz 2 by midnight.  
3/2 Quiz 3 by end of class time (12:15pm).  
3/2 RLP Option 2 via email by 5pm.  
3/26 Quiz 4 by midnight.  
4/13 In-class Exam.  
4/23 RLP Option 3 via email by 5pm.  
4/30 Quiz 5 by midnight.  
5/2 B&A Assignment: Part 2 via email by start of class.  
5/9 Design-A-Religion: Part 2 via email by 2pm.

Course Grade Scale: A (100-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-88), B (87-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-78), C (77-73), C- (72-70), D range (69-60), F (59-0). **\*I do not round up final grades.\***