

## Introduction to Religious Studies

RS 1301

University of Texas at El Paso

Department of Religious Studies

Winter 2023 RS 1301

**Instructor:** Dr. Glen J. Fairen

**Time:** N/A

**Room:** N/A

**Office:** Somewhere in the wilds of Oklahoma....

**Office Hours:** N/A

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### Course Description and Objectives:

What does the term 'religion' mean? Is it static or does it mean a variety of things depending on the context in which it is used? This course will introduce you to, not just the various discourses that get called “religion”, but (perhaps more importantly), the academic study of religion and current theories of religion in the field of Religious Studies today. Like any other key disciplinary term (such as “history” for historians, “culture” for anthropologists, “society” for sociologists, “literature” for Literary Studies, and so on), “religion” is subject to definitional debate in contemporary theorizing of religion. Equally subject to debate are questions about the relation of religion to other key terms in the study of society and culture. What does religion do in history, society and culture? What do people do with religion? In this course we will begin to think about the theoretical debates about “religion” with the aim is to become familiar with and engage scholarly debates over how religion is conceptualized so as to make it a suitable focus for critical, humanistic, social study.

### Required Texts:

Lincoln, Bruce. “Thesis on Method.” <https://religion.ua.edu/links/theses-on-method/>

Martin, Craig. *A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2014 (either edition, but second edition from 2017 would be preferred. **Also, while you are of course welcome to buy the book, it is available in the UTEP library as an ebook. But keep in mind it is still required.**)

Because I wish to keep the class material relevant, there will be other readings that I will assign as needed. This will be supplemental (but required) to the core material in both Lincoln and Martin.

### Assignments and Grade Distribution:

30% 6 journal entries (5% each). These will be assigned at the end of relevant sections.

20% Midterm Exam

30% Written Assignment (5-7 pages not including title page and bibliography. I will provide more detailed instructions in the Paper folder on blackboard)

20% Final Exam

**Assignment Notes:**

*Participation:* Participation points will be given if the student actively participates in the bi-weekly journal entry. This part of your grade is worth 30%. **You cannot afford to miss out on these.** Each journal entry will be graded on a 1-10 scale, but will be converted to a percent to reflect how the weight this assignment has been assigned. So...essentially you will have 6 journals, and each will be worth 5% of your final mark. Each Journal will be based on a prompt question that will be assigned ahead of time and need to be no less than one page (12 pt font, 1 inch margin all around) and no more than 2 pages. Prompts and guidelines will be provided below.

*Midterm Exam:* The midterm examination will be based on your readings from the beginning of the course up to the midterm. It will include multiple-choice questions and essay questions.

*Written Assignment:* Students are required to submit a 5-7 page written research assignment following the instructs that have been uploaded on blackboard. You may choose to write your paper using Chicago, MLA, APA, or SBL citation styles. **However, you must be consistent throughout your paper.** Your paper must contain proper citations and a bibliography/works cited page. Also...please be aware that lack of proper citation is not just a mistake but is essentially plagiarism. If you do not cite properly you will not do well on the paper. Please also see the paper guidelines in a separate document.

*Final Exam:* The final exam will have the same form as the midterm but will be based on the readings assigned in the second half of the semester (i.e., the readings assigned after the midterm).

**Course Outline:**

The following schedule/outline is tentative. Time constraints, unforeseen events, and class interest may result in slight alterations.

Week1-2	Topic	Required reading and Assignments
January 17-29	Laying the groundwork for the Study of Religion	<b>Readings:</b> Lincoln, "Thesis on Method" (in the week 1 course content)  Smith "Religion Religions, Religious" and Arnal "Definition."

		<p>Martin, <i>A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, Chapter 1 “Studying Religion: Laying the Groundwork”</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> Journal 1 (Due January 29, 11:59 PM).</p>
Week 3-4	Topic	Required reading and Assignments
Jan 30-Feb 12	Religion and Classification	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Martin, <i>A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, Chapter 2 “Functionalism and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion” and Chapter 3 “How Society Works: Classification.”</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> Journal 2 . (Due Feb 12, 11:50 PM).</p>
Week 5-6	Topic	Required reading and Assignments
Feb 13-26	Religion and Social Structure	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Martin, <i>A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, Chapter 4 “How Society Works: Essentialism” and Chapter 5 “How Society Works: Structure.”</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> Journal 3 (Due Feb 26, 11:59 PM)</p> <p><b>Midterm Exam:</b> The Midterm Exam will be available via the exams folder in your course content from February 26th at 6AM until March 6 at 11:59PM.</p>
Week 7-8	Topic	Required reading and Assignments
Feb 27-March 12	Religion and Social Practices	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Martin, <i>A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, Chapter 6 “How Society Works: Habitus.”</p> <p>TBA “Assigned Reading.”</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> Journal 4 (Due March 19th, 11:59 PM)</p>
Spring Break (13-17)		
Week 9-10	Topic	Required reading and Assignments
March 20-April 2	Religion and Legitimation	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Martin, <i>A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, Chapter 7 “How Religion Works: Legitimation.”</p> <p>TBA “Assigned Reading.”</p>

		<b>Assignments:</b> Journal 5 (Due April 2, 11:59 PM)
Week 11-12	Topic	Required reading and Assignments
April 3-16	Religion and Authority	<b>Readings:</b> Martin, <i>A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion</i> , Chapter 8 “How Religion Works: Authority.”  TBA “Assigned Reading.”  <b>Assignments:</b> NO JOURNAL but your paper is due no later than April 11, 11:59 PM).
Weeks 13-14	Topic	Required reading and Assignments
April 17-30	Religion and Authenticity Overall Case Study: What would Jesus do?	Readings: Martin, <i>A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion</i> , Chapter 9 and 10  TBA “Assigned Reading.”  <b>Assignments:</b> Journal 6 (Due April 30, 11:59 PM)
Week 15	Topic	Required reading and Assignments
May 1-7	Final Matters/TBA	<b>TBA “Assigned Reading.”</b>  <b>Final Exam.</b> The Final Exam will be available from May 8-12.

### Grading:

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below. The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work and examination then produces the final letter grade for the course.

### Grading Scale

Percentage Grade	Letter Grade	Grade Points
90-100%	A	4.0
80-89%	B	3.0
70-79%	C	2.0
60-69%	D	1.0
0-59%	F	0.0

### Academic Standing and Integrity:

#### “Academic Integrity

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In all matters of intellectual pursuit, UTEP faculty and students must strive to achieve excellence based on the quality of work produced by the individual. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. It is imperative, therefore, that the members of this academic community understand the regulations pertaining to academic integrity and that all faculty insist on adherence to these standards.

Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the [Handbook of Operating Procedures](#) (HOP) (available through the [Dean of Students Office](#)) may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing a grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.” (“Academic Standing,” for more information, please visit <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=61879&submenuheader=1>)

### **Policy for Late Assignments:**

Students who consult with me in advance regarding expected issues preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at my discretion, be granted an extension. Otherwise, assignments may be handed in one class-day after the stated deadline without penalty, with a 10%-per-class-day penalty assessed for each subsequent class-day of lateness.

### **Special Needs**

If you have a disability and require special needs classroom accommodations, please contact *The Center for Accommodations and Support Services* Monday through Friday 8:00a.m. – 5:00p.m. at the Union East Room 106. You can also reach the center by phone at (915) 747-5148 or by email: [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu)