

## INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Rutgers University-Camden Campus  
Dept. of Philosophy and Religion  
Course #50:840:101:01 (04447)  
Fall, 2022, T/TH 8:00-9:20 AM, BSB 334

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(Call *anytime* up to 11:00 PM)

This course introduces students to major academic methods for the study of religion and theories about religious belief and practice. It draws on diverse materials from the world's religions and multiple disciplinary approaches. Topics will include Issues of definition, history, myth, ritual, psychological approaches to religion, sociological approaches to religion, folklore, phenomenology, belief systems, concepts of eschatology, afterlife and gender.

The course will illustrate Religious Studies methodology by focusing upon mysticism and claims of "supernatural" experience. Mystical experiences have been an important part of nearly all religious traditions and have often played significant roles in the beginning of new religious movements. In many cultures mysticism is the normative means of religious expression while in other communities, such experiences are reserved for "special" or designated members of the society. Nevertheless, religious experience is one of the most enigmatic aspects of religion. It stands in contrast to more familiar concepts such as belief or ritual. As such, the subject of mysticism provides an opportunity to see how scholarly approaches to religion can help in understanding individuals and global communities.

### REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

Robert S. Ellwood, *Introducing Religion: Religious Studies for the Twenty-First Century*, Fifth Edition, (October 16, 2019) Routledge ISBN-13: 978-0367249755

Tayeb Salih, *The Wedding of Zein*, NYRB Classics; Illustrated edition (March 2, 2010)  
ISBN-13: 978-1590173428

Andrew Newberg, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*  
Ballentine Books, 2002  
ISBN-13: 978-0345440341

### GLOBAL COMMUNITIES (GCM)

Taking a variety of disciplinary approaches to the examination of societies, economies, and political systems, as well as ideas and beliefs and how they are formed, courses in Global Communities should introduce students to the diverse ways in which humans have organized their social relations. These courses should have comparative content. Upon completing a course in this category, students should be able to do at least two of the following:

1. Describe ways in which communities around the globe have been interconnected and interdependent historically and/or in the present in terms of the movement of ideas, culture, people, money, and goods.
2. Identify central practices, institutions, and ideas of regions, nations, or peoples outside the U.S. as well as how the representations of those regions, nations, or peoples have been used and contested.
3. Recognize how issues of difference (racial, religious, gender, etc.) have been treated in non-U.S. cultures and societies and/or in a global context.
4. Analyze a cultural, economic, environmental, geographic, historical, political, linguistic or literary, scientific and/or sociological issue facing one or more countries or globally.
5. Explore issues that transcend national borders and their implications for policy and practice.
6. Describe the point of view of peoples from outside the U.S. on specific issues.

### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) Attendance and active class participation. This includes being prepared for class, having *completed the reading for each unit*. Attendance will be taken each class. If you have a valid reason for an absence, please be sure to notify the instructor at the next class session. Also, if you come in late, you must remind the instructor *immediately at the end of that class* that you were present. Otherwise, you will be counted absent. Note that the instructor keeps track of late appearances by students. If you come in late repeatedly it *will* effect your class participation grade.

2) Participation in the Online Discussion Forum for each unit on Canvas. Students will be expected to read the discussions and post a *minimum of two messages per unit*. **The new unit will begin each Tuesday at 8:00 AM and end the following Tuesday at 7:59 AM.** This is a **weekly, per unit** assignment and will be graded on that basis. You **cannot** post messages in the discussion for a unit after the date that the unit ends. **The first message should be posted during the first half of the week (Tuesday-Thursday).** Discussion questions will be posted for each unit. For the first message of the week students should respond to **one** of these numbered questions. **The second message must be a response to one of the posts by the other students, analyzing the other student's post and taking the discussion further, so it will normally be posted during the second half of the week (Friday-Monday).** See the document "Grading Criteria for the Discussion Forum" for more help with this assignment. You are expected to follow the grading criteria in this document exactly.

3) A Midterm Exam, in class, on **Thursday, October 20th** over units 1-6.

4) A Final Exam, in class, on **Tuesday, December 20, 8:00 AM--** over units 7-14 (the material covered since the Midterm)

5) A term paper of 6-8 pages which analyzes an account of a religious experience using the different methods covered in the course. After choosing the experience you are going to examine, submit your topic **before Tuesday, October 11th by 7:59 AM.** **The topic must be submitted through the "Paper Topic" link on Canvas. This link is available on the opening/home page. You can also access it at end of the module for Unit 5.** The topic must be submitted as plain text. Just type your topic into the system at the link or cut and paste it there. No attachments are necessary for the topic and they are not allowed. Please note that after turning in your topic you are not allowed to change to a different topic without first receiving permission from the instructor. Note also that permission will definitely **NOT** be granted for topic changes late in the semester (Get started on your research early so you'll know if the topic is going to work for you or not.) A term paper guide has been posted on the Canvas opening/home page. It gives the details of how to do the paper. Students **must** follow it **exactly** throughout the process of writing the paper. **The paper must be submitted before 7:59 AM, Tuesday, December 6th. You must use the link titled "Paper Submission" to upload and submit the paper. The link can be found on the opening/home page in Canvas and also at the end of Unit 13.** The completed paper must be written and submitted using one of the following common word processing formats: .docx (Microsoft Word), .doc (old Microsoft Word), .odt (Libre Office or Open Office), or .rtf (Rich Text File). Do not try to submit it as a link to a Google Docs file. Also do NOT attempt to submit your paper as a .pdf file or using the Macintosh word processing format. The Canvas assignment is set to only accept .docx, .doc, .odt or .rtf files. If you are looking for a good, free word processing program that will do all of these formats, Libre Office is available for download on the net. The due dates for the paper are as follows:

**7:59 AM, Tuesday, October 11 Submit topic**  
**7:59 AM, Tuesday, December 6 Submit Paper**

Grades will be determined as follows:

Attendance/Participation	10%
Online Discussions	15%
Mid-Term	25%
Final	25%
Paper	25%
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	100%

## **COURSE OUTLINE AND READING:**

Note: Articles identified as "Canvas" are linked under "Reading" in the unit on Canvas

### **Unit One: Phenomenology Sept. 6-13 (Tues., Sept. 6, Thurs., Sept. 8)**

*The Quest for Understanding*

Article on Religious Studies and Phenomenology (Canvas)

### **Unit Two: Defining Religion Sept. 13-20 (Tues., Sept. 13, Thurs., Sept. 15)**

*Beginning to Think About the Elements of Religion*

Ellwood, Ch. 1 How to Study Religion

### **Unit Three: History of Religions/Historical Method Sept. 20-27 (Tues., Sept. 20, Thurs., Sept. 22)**

*How Did Religion Develop Over Time? How Do Scholars Reconstruct History?*

Ellwood, Ch. 2 The History of Religion on Planet Earth

### **Unit Four: Neurological Approach to Religion Sept. 27-Oct. 4 (Tues., Sept. 27, Thurs., Sept. 29)**

*Religious Experience and the Brain*

Newberg, Ch 1 A Photograph of God? An Introduction to the Biology of Belief

Newberg, Ch. 2 Brain Machinery: The Science of Perception

Newberg, Ch. 3 Brain Architecture: How the Brain Makes the Mind

### **Unit Five: Understanding the Role of Myth in Religion Oct. 4-11 (Tues., Oct. 4, Thurs., Oct. 6)**

*Sacred Stories and Sacred Texts*

Ellwood, Ch. 3 Myth: Our Lives, and the World's, Are Stories

Newberg, Ch. 4 Mythmaking: The Compulsion to Create Stories and Beliefs

**Submit Paper Topic by 7:59 AM Tuesday, October 11.**

### **Unit Six: Symbols, Ritual and Non-Ritual in Religious Worship Oct. 11-18 (Tues., Oct. 11, Thurs., Oct. 13)**

*Functionalism and Ritual*

Ellwood, Ch. 4 Doorways to Other Worlds: Symbol, Rite and Religion

Newberg, Ch. 5 Ritual: The Physical Manifestation of Meaning

Article on Ritual and Non Ritual (Canvas)

### **Unit Seven: Psychological Approaches to Religion-Part One Oct. 18-25 (Tues., Oct. 18, Thurs., Oct. 20)**

*Introduction to the Psychology of Religion; Freud's View of Religion*

Ellwood, Ch. 5 Oases of the Mind: The Psychology of Religion

Article on Freudian Analysis of Mystics (Canvas)

**Midterm Exam over Units 1-6—Thursday, October 20**

### **Unit Eight: Psychological Approaches-Part Two Oct. 25-Nov. 1 (Tues., Oct. 25, Thurs., Oct. 27)**

*Jung's View of Religion*

Article illustrating Jungian Analysis of a Supernatural Experience (Canvas)

### **Unit Nine: Sociological Approaches to Religion-Part One Nov. 1-8 (Tues., Nov 1, Thurs., Nov. 3)**

*Religion as a Social Experience*

Ellwood, Ch. 11 Traveling Together: The Sociology of Religion

Begin reading, *The Wedding of Zein*

### **Unit Ten: Sociological Approaches-Part Two Nov. 8-15 (Tues., Nov. 8, Thurs., Nov. 10)**

*Social Groups within an Islamic Village*

Finish reading, *The Wedding of Zein*

### **Unit Eleven: Phenomenology of Experience-Part One Nov. 15-22 (Tues., Nov. 15, Thurs., Nov. 17)**

*How Do Scholars Use Phenomenology to Study Accounts of Supernatural Experience?*

Excerpt from William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (Canvas)

Article on Studying Supernatural Experiences (Canvas)

**Unit Twelve: Phenomenology of Experience-Part Two Nov. 22-29 (Tues., Nov. 22, Tues., Nov. 29)**

*Visions, Apparitions of Mary, Near Death Experiences, Speaking in Tongues*

Newberg, Ch. 6 Mysticism: The Biology of Transcendence

Newberg, Ch. 7 The Origins of Religion: The Persistence of a Good Idea

Newberg Ch. 8 Realer Than Real: The Mind in Search of Absolutes

**Note: Thursday, Nov. 24—No Class—Thanksgiving Break**

**Unit Thirteen: Religion, Truth Claims and Belief Nov. 29-Dec. 6 (Thurs., Dec. 1, Tues., Dec. 3)**

*Concepts of God, Salvation, The "End of the World" and Life After Death*

Ellwood, Ch. 12 Truth Messages-The Conceptual Expression of Religion

Ellwood, Ch. 13 Words to Come: Religious Eschatology and the Afterlife

Newberg, Ch. 9 Why God Won't Go Away: The Metaphor of God and the Mythology of Science

**Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>—Submit Paper by 7:59 AM**

**Unit Fourteen: Religion and Gender Dec. 6-13 (Thurs., Dec. 8, Tues., Dec. 13)**

How Does Religion Interact with Concepts of Sexuality and Gender?

Articles on Gender and Religion (Canvas)

**Final Exam, in class, over Modules 7-14 Tuesday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 AM**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

*Rutgers University takes academic dishonesty very seriously. By enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for familiarizing yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy and the possible penalties (including suspension and expulsion) for violating the policy. As per the policy, all suspected violations will be reported to the Office of Community Standards.*

Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to):

- cheating
- plagiarism
- aiding others in committing a violation or allowing others to use your work
- failure to cite sources correctly
- fabrication
- using another person's ideas or words without attribution
- re-using a previous assignment
- unauthorized collaboration
- sabotaging another student's work

*If in doubt, please consult the instructor. Please review the Academic Integrity Policy at*

<https://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/sites/deanofstudents/files/Academic%20Integrity%20Policy.pdf>.