Theories of Religion

PHIL 3205, Fall 2017

Contact info and meeting times
Instructor Dr. Rosemary Kellison
Office TLC 2245
Office hours M 10–12 & 1–4, T 3:20–4,
R 1–1:45 & 3:20–4, and by appt.
Note: During the weeks of 9/11 and 10/9,
office hours will be on W instead of M
Email rkelliso@westga.edu
Phone 678.839.5514
Classroom Humanities 205
Meeting time T/R 2–3:15 pm
Course website https://westga.view.usg.edu

What this course is about
What is religion? How is it practiced and
why? To address these questions, we
examine some of the most important
developments in the Western
academic study of religion from the
nineteenth century to the present.

Among the topics we will study are: how
religion should be defined and whether it is
“special” compared to other aspects of
human social life; the question of whether
and how religion scholars can study
people’s beliefs and experiences; how
religion is used to create community
identities—and draw boundaries around
those communities; the relationship
between religion and violence; and how our
concept of religion relates to our concept of
secular democracy.

What you will learn in this course
Upon successful completion of this
course, you will be able to:
define and use basic vocabulary of the
academic study of religion,
describe and critically analyze the
arguments of several significant
theorists of religion,
identify and critically analyze some of
the most significant debates within
the academic study of religion,
describe and critically analyze the role
religion plays in the development
and enforcement of social norms,
and
describe ways in which differing
concepts of religion both reflect and
shape historical, social, and political
developments.

These course-specific learning
outcomes contribute to the learning
outcomes of the Philosophy Program
by enabling you to:
discuss the general historical
development of the discipline of
philosophy, including the views of at
least three major historical figures
of philosophy,
incorporate a philosophical position in
oral and written communications,
critically outline and analyze
philosophical issues, and
exhibit critical thinking skills.
The following **books** are required. You can purchase them at the UWG Bookstore or from Amazon or other online sellers:


Other required readings, marked (CD) below, will be posted as **PDFs on CourseDen**.

**ASSESSMENT**

**Participation (18%)** To earn an excellent participation grade, you must:

- come to class on time each day.
- be attentive during class, which requires putting away your phones, tablets, and laptops (except to reference assigned readings), staying awake and engaged, and not speaking while others are.
- bring the assigned reading to class and be prepared to reference it.
- participate in class discussions in a way that demonstrates familiarity with and critical thinking about the assigned readings and shows respect for fellow classmates.

When you are not in class, you cannot participate, nor can you engage in the very important parts of learning that take place only in the classroom. Therefore, you are expected to attend class every day. Documentation of an illness, emergency, or other approved university-approved reason for absence must be provided in order for an absence to be excused. After two unexcused absences, a 1-point deduction will be taken from your final course grade for each additional unexcused absence. Additionally, because late arrivals and early departures also inhibit your ability to participate, along with disrupting other students’ learning, late arrivals and early departures will also lead to deductions from your final course grade.

Your participation will be assessed according to a rubric (available on CourseDen) that measures your conduct and respect for others, use of the readings, quality of reasoning, and frequency of contributions. Participation will be graded three times throughout the semester (once every five weeks); each participation grade is worth 6% of your final course grade.

**Essays (34%)** Over the course of the semester, you will write four essays in which you construct your own argument in response to the course readings. Success on these essays will require familiarity with and critical reflection on the course readings and our class discussions. The first three essays are each worth 8% of your final course grade; the slightly longer final essay is worth 10% of your final course grade. A 25% deduction will be assessed immediately when an essay becomes late. An additional 25% deduction will be assessed for each consecutive day that the essay is late.
**Daily Reading Journal (48%)** While completing the assigned reading for each class day, you will complete a short journal entry. This journal is intended to help you become a more critical reader, to prepare you for informed participation in class discussion, and to help you develop ideas and notes for your essays. To earn full credit, each journal entry should be several sentences long and include two components: a description of one of the reading’s significant arguments or contributions (with specific references to the reading) and a critical observation or question. Further details can be found on CourseDen.

Your highest 24 (out of 28 total) journal grades will count toward your final grade; each is worth 2% of your final grade. Journal entries are due every class day (beginning on Aug. 17) at 2 pm and will be submitted online through CourseDen. No late entries will be accepted.

**Grading Scale:** A: 90–100; B: 80–89; C: 70–79; D: 60–69; F: 0–59

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**COURSE POLICIES**

**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**
Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Violation of the honor code will incur serious consequences. Ignorance is not an excuse for plagiarism. Thus, please review the academic honor policy at http://www.westga.edu/undergrad/1762.htm and consult with Dr. Kellison if you have any questions. If you commit a violation of the honor code, you will receive a minimum penalty of a 0 for the assignment and the offense will be reported to the Student Conduct Specialist in the Division of Student Affairs.

**UNIVERSITY EMAIL POLICY**
You are expected to check your MyUWG email account regularly, and must email professors only from that account.

**UNIVERSITY CLOSURE POLICY**
Should UWG cancel classes for any reason, our course will continue. You are responsible for checking CourseDen and your UWG email for information on how our course will proceed.

**FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**
If you have a documented disability, you are entitled to accommodations if you email Dr. Kellison your SAR immediately. Contact UWG Disability Services for more information.

**FOR HONORS STUDENTS**
If you wish to receive honors credit for this course, you must bring the appropriate paperwork to Dr. Kellison for approval immediately; Honors Contracts are due by the end of the second week of classes.

*For more details on these and other UWG policies, visit https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/assets/docs/faculty-resources/common_language_for_course_syllabi_v2.pdf.*
## Course Schedule

### INTRODUCTION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Th 8/10</td>
<td>Introduction to course and syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 8/15</td>
<td>Catherine Bell, “Paradigms Behind (and Before) the Modern Concept of Religion” (CD)</td>
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### PSYCHOLOGY, EXPERIENCE, AND RELIGION AS SUI GENERIS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Th 8/17</td>
<td>William James, <em>The Varieties of Religious Experience</em>, II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 8/22</td>
<td>William James, <em>The Varieties of Religious Experience</em>, IV &amp; V</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 8/24</td>
<td>William James, <em>The Varieties of Religious Experience</em>, VI, VII, &amp; VIII (see CD notes for what to focus on)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 8/29</td>
<td>William James, <em>The Varieties of Religious Experience</em>, XVIII &amp; XX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 9/5</td>
<td>Sigmund Freud, <em>The Future of an Illusion</em>, chapters I–V</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 9/7</td>
<td>Sigmund Freud, <em>The Future of an Illusion</em>, chapters VI–X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 9/12</td>
<td>Mircea Eliade, Introduction &amp; chapter 1 from <em>The Sacred and the Profane</em> (read pgs. 8–13 &amp; 20–47) (CD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 9/14</td>
<td>Mircea Eliade, chapter 1 from <em>The Sacred and the Profane</em>, (read pgs. 62–65), and “A New Humanism” from <em>The Quest</em> (CD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 9/19</td>
<td>Diana Eck, “Prospects for Pluralism: Voice and Vision in the Study of Religion” (CD)</td>
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<td>Th 9/21</td>
<td>Karl Marx, <em>Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right</em> (CD)</td>
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<td>M 9/25</td>
<td>Essay #1 due by 2 pm</td>
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<td>Tu 9/26</td>
<td>Émile Durkheim, <em>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</em>, pgs. 3–24</td>
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<td>Th 9/28</td>
<td>Émile Durkheim, <em>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</em>, pgs. 25–46</td>
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<td>Tu 10/3</td>
<td>Émile Durkheim, <em>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</em>, pgs. 153–82</td>
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<td>Th 10/5</td>
<td>No class—Enjoy Fall Break!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 10/10</td>
<td>Émile Durkheim, <em>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</em>, pgs. 310–44</td>
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<td>Th 10/12</td>
<td>Mary Douglas, “Secular Defilement” from <em>Purity and Danger</em> (CD)</td>
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<td>Tu 10/17</td>
<td>Mary Douglas, “The Abominations of Leviticus” from <em>Purity and Danger</em> (CD)</td>
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<td>Th 10/19</td>
<td>Mark Juergensmeyer, “Cosmic War” from <em>Terror in the Mind of God</em> (CD)</td>
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<td>M 10/23</td>
<td><strong>Essay #2 due by 2 pm</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 10/24</td>
<td>Mark Juergensmeyer, “Martyrs and Demons” from <em>Terror in the Mind of God</em> (CD)</td>
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<td>Th 10/26</td>
<td>Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Devil in Mr. Jones” (CD)</td>
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<td>Tu 10/31</td>
<td>Bruce Lincoln, <em>Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11</em>, pgs. 1–18 &amp; 97–102</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 11/7</td>
<td>Bruce Lincoln, <em>Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11</em>, pgs. 51–96</td>
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**DEFINING RELIGION IN SECULAR DEMOCRACY**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 11/13</td>
<td><strong>Essay #3 due by 2 pm</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 11/14</td>
<td>Russell McCutcheon, “‘Religion’ and the Governable Self” (CD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 11/16</td>
<td>Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, “Free Religion” (CD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu 11/28</td>
<td>Saba Mahmood, “Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?,” pgs. 64–78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 11/30</td>
<td>Saba Mahmood, “Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?,” pgs. 79–92</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 12/4</td>
<td><strong>Final Essay due by 2 pm</strong></td>
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