

**North Carolina Wesleyan College**

**REL 101: Introduction to Religion (3 semester hours)**

**8 Week Session**

**Instructor: Jerry Michael Grimes, BA, MDiv, MAT, ThM, DMin**

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**Course Description:**

This course is an analytical and topical examination of religious traditions, beliefs, and socio-religious interaction throughout human history. In this class we will also distinguish between *religion* and *theology* as the two fields are often, yet incorrectly, conflated. We will examine various religious traditions with particular attention given to the Judeo-Christian tradition.

**Course Objectives:**

- 1) Understand the difficulties in defining and conceptualizing “religion” and how a variety of prominent thinkers have approached the topic.
- 2) Master the rudiments of practice and belief in several of the world’s largest religious traditions.
- 3) Develop a solid grasp of the phenomenological approach to studying religion.
- 4) Clearly articulate your ideas and construct persuasive arguments.
- 5) Critically analyze a wide range of sources.
- 6) Learn what it means to study religion as an academic discipline, rather than in a confessional or apologetic setting.

**Course Requirements:**

**Required Textbook:**

Kessler, Gary E., *Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases 3d*. New York, NY:

McGraw-Hill Humanities, 2007.

Additional study materials and resources are provided by the instructor and found on the Resources page of this syllabus. 3

**ATTENDANCE**

Adult and Professional Studies classes are accelerated and are offered in 8-week and 5-week sessions. Because of this, students are required to attend every class session. Missing any class will have a negative impact on the student’s learning and course performance. In the event of an absence, the student is required to notify the instructor ahead of time and follow the instructor’s course of action for

dealing with the missed class time. This may include the completion of additional assignments or a reduction in the final grade due to the missed class.

Attendance on the first night/week is mandatory. Students will be required to participate in a week 1, introduction forum for attendance reporting.

NOTE: THIS FORUM IS NOT GRADED BUT IS USED TO DETERMINE YOUR ATTENDANCE FOR WEEK 1. IF YOU DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN THIS DISCUSSION, YOU WILL BE REPORTED AS A "NO-SHOW" AND YOUR CAMPUS DIRECTOR WILL BE NOTIFIED. THIS WILL RESULT IN YOU BEING DROPPED FROM THE CLASS, REGARDLESS IF YOU POST IN THE OTHER WEEK 1 FORUMS.

## **DISABILITY STATEMENT**

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) at 985-5369 as soon as possible to coordinate and implement accommodations in a timely fashion. The Office of DSS is located in the Student Support Center, PC 188.

## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

### **I. Midterm Religious Excursus:**

Students will draw from assigned readings, class notes and supplementary materials a basis of research from which a 3-4 page paper will be written. Topics include, but are not limited to (a) A World Religion, (b) One Dimension of a Particular Religion or (c) How particular institutions (governments, businesses, communities, etc.) engage religious traditions. (Example: Chaplaincy in the U.S. Armed Forces).

It is important that your excursus treat study of religion as a branch of the humanities and the social sciences. This means that affirmations of faith, as would be discussed in a theological course, are not what is being evaluated. This paper should take as objective and analytical view of religion as possible.

**Upload your assignment to the Student Portal as a PDF. 4**

### **\*IMPORTANT NOTE\***

The Midterm and Final excursus must be written in Times Roman, 12 point font, double-space using the Turabian documentation system or Chicago Style. The Midterm Excursus must have a minimum of TWO Turabian or Chicago Style citations from your required textbook. A quick-reference can be found here:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TclISwE0Ulg>

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57WvdX8YsR8>

3. [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)

### **II. Critical Analysis in Context:**

Via the use of the three multimedia clips, our class will view various examples of religious expression as typified by our assigned readings and lectures toward the end of freewriting and sharing initial reactions

to said presentations. This freewriting assignment is to be HANDWRITTEN, scanned and uploaded to the Student Portal. The links to the three multimedia clips can be found under the Resources heading at the end of this syllabus.

**Upload your assignment to the Student Portal as a JPEG, PDF, TIFF, PNG or any format that makes the images viewable.**

### **III. Final Religious Excursus:**

The Midterm Excursus will be graded and feedback will be provided to the students for 3 purposes:

**Revision:** Any necessary changes in the structure of the Midterm submission should be reflected in the

Final submission. **Expansion:** Whereas the Midterm Excursus is 3-4 pages in the length, the Final

excursus should be a minimum of 5 pages not to exceed 7 pages. These pages do not include the

required Works Cited page. **Corrections:** Any errant information, data or research should be corrected. A

minimum of THREE Turabian or Chicago Style citations from your required textbook must be used in the Final submission.

**Upload your assignment to the Student Portal as a PDF.**

### **Grading:**

Critical Analyses in Context: 30%

Midterm Religious Excursus: 35%

Final Religious Excursus: 35% 5

### **Honor Code:**

All students are expected to conform to the highest standards of academic integrity. This means that all written assignments, exams, and papers must reflect the work of the student. Credit must be given to outside sources whenever materials and ideas are incorporated into class work. Plagiarism will immediately be reported in accordance with institutional policies. For this course in particular, this policy includes appropriating the correct documentation system in both written and oral assignments (i.e., correctly formatted footnotes, crediting sources used in PowerPoint presentations, correctly formatted bibliographical citations, etc.). Please refer to page 72 of the North Carolina Wesleyan College catalog for further details.

### **Contacting the Instructor:**

The easiest way to contact me is via email at jgrimes@ncwc.edu. In the event of emergencies, I can also be reached at (920) 248-1951. As this is my personal number, texting is preferred for initial correspondence. Please identify yourself as a NCWC student in REL 101 along with your name. At some point during our course, I would like to arrange a Zoom conference that will allow students to discuss topics germane to the assignments and the field of professional ethics in general as a helpful way of

getting the absolute most from this course in light of the pedagogical adjustments being made due to COVID-19. This matter will be revisited during the course as to its feasibility.

**Policy On Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to speak privately with the Instructor and contact Counseling and Disability Service at (252) 985-5369 or (252) 985-5131 as soon as possible to coordinate and implement accommodations in a timely fashion. Counseling and Disability Services is located in the Student Success Center, Pearsall Classroom Building 192. (Rev. 8-3-11)

**Grading Scale:**

The final grade for all students will be based on the following grading scale:

**A** 94-100

**A-** 90-93

**B+** 87-89

**B** 84-86

**B-** 80-83

**C+** 77-79

**C** 74-76

**C-** 70-73

**D+** 67-69

**D** 60-66

**F** Below 60

**XF** Failure to attend first 1-3 class meetings

**Inc.** INCOMPLETE

**W** WITHDRAWAL

**RESOURCES:**

**Questions for Critical Analysis in Context:**

**REFLECTION #1.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kw\\_DDf9Z9vg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kw_DDf9Z9vg)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Kxi7CrLA8>

After viewing the two clips above, please write a one-page, handwritten response to the following question: Why did the realization that every member of the study group, despite being close friends, expressed varying religious beliefs bring division? 7

#### **REFLECTION #2.**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsg6Kx-3xdI>**

After watching the debate linked above, write a one-page, handwritten response identifying the central position of Dr. Bart D. Ehrman and that of Dr. Dinesh D'Souza.

#### **REFLECTION #3.**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otrqzITuSqE>**

Freewriting your initial thoughts after watching Dr. Lennox's argument, answer the following question from your own perspective in a handwritten 1-2 page response.

If a deity/God/god/transcendent reality exists, following Dr. Lennox's proposition at the end of his argument, why would such a deity find it necessary to be in such close proximity to human suffering as to die on a cross?

#### **Turabian Quick and Chicago Style Reference Guides:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TclISwEOUIg>

<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/turabian-notes-and-bibliography-citation-quick-guide.html>

[http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)

#### **Sample Turabian Paper:**

[http://www.liberty.edu/media/1171/Notes-Bibliography\\_Sample\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.liberty.edu/media/1171/Notes-Bibliography_Sample_Paper.pdf)

#### **Free Tutoring:**

**<https://ncwc.edu/campus-life/resources/student-success-center/online-tutoring/>**

**Suggested Formatting Guide for an Excursus: 8**