

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD  
School of Professional Studies  
RELS 4330 Death and Belief  
COURSE OUTLINE

**Term and Year: Approved for Academic Year**

**See Instructor Section of Blackboard Course for More Information**

**Overview of the Course:**

This course is an examination of the dying and grieving processes in North America, and an exploration of the relationship between religious beliefs and the coping devices used in dealing with these processes.

**Study Topics:**

- Come to understand the relationship between religion and culture and, more precisely, how these together shape perceptions about life, death, and the afterlife.
- Achieve a global and historical consciousness by becoming more aware of other cultural and religious perceptions of a universal phenomenon that confronts humankind.
- Obtain a better understanding of current perceptions of death in contemporary North American culture.
- Understand the processes of grief and bereavement and how religious beliefs and other coping mechanisms facilitate these processes.
- Become equipped to address contemporary moral and ethical questions dealing with death and dying.
- Develop critical thinking and effective communication skills.

**Description of the course:**

This course will examine the ways in which human beings have responded to issues like death, tragedy, mystery, awe, and human consciousness within the framework of religion. It will provide a broad interdisciplinary introduction to the basic concepts and developments of human religiousness and the attitudes around the finality of death from a number of perspectives, including the philosophical, theological, psychological, cultural, and religious. We will compare and contrast how the various world religions approach this issue and explore how these ideas relate to our own personal worldview on this topic.

This course is part of the General Education Core Course. This course may be offered in a face-to-face, blended and online format.

| <b>Outcomes</b>   | <b>Assessment will be a combination of the following</b> |
|---|--|
| 1. Understand the processes of grief and bereavement and how religious beliefs and other coping mechanisms facilitate these processes                                   | Online discussions, Quizzes                              |
| 2. Achieve a global and historical consciousness by becoming more aware of other cultural and religious perceptions of a universal phenomenon that confronts humankind. | Discussions, Quizzes, papers                             |
| 3. Obtain a better understanding of current perceptions of death in contemporary North American culture.  | Discussions, Quizzes, papers                             |
| 4. Address contemporary questions concerning social justice issues as related to death and dying  | Online discussions, Quizzes, papers                      |
| 5. Become equipped to address contemporary moral and ethical questions dealing with death and dying.  | Discussions, Quizzes, and papers                         |
| 6. Develop critical thinking and effective communication skills   | Discussions, Quizzes and papers                          |

**Catalog Description:**

This course is an examination of the dying and grieving processes in North America, and an exploration of the relationship of religious beliefs and the coping devices used in dealing with these processes.

**Prerequisite:** 3 semester hours of RELS or permission of the Instructor.

**Introduction:**

RELS 4330 is an online course with written assignments, classroom dialog, and assigned readings. Please familiarize yourself with the online classroom. The basic course information is listed here for you in this Common Course Outline. The assignments will be listed in the Weekly Lessons, and the discussions will take place in the Discussion area.

**Readings** (Required)

SEE THE LINKS EMBEDDED IN THE WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE (below)

Since all readings are from the Internet, they may change because of changes to their availability. Each Instructor may have additional articles to read. You are also required to read each of the Lecture Notes that are on the class website.

**Student Evaluation**

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Discussions     | 30% |
| Quizzes         | 20% |
| Article Journal | 30% |
| Reading Summary | 20% |

**Discussion:**

Students are encouraged to use outside materials and examples in class discussions, whether online (in online versions of the class) or on-ground. Constructive class contribution includes being present, engaged, and professional. Students will be expected to participate in discussions by asking questions, sharing examples, presenting arguments, and sharing real-world applications

**Quizzes:**

There will be a brief online quiz at the end of each section we cover (usually one each week). The answers for these quizzes will come from your assigned readings, discussions, AND the class lecture notes.

**Article Journal:**

In Blackboard you will find a couple of PDF articles uploaded in the “Course Outline and Book” tab. The Article Journal is simply a synopsis of ONE of these articles. DO NOT wait until the last moment to read the articles. The material can be a little difficult, and you will probably need to read through it more than once. The assignment will be a typed, double-spaced, 12-font paper detailing what the article was about, and MUST include your own personal thoughts and ideas on the topic (agreements, disagreements, likes, dislikes, other views, etc). The paper needs to be at least 4 full pages. This is a one-time assignment, and there is no need for outside research (simply use the article provided). Since this assignment is due week 3, you will submit this paper in the Week 3 folder in the assessment folder.

**Reading Summary:**

The Reading Summary is simply a synopsis of an article from a magazine, newspaper, or the Internet, that is current, not older than two months, and reflects one of the topics covered in this course. The synopsis must be a typed, double-spaced, 12-font paper detailing what the reading was about, summarizing the points made in the article, and MUST include your own personal thoughts and ideas on the topic (agreements, disagreements, likes, dislikes, other views, etc). The paper needs to be at least 3 full pages. This is a one-time assignment. Since this assignment is due week 7, you will submit this paper in the Week 7 folder in the assessment folder.

**Late Work Policy:** Assignments are expected to be completed by the stated due date. A 25% penalty will be deducted from the assignment grade for all late papers. Given that discussion questions are “real-time,” no late discussion board posts will be accepted.

**Academic Honesty:**

The UIW Student Handbook states, “Students are expected to pursue and maintain truth, honesty, and personal integrity in their academic work. Academic dishonesty, in any form, constitutes a serious threat to the freedoms that define the academic community. The following definitions and guidelines have, therefore, been established to secure the maintenance of academic integrity at Incarnate Word. Forms of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

1. Cheating on tests, exams, or other class or laboratory work
2. Involvement in plagiarism
3. Counterfeit work
4. Falsification of academic records
5. Unauthorized reuse of work
6. Theft
7. Collusion
8. Facilitating academic dishonesty
9. Taking information from the Internet and plagiarizing, or not properly citing such sources

### **Class Schedule and Assignments:**

Readings you should do this week, in addition to any other articles requested by your Instructor.

#### WEEK ONE

Introduction & background/ the nature of religion “Defining Religion” from Religious Tolerance READ ALL THREE PAGES/Links [http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel\\_defn.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel_defn.htm)  
[http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel\\_defn1.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel_defn1.htm) [http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel\\_defn2.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel_defn2.htm)

#### WEEK TWO

Death in Ancient Religions

“Religion in the Lives of the Ancient Egyptians” by Emily Teeter & Douglas Brewer, University of Chicago  
<http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777190168/>

“Ancient Mesopotamian Beliefs in the Afterlife” by M. Choksi, Ancient History Encyclopedia  
<http://www.ancient.eu/article/701/>

#### WEEK THREE

Death in Native American Traditions

“A Summary of Native American Religions” by David Ruvolo, West Virginia University  
<http://are.as.wvu.edu/ruvolo.htm>

“Native American Religion” Encyclopedia of Death & Dying <http://www.deathreference.com/Me-Nu/Native-American-Religion.html>

“Afterlife: Mesoamerican Concepts” by Thomas Gale  
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/afterlife-mesoamerican-concepts>

### **Article Journal due**

#### WEEK FOUR

Death in Judaism, Christianity & Islam

“Judaism; an Introduction” Khan University Read all 5 sections and watch the video clip and 2 illustration links  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/judaism-art/a/judaism-an-introduction>

“Christianity” ReligionFacts <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity>

“Islam” Encyclopedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islam>

#### WEEK FIVE

Death in Judaism, Christianity & Islam (continued) “Olam Ha-Ba: the Afterlife” Judaism 101  
<http://www.jewfaq.org/olamhaba.htm>

“Heaven and Hell in Christian Thought” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heaven-hell/>

“Islamic Belief about the Afterlife” by Jason Gray, University of California Riverside  
<http://www.sptimmortalityproject.com/background/islamic-belief-about-the-afterlife/>

#### WEEK SIX

Death in Buddhism & Hinduism “Buddhism; An Introduction” PBS Online  
<http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm>

“Hinduism for Beginners” by Subhamoy Das, ThoughtCo <https://www.thoughtco.com/hinduism-for-beginners-1770069>

#### WEEK SEVEN

Death in other Eastern religions

“After Death Beliefs of Japanese People” by Charles Infosino <http://classroom.synonym.com/after-death-beliefs-japanese-people-17439.html>

“Ancestor Worship in Taoism”

[https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese\\_Customs/taoism\\_ancestor\\_worship.htm](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/taoism_ancestor_worship.htm)

### Reading Summary due

#### WEEK EIGHT

Death in neo-Paganism, Wicca, New Age thought

“Pagan Thoughts on Death and Afterlife” by John Beckett

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/johnbeckett/2015/10/pagan-thoughts-on-death-and-the-afterlife.html>

#### **Grading Scale:**

A 93 – 100

A- 90 -92

B+ 87 – 89

B 83 – 86

B- 80 – 82

C+ 77 – 79

C 70 – 76

C- There is no C- grade at UIW

D+ 67 – 69

D 63 – 62

D- 60 – 62

F Less than 60

“A” and “A-” indicate a superior grasp of the subject matter of the course, initiative and originality in attacking problems, and ability to relate knowledge to new situations.

“B+”, “B”, and “B-” indicate better than average grasp of the subject matter of the course and ability to apply principles with intelligence. “C+” and “C” indicate an acceptable grasp of the essentials of the course. Most folks fall in this region, or they should!

“D+”, “D”, and “D-” indicate less than average performance in the course. The course must be repeated for Business majors. “F” indicates failure to master the minimum essentials of the course. The course must be repeated.

## **Class Syllabus Statement regarding Disability and Title IX**

### **Disability Accommodations:**

The University of the Incarnate Word is committed to providing a supportive, challenging, diverse and integrated environment for all students. In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act – Subpart E, Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Title III of the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), the University ensures accessibility to its programs, services and activities for qualified students with documented disabilities. To qualify for services, the student must provide Student Disability Services with the appropriate documentation of his or her disability at the time services and/or accommodations are requested.

### **Pregnancy Accommodations:**

Under the Department of Education’s (DOE) regulations implementing Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University does not discriminate against any student on the basis of pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions.

To request reasonable accommodations for disability, temporary disability (e.g., injury, surgery) or pregnancy, please contact:

Student Disability Services 4301 Broadway CPO 295  
Administration Building – Suite 51 San Antonio, TX 78209  
(210) 829-3997  
(210) 283-6329  
[www.uiw.edu/sds](http://www.uiw.edu/sds)

### **Title IX Information:**

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. As a part of our mission UIW is committed to provide an environment that welcomes all students. UIW does not tolerate sex discrimination of any kind. UIW is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline for violations of the University’s relevant policies.

All Employees are considered Mandatory Reporters, which means that they are required to report possible violations of Title IX or the UIW Sexual Misconduct Policy to the Director of Title IX. As a UIW faculty member, I am a Mandatory Reporter and must report any Title IX related incidents that I become aware of or witness. This includes but is not limited to incidents that are disclosed in writing, discussion, one-on-one, or that I may overhear. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit [uiw.edu/TitleIX](http://uiw.edu/TitleIX) or contact the Director of Title IX at:

Alexandria Salas Administration Building, Room 444 210.283.6977

[ansalas@uiwtx.edu](mailto:ansalas@uiwtx.edu)

### Alternative Instructional Equivalent

Shown below is a class matrix to help you figure out how much time you should be spending on various assignments each week (this includes reading time, quiz time, discussion questions, etc).

Class Meeting Matrix includes the topics, readings, and/or assignments. You will notice a number in parenthesis. This is the Alternative Learning Equivalencies for this course. It is an expectation for the minimum amount of time (hours) you should spend on each topic. Its primary purpose is for accreditation.

| Week | Alternative Instructional Equivalent (AIE) for Activity   | Estimated Hours |
|------|---|-----------------|
| #1   | Lecture Notes review (1.5).<br>Assigned readings (2).<br>Take part in Week One Introductions (2.5).<br>Quiz | 6               |
| #2   | Quiz<br>Assigned readings (3.5).<br>Discussion (2.5).   | 6               |
| #3   | Article review (1.5).<br>Assigned readings (2).<br>Discussion (2.5).<br>Quiz                                | 6               |
| #4   | Quiz<br>Assigned readings (3.5).<br>Discussion (2.5).   | 6               |
| #5   | Assigned readings(3.5).<br>Discussion (2.5).<br>Quiz  | 6               |
| #6   | Quiz<br>Assigned readings (3.5).<br>Discussion (2.5).   | 6               |
| #7   | Reading summary (1.5).<br>Assigned readings (2).<br>Discussion (2.5).<br>Quiz                               | 6               |
| #8   | Quiz<br>Assigned readings (3.5).<br>Discussion (2.5).   | 6               |
|      | <b>Total</b>  | <b>48</b>       |

