



RHUM301 – Nature of Religion

Master Course Syllabus

Course Overview (QM Standards 1.2)

Course description: In this course students analyze the nature of religious personalities, institutions, literature, philosophies, experiences, and education.

Course Goals:

- Students will identify and describe religious concepts, practices & spaces
- Students will interpret religious concepts, practices & spaces
- Students will explain religious concepts, practices & spaces

Pre-Requisites (QM Standard 1.6)

There are no course prerequisites for this course other than being an RBA (Regents Bachelor of Arts) student.

Minimum Technical Requirements and Online Resources (QM Standards 1.5 & 1.7)

In addition to a web browser (preferable Firefox) that is Blackboard compatible, you will need the other WVROCKS supported technologies outlined in the student policies section. You should know how to access and use Internet, WVROCKS, and Microsoft Office programs, and you will need to have consistent access to these technologies. You should know how to use email with attachments. You will also need a flash drive.

Online Resources: This course makes use of many online resources. I have made every effort to make sure the links I have are up-to-date. However, due to the changing nature of the web, you may find that a resource is temporarily unavailable or has been removed. If this should happen, please send me an email and I will find an alternative resource or modify the assignment accordingly.

Instructor Information (QM Standards 1.8 & 5.3)

Individual instructors complete this information.

Virtual Office Hours

I am available in my virtual office by appointment only. Send me an email to set up an appointment.

Personal Commitment

My personal commitments to you as a participant include:

- I will reply to course mail messages within 24 hours;
- I will read all discussion postings and will reply where appropriate within 3 days
- I will acknowledge my receipt of every course mail message immediately upon reading it. If I am unable to respond to the request or concern at the time of initial reply, I will give you an estimated time for my next reply.

- If I am going to be away from the course space for more than a day or two, I will send a message to you indicating the length of my absence.
- I will regularly update information regarding due dates in the course announcements.

Optional/Required Course Materials (QM Standard 4.6)

No text required.

Grading Policy (QM Standard 3.2)

Each week students will be expected to complete:

1. **Reading & media:** Each week you will look in the folder for that unit and read assigned readings, watch videos, or examine other required materials.
2. **Discussions:** Post content or comments on any new discussions. Replay to others who respond to your posts. Fulfill any specific discussion post assignments are requirements that are posted to the discussion instructions.
3. **Assignments:** Check for any specific assignments in the unit folder and complete them by their due date (usually end of week)
4. **Quizzes:** Take any quizzes by their specific due dates. Terms & ID quizzes are usually due midway through a unit; Short answers & essays are usually due at the end of the unit. See course schedule and test schedule in the “start here” folder.

Grading

The total amount of points to be earned for the course is 1420. These points are earned via three types of assessments including: module assignments, module discussions and module quizzes.

- A – 90 - 100
- B – 80 - 89
- C - 70 - 79
- D - 60 - 69
- F - <60

Course Schedule and Weekly Outline

- Week 1: Introduction to the study of religions (Unit 1: Introduction)
 - Syllabus. Carefully read and study the whole syllabus
 - Introduction: The Insider-Outsider problem in the study of religions
 - Blackboard readings: “The study of religions” & Clifford Geertz article “ethos”.
 - Discussion Questions & Terms posted online
- Week 2: Cases of religious beliefs and ideas (Unit 2: Religious Concepts)
 - Reading: Bruce Lincoln on Definitions of Religion
 - Excerpt from *Thunder Rides a Black Horse* (Native American beliefs)
 - Christianity: The parable of the Good Samaritan
 - The Buddhist Four Noble Truths
 - Hindu Karma & Dharma
 - Discussion Questions & Terms posted online
 - Recommended: Memorize new vocabulary from online “Discussion Questions & Terms”
 - Discussion posts
 - Terms quiz

- Week 3: The supernatural, or not. (Unit 2: Religious Concepts)
 - The Christian trinity
 - Islam: God is One
 - Hinduism: Polytheism or Monotheism? Or do these terms work at all?
 - Buddhist Atheism & Secular Humanism
 - Discussion posts
 - Short answer & short essay quiz

- Week 4: Group activities (Unit 3: Religious Practices)
 - Hindu puja—multimedia & reading
 - Christian Mass—multimedia & reading
 - Jewish Passover—multimedia & reading
 - Review Questions & Terms posted online
 - Discussion posts
 - Terms quiz

- Week 5: personal activities (Unit 3: Religious Practices)
 - Buddhist Mindfulness and Zen meditation—multimedia & reading
 - Christian Evangelical prayer practices—multimedia & reading
 - Chanting & the Liturgical uses of prayer—multimedia & reading
 - Five Pillars of Islam—multimedia & reading
 - Discussion posts
 - Short answer & short essay quiz

- Week 6: Temples, Churches, Ashrams, etc. (Unit 4: Religious Spaces)
 - Reading: excerpt from *The Production of Space*. Henri Lefebvre
 - Hindu Ashram: learning yoga in India—multimedia & reading
 - Mega-Churches: Christianity as media event & big business—multimedia & reading
 - Urban neighborhood Synagogue in New York City
 - Rural Churches in Appalachia
 - Discussion posts
 - Terms quiz

- Week 7: Pilgrims & travelers (Unit 4: Religious Places, Journeys and Destinations)
 - The Muslim Hajj—multimedia & reading
 - Hindu Kumbha Mela—multimedia & reading
 - Native America: Wisdom Sits in Places—multimedia & reading
 - Additional materials on MUOnline/Blackboard (Geertz “religion”)
 - Recommended: Memorize new vocabulary from online “Discussion Questions & Terms”
 - Discussion posts
 - Short answer & terms quiz

- Week 8: Implications of religious life and the nature of religions (Unit 5: Conclusions)
 - Does Religion Matter?
 - Religious conflict in the Modern world
 - The debate between whether all religions are different paths to the same thing or radically different and exclusive paths. And, the Outsider’s perspective
 - Discussion posts