



Religious Studies 0011 / 1031E
2013 - 2014

Contemporary Religious Quests

"Being religious means asking passionately the question of the meaning of our existence and being willing to receive answers, even if the answers hurt." Paul Tillich

Time: Mondays 6:30 – 9:30 pm. **Rm** 302
Course Director: Dr. Sheila Kappler **e-mail:** through the course site on OWL
Office Hours: Mon. 5:30 - 6:15 pm. **Office:** tba
or by appointment

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to Religious Studies which incorporates the autobiographies and/or biographies of twentieth and twenty-first century men and women representing different religious perspectives and walks of life. It will introduce the student to the theory of religion: its meaning and function in culture and in the lives of individuals.

The life stories of people such as Mohandas Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Elie Wiesel, Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King, Rigoberta Menchu and others will facilitate the exploration of questions such as: What does it mean to be on a religious quest? How do cultural and social influences affect the quest? What experiences are unique to the individual? Are there any experiences that all those on a religious quest share?

Particular phenomena prevalent in the 20th and 21st centuries and relevant to the study of religion will be considered, such as environmental and new-age spiritualities.

The course will draw on written materials, films, lectures and in class and on-line discussions. 3 hours

Requirements:

RS 0011	
forums participation (on line discussion)	25%
two in-class tests, @ 10 marks each	20%
major presentation	10%
report on research	10%
final exam	35%

RS 1031E	
forums participation (on line discussion)	20%
two in-class tests, @ 10 marks each	20%
major presentation	10%
report on research	10%
book review	10%
final exam	30%

Required Text: Gary E. Kessler, *Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases*. Third Edition. New York: McGraw Hill, 2006. Additional readings will be assigned.

Description of Requirements

Forums participation (25% for 0011, 20% for 1031E)

This section of the course is to be completed on-line, through the OWL Sakai platform. Each week (except as noted in the calendar of readings) we will engage in on-line discussion of the course reading material for that week. Details of this task will be fully discussed in the first and second class, and posted on the course site on the OWL course home page.

In-Class Tests (10% each) & Final Exam (35% for 0011, 30% for 1031E)

Definitions, short answers and essays

The in class tests are scheduled for class 9, on the 11th of November, and class 18, on the 10th of February.

The final exam will be written in the April exam period.

The use of electronic devices is not permitted at any of these evaluative exercises.

Book Review (10%) (RS 1031E only)

Please choose one of the books below to read, and on which to prepare a 4-5 page review.

After a basic overview of the content of the book (no more than one and one-half pages), write an analysis of the ways that religion influences the life of the major character(s). Questions such as the following may be addressed:

- ✦ What role does play in the life of the major character(s)?
- ✦ Does religion serve to stifle or broaden the lives in question?
- ✦ What elements of religion are most prominent?
- ✦ To what degree does the life of the major character(s) correspond to the quest motif?
- ✦ Conclude your review with a one page description of your personal response to the book and what it revealed to you about the nature and function of religion.

Please submit your book review through the Assignments tab on OWL Sakai. All papers will be submitted to turnitin.com.

Books: (widely available from bookstores or local libraries)

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985.

Hosseini, Khaled. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Toronto: Viking Group, 2007.

Potok, Chaim. *My Name is Asher Lev*. New York: Knopf, 1972. (or any other edition)

Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*

Suri, Manil. *The Death of Vishnu*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2002.

Toews, Miriam. *A Complicated Kindness*. Toronto: Alfred K. Knopf, 2004.

Wilentz, Amy. *Martyrs' Crossing*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001.

Other titles can be negotiated.

Due date: March 10th

Major presentation (10%)

Each student will research and present one 20th or 21st century individual who has embarked on a religious quest. You are strongly encouraged to work with another student on this project, but independent papers must be submitted.

A list of possibilities will be made available, but you are not restricted to it. The person presented must meet these criteria:

- ✚ adult life lived in 20th of 21st century
- ✚ who is broadly acknowledged to be a religious person
- ✚ for whom there are available primary and secondary sources.

You must have selected the person and date of your presentation by class 5, on the 7th of October.

By class 7, on the 28th of October, you are to have submitted, through the Assignments tab, a page on which you identify the person you will study, your interest in that particular person, and an annotated bibliography of *at least* two primary sources and two or more secondary sources. A primary source is something written by the person in question. A secondary source is something written about her/him.

Please note that one purpose here is to provide the opportunity for new learning, hence some persons who are/have been very much documented and/or in the public eye are counter-indicated for this task.

You will have the opportunity to share certain aspects of your assignment with the class. You may choose to present your research to the class using some form of creative expression: a dialogue with the person in question, an interview, a monologue by the person, a photo essay of their life, etc. Whatever choice you make, your presentation should be interactive and engaging for the class. The norm for each presentation is 20 minutes. You may NOT exceed that time frame. This will be discussed more fully in class.

Once scheduled, the dates for these presentations will, typically, not be changeable. Please refer to the posted file regarding PowerPoint presentations.

Report on Research (10%)

The written component of your research is a formal essay, due one week after your presentation. It should be 9 -10 pages (type written, double-spaced, 12 pt.) in length and include, minimally, the following:

An introduction to the person you are studying and his/her quest, which should take account of:

- ✚ personal background: family, religious, historical, cultural background which influenced the person
- ✚ major events in his/her life (highlight the pivotal experience and key questions/concerns that motivated the person)
- ✚ a general description of his/her religious quest, its uniqueness and particular direction and expression.

An analysis of key elements of the quest of the person in question

- ✚ Using your primary and secondary sources, describe the person's context and religious beliefs which influence his/her actions throughout their quest. Include specific reference to the manner in which this quest fits the general quest pattern we have discussed in class.

Pulling It All Together: connections, implications, conclusions

This part is a synthesis: pulling it all together: a) your personal reaction; and b) connections to subject matter of the course.

In this part of the paper you may do some of the following:

- ✚ make comparisons to other religious persons and their quests
- ✚ draw some conclusions about religion and the religious quest
- ✚ give your personal reactions to the person
- ✚ list and explain questions that the person raises for you.

Your paper is due one week
after your presentation.

Please pass in your completed paper through the Assignments tab.

Instructional Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ✚ Identify the basic elements, themes, and trends in the study of religion
- ✚ Summarize the basic components of religion (creed, code, cult, community, cosmology)
- ✚ Discuss and critique the function and purpose of religion
- ✚ State what constitutes a quest and discuss the pattern of the quest
- ✚ Name 20th / 21st century individuals on religious quests and discuss the salient features of their journeys
- ✚ Critique, compare and evaluate aspects of those journeys
- ✚ Evaluate how culture and religious tradition lend shape to any particular religious quest
- ✚ Recognize and identify terms specific to the religious traditions of particular individuals
- ✚ Recognize and evaluate new religious phenomenon

General Expectations:

1. **Deadlines:** Deadlines are firm, and must be met. Absence from class on the day work is due does not constitute an extension. Any extension must be negotiated with the instructor prior to the due date and recorded, preferably by email. Any work submitted after the due date for which you have not followed this procedure may be penalized at five (5) per cent per day.

It is particularly important that presentation dates are honoured. Failure to present on the specified date will be penalized by not less than 35%.

A medical accommodation for work valued at less than 10% of your total grade can be established, in writing (preferably email, as above), with your instructor. For all other cases, please refer to Western's policy regarding "Medical Accommodation Policy," available at <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

2. Academic Integrity: One operative assumption of this course, as with all university courses, is that all work you submit for marking will be **your** work. You must **properly cite all the sources** from which you gather your ideas and phrasing, and not only the directly quoted material.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence – please see: Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar), available at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

All required papers are to be submitted through the Assignments tab on the OWL Sakai course site. This site sends papers through turnitin.com, the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Plagiarism may be penalized with a failing grade in the assignment and an offence record that will be held in the Dean's office.

There is a helpful resource available at www.uwo.ca/ombuds/pdf/academicintegrity.pdf and another at <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/student/cheating.html>

3) Academic Style: There are a number of acceptable styles of documentation: Chicago, MLA and APA. The MLA (Modern Language Association) style is preferred for this course.

This is the first thing I look at when assessing your papers. Be attentive.

The MLA recommends a Name-Page method. In this method, no footnote or endnote is needed. Rather you can make a brief parenthetical citation in your text.

i.e., "Mysticism is seen to be a highly specialized search for reality, for heightened and completed life, which we have found to be a constant characteristic of human consciousness" (Underhill 27).

The parenthetical reference includes the author's surname and the relevant page number with no punctuation intervening. Placed on a separate sheet, at the end of the paper, is a list of Works Cited, as below:

Underhill, Evelyn. *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*. 12th ed. New York: World Publishing, 1930.

The list of "Works Cited" must include an entry for each source you use in your paper.

I recommend: Buckley, Joanne. *Fit To Print: The Canadian Student's Guide to Essay Writing*. 6th ed. Toronto: Nelson, 2004.

An on-line document guide can be found at <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/files/styleguides/MLA.pdf> This site is particularly helpful in giving examples of the proper way to cite electronic sources.

4) Inclusive Language: Use non-sexist, non-discriminatory language in your writing. Language that reinforces sexism or racism, ethnic bias, homophobia, or other forms of prejudice and discrimination, should not be used. Some

general points: In English, there is a tradition of using male terms to refer to the whole human population: “man,” “mankind,” “he,” and “his” are often employed in the generic sense. Since these terms refer also to exclusively male populations, using the same term for the two different meanings is ambiguous. Be specific: if you mean all people, males and females, say so. Instead of man/mankind – use humanity, human beings, human race, people, person(s), individual(s), men and women, women and men.

5) A Respectful Learning Environment: A respectful learning environment is a collective responsibility. We will listen to each other with openness and consideration, respecting individual differences and honouring each person's right to hold her or his own beliefs. This does not preclude discussion and/or disagreement, but does call for a considerate sharing of opinions and ideas.

6) Grading: Grading will be based on the extent and quality of research and on the imagination and critical judgment shown in papers and on the exam.

University-wide grade descriptors:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

See <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2011/pg104.html> for the reference in the UWO Calendar.

[Further Information about Policies and Procedures at Brescia](#)

BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are not grounds for academic accommodation.

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded under the Medical Documentation heading of the following website: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm> . If it is not possible to have an SMC completed by the attending physician/nurse practitioner, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill” is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation. All documentation is to be submitted to an Academic Advisor.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full statement of University policy regarding extensions of deadlines or makeup exams can be found at <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2013/pg117.html>

2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website, www.registrar.uwo.ca, for official dates). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory.

3. ABSENCES

Short Absences: If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

Extended Absences: If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Misconduct in the Western Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Computer-marked Tests/exams:

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudsperson's Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar.

6. PREREQUISITES AND ANTIREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Similarly, you will also be deleted from a class list if you have previously taken an antirequisite course unless this has the approval of the Dean. These decisions may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course because you have taken an antirequisite course.

7. SUPPORT SERVICES

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar_services/index.html . The Western Registrar's website is at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/index.cfm> . The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/> . Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.