

**SCAR 1B03—WHAT ON EARTH IS RELIGION? WINTER 2023
(DRAFT ONLY—SUBJECT TO REVISION)**

Instructor: Dr. Philippa Carter
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Lecture: M, Th 4:30 -5:20 pm

Tutorials: As noted on Mosaic
Office Hours: [By Appointment](#) (Zoom)

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Course Description

An introduction to the academic study of religion and religions focusing on key themes and on how scholars approach religiosity both historically and in contemporary global cultures. Topics covered may include truth and truth-claims, ritual and practice, myth and history, authority and power, community and conformity.

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion focusing on the history of the discipline, including ideas about what constitutes “religion” and “religions” and the ways in which religious worldviews affect individuals and communities historically and globally.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course students will have:

- Encountered a range of approaches to the academic study of religion both historical and contemporary;
- Become familiar with the kinds of questions religious studies scholars investigate;
- Cultivated a scholarly approach to studying religion.

By the end of this course students will:

- Recognize similarities and differences in how human beings participate in religious communities;
- Understand fundamental problems in the academic study of religion;
- Appreciate the complexity and diversity of religious studies.

Required Materials and Texts

Nye, Malory. *Religion: The Basics*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2008. (An e-book version is available through McMaster’s library.)

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. 80% Four written assignments (@20% each)
2. 5% Five online quizzes (@1% each)
3. 15% Participation & Engagement

Course Evaluation – Assignment Dates

- Assignment 1 (20%) due: 3 Feb, 11:59 pm.
- Assignment 2 (20%) due: 3 Mar, 11:59 pm.
- Assignment 3 (20%) due: 31 Mar, 11:59 pm.
- Assignment 4/Take-home test (20%) due: 21 Apr, 11:59 pm.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (9, 12 Jan) Introduction

Week 2 (16, 19 Jan) Religion: Some Basics

Readings: Nye, chapter 1

Week 3 (23, 26 Jan) Culture

Readings: Nye, chapter 2; Notes: Quiz 1 DUE 27 Jan, 11:59 pm

Week 4 (30 Jan, 2 Feb) Power

Readings: Nye, chapter 3; Notes: Assignment 1 DUE 3 Feb, 11:59 pm

Week 5 (6, 9 Feb) Gender 1

Readings: Nye, chapter 4; Notes: Quiz 2 DUE 10 Feb, 11:59 pm

Week 6 (13, 16 Feb) Gender 2

Week 7 (20, 23 Feb) Reading Week (No classes)

Week 8 (27 Feb, 2 Mar) Belief 1

Readings: Nye, chapter 5; Notes: Assignment 2 DUE 3 Mar, 11:59 pm

Week 9 (6, 9 Mar) Belief 2

Week 10 (13, 16 Mar) Ritual

Readings: Nye, chapter 6; Notes: Quiz 3 DUE 17 Mar, 11:59 pm

Week 11 (20, 23 Mar) Texts 1

Readings: Nye, chapter 7; Notes: Quiz 4 DUE 24 Mar, 11:59 pm

Week 12 (27, 30 Mar) Texts 2

Notes: Assignment 3 DUE 31 Mar, 11:59 pm

Week 13 (3, 6 April) Whither the Academic Study of Religion?

Notes: Quiz 5 DUE 6 April 11:59 pm

Week 14 (10 April) Conclusion

Notes: Assignment 4/Take-home Exam DUE 21 April, 11:59 pm.

Course Policies – Personal Policies

Personal Email Policy

I try to respond to email messages within 24 hours on weekdays. If you email me on the weekend, expect a reply by Monday afternoon. If you do not receive an answer to your email within 24 hours on weekdays, please do not hesitate to email again. NOTE: I do not discuss grades, including requests for grade reviews, by email. Please make an appointment!

Personal Policy Regarding Submission of Assignments

All assignments should be submitted to Avenue as .doc(x) or .pdf. Please **do not** include a cover page. Assignments submitted in other formats will not be graded. Please do not submit assignments by email attachment unless specifically instructed to do so. If you have a query about a grade for an assignment, please make an appointment and be prepared to explain, in some detail, why you believe your grade is incorrect. Your assignment will be reviewed before final marks are submitted to the Registrar's office. Your grade may be increased, may stay the same, or in very unusual circumstances, be decreased.

If you find it necessary to submit the MSAF during this course, you must submit the missed work before the end of classes. I do not redistribute grades for missed assignments. ADDITIONALLY, it is not necessary to contact me to report your submission of the MSAF; simply submit your work as soon as possible.

Viewpoint Diversity Encouraged

Students in my classes should assume that their considered opinions on course materials are welcome, even if—especially if—those opinions constitute a minority position. I have been criticized in the past for not shutting down student remarks that go against the general tide of a given discussion. If you disagree with another member of the class, including myself, be prepared to defend your position respectfully so that we can all learn together. We all have the right not only to speak but also to be heard in the classes I teach.

Course Policies – University Policies

Submission of Assignments

[See personal policies above.]

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE	MARK	GRADE	MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+	70-72	B-	53-56	D
85-89	A	67-69	C+	50-52	D-
80-84	A-	63-66	C	0-49	F
77-79	B+	60-62	C-		
73-76	B	57-59	D+		

Late Assignments

See personal policies above.

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Courses with an Online Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or

lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

[McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work” but see personal policies above.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar’s Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.