What On Earth is religion

Spring 2022

**Instructor:** Hasan Doagoo

**Email:** Doagooh@mcmaster.ca

**Lecture:** Tue and Thu, 1:30 -4-30 pm

**Office:** UH B122

**Office Hours:** Fri, 1-2 pm (Over Zoom)

# Course Description

This course aims to familiarize students with the academic study of religion. It discusses certain Religious Studies' fundamental inquiries and introduces some of the key theories and methods employed in studying religion in Western academia. In addition, topics like gender and religion, myth and ritual, and orientalism intend to highlight some other important discourses tackled in this field.

# Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

* Indicate some challenges around defining the concept of 'religion.'
* Discuss key theories used to explain religion.
* Explain some of the primary methods in the academic study of religion.
* Describe how topics like gender, colonialism, and myth are associated with studying religion.
* Discuss the main tenents in the contemporary scholarship of religion.

# Required Materials and Texts

The following will be our primary textbook for this course:

* Hedges, Paul. *Understanding Religion Theories and Methods for Studying Religiously Diverse Societies*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021.

Our discussion on certain topics relies on chapters/articles from some other books listed below, which also contain the optional readings suggested in the syllabus:

*Please note that the following books can be accessed through the McMaster Library website.*

* Hinnells, John R. *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. London: Routledge, 2010.
* McCutcheon, Russell T. *Studying Religion: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
* Orsi, Robert A. *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

# Class Format

This course will be offered remotely via Zoom in a synchronous format. There will be two sessions every week on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 1:30-4:30 pm. In addition, relevant course readings and important announcements will be posted on Avenue.

# Attendance

Attendance in this course will be recorded using Zoom's automatic generated reports, which contain details of when each user joins or leaves a session. Please use your first name-last name as your Zoom profile in all the course sessions.

# How to Reach your Instructor?

The best way to get in touch with me is to contact me at [Doagooh@mcmaster.ca](mailto:Doagooh@mcmaster.ca). I usually get back to you within 24 hrs, excluding weekends. You can also attend my office hour over Zoom on Fridays, 1-2 pm. Please feel free to let me know if your schedule conflicts with my office hour and you would like to meet at a different time. I will try to find a timeslot that works for us.

# Course Evaluation – Overview

1. First quiz - 15%, on May 17
2. Mid-term essay - 25%, due May 26
3. Second quiz - 15%, on June 7
4. Final take-home project – 30%, due June 17
5. Attendance and participation – 15%

# Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

## Week 1: What is Religion?

### Tue May 3 – Challenges of defining religion

Reading:

Understanding Religion

* Religion: Language, Law, and Legacies, 19-43.

Suggested:

Studying religion

* + What's in a name? 13-24

### Thu May 5 – Theories of religion

Readings:

Routledge Companion

* + Theories of religion 75-92

Suggested:

Studying Religion

* + Religion and classification 111-122

## Week 2: Academic Study of Religion

### Tue May 10 – Religious Studies: What is it about?

Readings:

Studying Religion

* + What is the study of religion? 1-11

Routledge Companion

* + Why study religions? 5-20

### Thu May 12 – Insider-Outsider debate: How religion ought to be studied?

Readings:

Understanding Religion

* + Method: Insider-Outsider Debates, Phenomenology, and Reflexivity 44-66

Suggested:

Routledge Companion

* + Insider/outsider perspectives 259-273

## Week 3: Historical and phenomenological approaches

### Tue May 17 – Phenomenology of religion

Readings:

Routledge Companion

* + Phenomenology of Religion (202-224)

### Thu May 19 – religion from a historical perspective

Readings:

Understanding Religion

* + History: Historical Methodology and the Invention of Tradition 93-116

Notes:

* + First Quiz

## Week 4: Critical and comparative approaches

### Tue May 24 – Comparative Religions

Readings:

Understanding Religion

* + Comparison: Comparative and Contrastive Methodologies 255-277

Suggested:

Routledge Companion

* + Comparative religion 225-242

### Thu May 26 – Critical study of religion

Readings:

Routledge Companion

* + Comparative religion 225-242

Notes:

* + the mid-term essay is due on this day

## Week 5: Living Religion

### Tue May 31 – Religion as a lived experience

Readings:

Understanding Religion

* + Life: Lived Religion, Syncretism, and Hybridity 67-91

### Thu June 2 – Religious practices: Finding sacred in mundane life

Readings:

Cambridge companion

* + The look of the sacred 296-318
  + Practicing religions 273-295

## Week 6

### Tue June 7 – Myth and ritual

Readings:

Understanding Religion

* + Ritual: Ritualization, Myth, and Performance 278-302

Suggested:

Routledge Companion

* + Myth and ritual 372-396

Notes:

* Second Quiz

### Thu June 9 –Gender and religion

Readings:

Understanding Religion

* + Gender: Feminism, Sexuality, and Religion 232-254

Suggested:

Routledge Companion

* + Gender 245-248

## Week 7

### Tue June 14 – colonialism and orientalism

Readings:

Understanding Religion

* + Colonialism: Postcolonialism, Orientalism, and Decolonization 163-187

Suggested:

Routledge Companion

* + Orientalism and the study of religions 291-305

### Thu June 16 – Contemporary study of religion

Readings:

Routledge Companion

* + The study of religions: the last 50 years 39-56

Notes:

* + The final project will be due on June 17

# Course Policies

## Submission of Assignments

[Insert policy on format of assignments and how to be submitted. Keep in mind our department policy that staff in the office of the Department of Religious Studies will not date-stamp or receive papers and other assignments.]

## Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

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

## Late Assignments

Late submission of the mid-term essay or final project is subject to penalty unless an extension is given upon request.

## Avenue to Learn

In this course, we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster email 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 this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

# University Policies

## 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,](about:blank) located at [https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures- guidelines/](about:blank)

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., online search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.](about:blank)

## Courses with an Online Element

**This course** uses online elements (e.g. email, Avenue to Learn (A2L), 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 email 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 online 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

**We may** **use** online proctoring software for running quizzes. 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*](about:blank)(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](about:blank) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](about:blank) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [*Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*](about:blank)policy.

## Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

[McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)](about:blank): 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".

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](about:blank) 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.