

REL 100 – INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION MSU

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Office Hours: I am available to visit with you in my office during the day on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 11:35-12:55 and you may schedule appointments on (some) Wednesdays and Fridays from 1:45-2:45. I also welcome the opportunity to join you for lunch. Please feel free to call me or send an email to discuss questions or to arrange for an appointment.

Welcome to our Religion 100 Experience! Throughout history in all cultures so far as we know, humans have been concerned with questions concerning religion. In this course we will ask and examine many important questions related to religion, culture and ethics. As the philosopher Bertrand Russell observed, "In Philosophy, what is important is not so much the answers that are given but the questions that are asked." You are, therefore, strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions, ask questions freely, and join in our common search.

REQUIRED READING

Morreall & Sonn	<i>The Religion Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Religious Studies</i>
Kushner	<i>When Bad Things Happen to Good People</i>
Sandel	<i>Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?</i>
Wiesel	<i>Night</i>

New York Times: Register for the *email headlines*; and you will then have access to the NYT every day in your mailbox. Keep articles which demonstrate the relevancy of religion to public and private life, articles which shed light on the role of religion in cultures around the world and articles that are concerned with personal and public ethics. You can enjoy 10 free articles (including blog posts, slide shows, videos and other multimedia features, as well as unrestricted access to browse the home page, section fronts and blog fronts. NYT apps are free to download and install, and they include the Top News section for free.

GRADING SCALE

Plus/minus grades: In order to give students appropriate credit for their work, grades will be reported with pluses and minuses at the end of the semester. Your overall numerical score in the class will be converted to a letter grade on the basis of the following percentage chart:

90-92% = A-	93-100% = A	
80-82% = B-	83-86% = B	87-89% = B+
70-72% = C-	73-76% = C	77-79% = C+
60-66% = D	67-69% = D+	59% and below F

Note that the university does not allow the reporting of D- or of A+ grades.

Unit I

"Religion is..." Essay and <i>New York Times</i> article	5 points
Exam I	45 points

Unit II

Exam II	40 points
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Unit III

Exam III	45 points
<i>Shadowlands</i>	5 points

Unit IV

Exam IV	65 points
Final Questions/Essay	10 points
Final Exam	60 points

Positive contribution to class discussion and attendance
5 points
*280 points possible

*Additional points may be added if necessary to accommodate NYT articles. Please record your grades as you receive them throughout the semester. Grades will never be discussed via email.

COURSE OUTLINE

Unit I: The Relevancy of Religion in the 21st Century World

Unit II: Religion and Ethics

Unit III: Important Questions of Meaning in Religion

Unit IV: Multiple Cultural Religious Perspectives

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

1. **Exams:** There will be five exams, as listed in the course outline. The exams will consist primarily of objective questions along with some short answer and essay questions. Approximately 1/2 of the final exam will be comprehensive. Exams may not be made up unless arrangements are made with the instructor prior to the date of the exam. Exams taken late will most likely be short answer exams. No exams may be made up and no late assignments may be turned in after our last class session on Dec. 8th.
2. **Assignments:** There will be at least three writing assignments (A reflection paper, "Religion is..." and a newspaper article are due on Aug. 26. All written assignments must be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins, inclusive language, proper style, grammar, and they must be on time (otherwise points will be deducted). Both of the writing assignments are intended to help you reflect personally on the impact and value of the ideas

we have studied. You are to write in the first person and follow the instructions carefully in order to receive all of the points possible.

In keeping with the latest style guideline manuals, students will be expected to use inclusive language in all assignments. For example, male pronouns refer specifically to males and female pronouns refer specifically to females. Therefore when referring to both males and females use he/she, him/her, humankind, etc. If you have specific questions ask me about them. All assignments must be submitted in hard copy and typed. E-mailed assignments do not receive credit.

3. **Classroom participation and attendance.** You are expected to be in class on time and prepared for any questions or discussion. Attendance will be taken daily and more than 3 absences will adversely affect your grade. You will receive a maximum of 5 points for making a positive contribution to our class discussions. (Obviously you must be in class to contribute.) All assignments are given in the course outline. Therefore it is not necessary to call me before or after an absence unless you are missing a test. Email: test scores, grades, and assignments will not be given or accepted via email, unless requested in syllabus.
4. **Plagiarism and/or cheating** will result in an “F” for the course or a forced withdrawal at the student’s expense. Sanctions are described in the *Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures*, at <http://www.missouristate.edu/acadaff/AcademicIntegrity.html>
5. **Disabilities and Nondiscrimination:** This class adheres to the University’s policies. For disability accommodations, including assistance during emergency evacuations see www.missouristate.edu/disability and/or call 836-4192. The nondiscrimination statement is at www.missouristate.edu/eoaa.htm . If you have any personal concerns which need special consideration (physical, emotional, and/or mental), please let me know. Every effort will be made to be helpful to you. Disability Services refers some accommodation requests to the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, which also provides diagnostic testing for learning and psychological disabilities. For information, call 836-4787.
6. The use of **cell phones** is prohibited in all classes according to university policy. The failure to turn your cell phone to silent mode, leaving the class to receive a call, or text messaging in class will result in an absence. All of the above will result in the loss of “positive participation” points. (In case of emergency, please inform professor.)
7. **Extra Credit:** 5 points of extra credit may be earned for attending and summarizing a lecture approved by professor and available to all students. The lecture review must be typed and handed in within one week following the lecture. A minimum of two pages are required; the first page is a summary of what you heard and the second page is your analysis, reflecting upon ways you were able to make connection to our class.

Course Description, General Education Goals and Assessment

Religion 100 fulfills the university's rationale for public affairs courses as stated in the General Education Program: *Students must prepare for their roles as world citizens by cultivating civic virtues, understanding the bonds that unite people, exploring and executing citizenship obligations, understanding the effects of private behavior in the public sphere, and recognizing and reflecting on public issues.*

Religion 100 helps students develop life-long decision-making skills that will lead to a thoughtful and meaningful life, as well as to responsible participation in an increasingly diverse and globalized society. The course contributes to MSU's public affairs mission by enhancing students' cultural competence and preparing students for ethical leadership within their spheres of influence.

General Education Goals met in Religion 100:

I. Cultural Competence: Students will be able to recognize and consider multiple perspectives and cultures

1. Examine and articulate perspectives and behaviors they acquire in their homes, schools, and communities.
2. Understand, critically examine, and articulate key similarities and differences between their own cultural practices and perspectives and those of other cultures, past and present.
3. Identify the importance and best practices of developing skills for working/interacting with others.
4. Analyze the role that different languages, cultures, institutions and beliefs have in shaping individual and collective behavior.

In Religion 100 students increase self-awareness and expand their knowledge of and respect for other cultures. The course explores the role that religious beliefs have in shaping individual and collective behavior, and then gives students tools to understand, critically examine and articulate key similarities and differences between their own perspectives and practices, and those of others. A variety of instructional methods engages students in informed and respectful examination of various religio-cultural views which serves to sharpen their skills for interacting with others.

II. Ethical Leadership Students will be able to articulate their value systems, understand the ethical implications of their actions based on those values, and develop skills consistent with having a positive impact on individuals, groups, or communities.

1. Engage in self evaluation of their personal values and the degree to which their ethical

values and behaviors are congruent.

2. Understand the foundations for ethical thought and action.
3. Identify areas of difficulty in responding to situations demanding ethical inquiry.
4. Analyze complex ethical dilemmas facing the world.

Students learn various foundations for ethical thought and action, evaluate the congruency of their own values and actions, and acquire tools to analyze complex ethical dilemmas in today's world.

Ultimately, students come to recognize the need for understanding and respect of diverse ethical and religious perspectives as a means to a more peaceful and productive world.

Please visit www.missouristate.edu/ucollege/generaled/goalsenate.html to see the full text of the Missouri State General Education Program. Because of the importance of General Education to one's life-long learning, near the end of the semester you will be asked to assess how well the General Education Goals have been met in this class.

RELIGION 100 Course Goals

1. To become aware of the relevance of religion in human life, both public and private. (Corresponds to SLOs: 13:4)
2. To become acquainted with the meaning of religion and with multiple religious and cultural perspectives, and to examine one's own perspective, religious or not, in light of this knowledge. (Corresponds to SLOs: 13:1, 2, and 4.)
3. To learn to recognize and understand the religious and non-religious beliefs of others and to practice informed and respectful discussion of differences in world views. (Corresponds to SLO 13: 3.)
4. To recognize and understand the foundations of ethical decision-making and examine one's own values and behaviors. (Corresponds to SLOs: 14:1 and 2.)
5. To develop skills for analyzing ethical dilemmas in order to have a positive impact on personal and public life. (Corresponds to SLOs 14:3, and 4.)

Gen Ed Goals included:

13:1, 2, 3, 4

14:1, 2, 3, 4

ASSESSMENT: Matching General Education Goals with REL 100 Course Goals:

Each of the five course goals is an extension of one or more of the goals under cultural competence or ethical leadership. A chart is provided to explain the relationship between the five course goals and the general education goals.

REL 100

Introduction to Religion: A Public Affairs Course

Rationale for Gen Ed Public Affairs Courses: Students must prepare for their roles as world citizens by cultivating civic virtues, understanding the bonds that unite people, exploring and executing citizenship obligations, understanding the effects of private behavior in the public sphere, and recognizing and reflecting on public issues.

13. Cultural Competence: Students will be able to recognize and consider multiple perspectives and cultures.

13.1. Examine and articulate perspectives and behaviors they acquire in their homes, schools, and

13.2. Understand, critically examine, and articulate key similarities and differences between their own cultural practices and perspectives and those of

13.4. Analyze the role that different languages, cultures, institutions, and beliefs have in shaping individual

2. To become acquainted with the meaning of religion and with multiple religious and cultural perspectives, and to examine one's own perspective, religious or

13.3. Identify the importance and best practices of developing skills for working/interacting

1. To become aware of the relevance of religion in human life, both

3. To learn to recognize and understand the religious and non-religious beliefs of others, and to practice informed and respectful discussion of differences in

REL 100 Course Goals

5. To develop skills for analyzing ethical dilemmas in order to have a positive impact on personal

4. To recognize and understand the foundations of ethical decision-making, and to examine one's own

14.4. Analyze complex ethical dilemmas

14.3. Identify areas of difficulty in responding to situations demanding

14.2. Understand the foundations for ethical thought and action.

14.1. Engage in self-evaluation of their personal values and the degree to which their ethical values and behaviors

14. Ethical Leadership: Students will be able to articulate their value systems, understand the ethical implications of their actions based on those values, and develop skills consistent with having a positive impact on individuals, groups, or communities.

RELIGION 100: TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LECTURE TOPICS</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENTS</u>
UNIT I: THE RELEVANCY OF RELIGION IN THE 21ST CENTURY WORLD		
AUG 22	Introduction to REL 100	<i>Toolkit 2-14</i>
AUG 24	What are some of the essential questions in religious studies?	<i>Toolkit 71-74, 94-95</i> NYT article and essay are due on Fri.
AUG 26	Methodological Approaches to Study of Religion (Sociology: Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Berger)	article/essay due <i>World Religions 8-11</i>
AUG 29	How is religion relevant in understanding history and current international events? (Phenomenology: Husserl, Eliade, Otto, Jung)	<i>Toolkit 77-85</i>
AUG 31	How is religion relevant in understanding U.S. and current events? (Psychology: Freud, James)	<i>Toolkit 96-101</i>
SEPT 2	What are some different ways of defining religion? (Feminism, Historical and Comparative Approaches)	<i>Toolkit 65-70</i>
SEPT 5	Labor Day--no classes	
SEPT 7	Tillich's Ultimate Concern and Threats to Being: Death, Meaninglessness and Condemnation	<i>Toolkit 41-50</i>
SEPT 9	When is religion "Pseudo" or "Crypto"?	Study for exam
SEPT 12	Exam 1	
UNIT II: RELIGION AND ETHICS		
SEPT 14	The Greatest Happiness Principle: Utilitarianism	<i>Justice 1-57</i>
SEPT 16	What Matters is the Motive: Kant's Deontological Ethics	<i>Justice 103-140</i>
SEPT 19	Buddha Ethics: The Eight Fold Path	<i>World Religions 150-152</i>
SEPT 21	Moses' Code of Ethics: The Ten Commandments	<i>Exodus 20:1-17</i>
SEPT 23	<i>Justice</i> the Common Good: Abortion, Same-sex Marriage	<i>Justice 244-269</i>
SEPT 26	Jesus Ethics: The Sermon on the Mount	<i>Matthew 5-7</i>

SEPT 28 Exam 2

UNIT III: IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OF MEANING IN RELIGION

SEPT 30 Human Existential Needs Begin Kushner's book: *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*

OCT 3 Theodicy: Suffering and Death

OCT 5-7 Suffering caused by moral choices *Toolkit 16-27*

OCT 10 *Shadowlands* C.S. Lewis and Grief Film Questions

OCT 12 Suffering caused by nature

OCT 17 Making Meaning Discuss questions and review for exam

OCT 19 Exam 3

UNIT IV: MULTIPLE CULTURAL RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES

OCT 21 Diversity of Western Monotheisms and Two Traditions from India (chart)

OCT 24 Religions Rooted in Abraham *Toolkit 135-150; Wiesel's Night*

OCT 26 *Palestine is Still the issue* (film) Analysis of complex ethical dilemma

OCT 28-30 Jewish Cultural Influences Palestine film questions

NOV 2-4 Christian Cultural Influences *Toolkit 151-167*

NOV 7-9 Islamic Cultural Influences *Toolkit 167-174*

NOV 11 The Ethics of Muhammad *Toolkit 179-183*

NOV 14 Exam 4

NOV 16-21 Hindu Cultural Influences *Toolkit 206-229*

NOV 23-25 Happy Thanksgiving!

NOV 28-DEC 2 Buddhist Cultural Influences *Toolkit 229-244*

DEC 5-7 Final Essay, Questions and Review for Final Essays due