

RELS 1 Course Outline as of Fall 2020**CATALOG INFORMATION**

Dept and Nbr: RELS 1 Title: INTRO TO RELIGIOUS STUDY

Full Title: Introduction to Religious Studies

Last Reviewed: 8/25/2025

Units		Course Hours per Week		Nbr of Weeks	Course Hours Total	
Maximum	3.00	Lecture Scheduled	3.00	17.5	Lecture Scheduled	52.50
Minimum	3.00	Lab Scheduled	0	6	Lab Scheduled	0
		Contact DHR	0		Contact DHR	0
		Contact Total	3.00		Contact Total	52.50
		Non-contact DHR	0		Non-contact DHR	0

Total Out of Class Hours: 105.00

Total Student Learning Hours: 157.50

Title 5 Category: AA Degree Applicable

Grading: Grade or P/NP

Repeatability: 00 - Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

Also Listed As:

Formerly:

Catalog Description:

This course introduces the study of religion as a critical, academic discipline. It will explore the meaning, origins and function of religion, and illustrate these by drawing on myths, rituals, symbols, and beliefs from cultures all over the globe and through human history. The course will survey the evolution and content of various theories and methods in the study of religion, as well as career opportunities in the field.

Prerequisites/Corequisites:**Recommended Preparation:**

Eligibility for ENGL 1A or equivalent

Limits on Enrollment:**Schedule of Classes Information:**

Description: This course introduces the study of religion as a critical, academic discipline. It will explore the meaning, origins and function of religion, and illustrate these by drawing on myths, rituals, symbols, and beliefs from cultures all over the globe and through human history. The course will survey the evolution and content of various theories and methods in the study of

religion, as well as career opportunities in the field. (Grade or P/NP)

Prerequisites/Corequisites:

Recommended: Eligibility for ENGL 1A or equivalent

Limits on Enrollment:

Transfer Credit: CSU;UC.

Repeatability: Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

ARTICULATION, MAJOR, and CERTIFICATION INFORMATION:

AS Degree:	Area		Effective:	Inactive:
	E	Humanities	Fall 2025	
	L3	Arts and Humanities		
	E	Humanities	Spring 2010	Fall 2025
CSU GE:	Transfer Area		Effective:	Inactive:
	C2	Humanities	Spring 2010	
IGETC:	Transfer Area		Effective:	Inactive:
	3B	Humanities	Spring 2010	
CSU Transfer:	Transferable	Effective:	Spring 2010	Inactive:
UC Transfer:	Transferable	Effective:	Spring 2010	Inactive:

CID:

Certificate/Major Applicable:

Major Applicable Course

COURSE CONTENT

Student Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify and explain various methods and theories used in explicating the meaning, origins, functions, and elements of religions.
2. Describe, compare and contrast corresponding elements of different kinds of religions from different parts of the world and different periods of history.
3. Demonstrate appreciation for the diversity of religious expression.

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Distinguish among differing kinds of approaches to the study of religion
2. Identify the components of religious expression
3. Evaluate religious claims and explanations
4. Analyze the usefulness of definitions of religion
5. Recognize large-scale patterns in religious belief and practice
6. Organize various religions into taxonomies
7. Support or challenge descriptions of religion with evidence drawn from a wide diversity of religions from broad categories such as religions of the book, diasporic, doctrinal, imaginistic, and indigenous traditions.
8. Explain religious studies as a secular as well as a sacred enterprise
9. Describe the human diversity reflected in religious phenomena, including expressions and

contributions by people ancient and modern, Western and non-Western, literate and oral, and the place and perspectives of women, and understandings of the natural world

Topics and Scope:

Topics will include but not be limited to the following, and will be illustrated by examples drawn from a diversity of religions from broad categories such as: religions of the book, diasporic, doctrinal, imagistic, and indigenous.

- I. The Religious Studies Major as a Career Choice
- II. Definitions of Religion
- III. Taxonomy of Religions
- IV. Theories of the Origin of Religion
- V. History of the Study of Religion as a Unique Discipline
- VI. Significance of the Historical Development and Changes that Occur in Religions
- VII. Elements of Religion
 - A. Myth
 - B. Ritual
 - C. Symbolism
 - D. Mystical Experience
 - E. Scripture: Production, Transmission and Canonization of Sacred Text
 - F. Theology and Creed
 - G. Apologetics
 - H. Community
 - I. Institution
- VIII. Methodological Approaches to the Study of Religion
- IX. Relationships Between Orthodox Religion and Popular Folk Traditions
- X. The Role, Contributions and Perspectives of Women
- XI. Ethnicity, Race, Class and Sexual Orientation in Religion
- XII. Examples Drawn from Specific Religious Traditions
- XIII. Relationship of Religion to Politics
- XIV. Religion and Ecology

Assignment:

1. Weekly reading assignments of between 20-50 pages
2. Written homework (study questions on assigned reading)
3. Quizzes (0 - 10)
4. Exams (1 - 4) including a comprehensive final exam
5. A research paper of 5-7 pages
6. Optional field trips, virtual or in-person
7. Optional presentations

Methods of Evaluation/Basis of Grade:

Writing: Assessment tools that demonstrate writing skills and/or require students to select, organize and explain ideas in writing.

Homework on reading, essays, research paper

Writing 40 - 80%

Problem Solving: Assessment tools, other than exams, that demonstrate competence in computational or non-computational problem solving skills.

None

Problem solving
0 - 0%

Skill Demonstrations: All skill-based and physical demonstrations used for assessment purposes including skill performance exams.

None

Skill Demonstrations
0 - 0%

Exams: All forms of formal testing, other than skill performance exams.

Quizzes, optional midterm(s), comprehensive final exam

Exams
20 - 50%

Other: Includes any assessment tools that do not logically fit into the above categories.

Classroom participation, optional: oral presentations, reports on interviews, museum visits, or field trips

Other Category
0 - 10%

Representative Textbooks and Materials:

Studying Religion: An Introduction. McCutcheon, Russel. Routledge. 2018

Big Gods; How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict. Norenzayan, Ara. Princeton University Press. 2015 (classic)

The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods. 2nd ed. Chryssides, George and Geaves, Ron. Bloomsbury Academic. 2014 (classic)

Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases. 3rd ed. Kessler, Gary E. McGraw-Hill. 2007 (classic)

Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought. Boyer, Pascal. Basic Books. 2001 (classic)