

University of North Texas
Representing Religion: and other problems of theory and method in
the study of religion
PHIL 4900

Professor: Dr. Terra Schwerin Rowe
Email: terra.rowe@unt.edu
Time: T/R 12:30-1:30
Location: ENV 310 M
Office Hours: T/R 1:30-2:30 (or by appointment)
Office: ENV 310 M

I. Rationale and course outline:

This course gives an introduction to the history of the modern scientific study of religion, including the development and debates around methods and critical analysis of the construction of the category “religion.”

II. Course Outcomes:

By the end of the course students should:

- Be able to describe key figures in the beginnings of religious studies and their associated theories and/or methods.
- Be able to compare and contrast theories of religion
- Be able to outline key concerns or critiques of the modern concept of religion and world religions.

III. Format and Procedures:

This class will be an independent study. In weekly meetings with Dr. Rowe the readings will be analyzed and discussed, looking always to compare and contrast different approaches and theories of religion as well as their concerns/critiques.

IV. Course Requirements:

1. Attendance and participation:

- Meet to discuss readings with Dr. Rowe. The student should come to meetings:
 1. having closely read the assigned reading,
 2. having identified a main argument or key insights,
 3. and with questions prepared for clarification and/or discussion.
- Attendance policy: Attendance is required at each class. An unexcused absence will result in a reduction in grade, visible through Canvas.
 - *An unexcused absence is 1) when you don't show up in class without first communicating with the instructor and/or 2) don't have an acceptable reason for missing class (even if you first communicate with the instructor).

* If a student misses a class (whether it is an excused or unexcused absence) that student is responsible for class content, assignments missed, and upcoming due dates. Any time a class is missed the student is responsible for arranging with a classmate to take good notes and notifying them of upcoming due dates and announcements.

*Exceptions will only be made for emergency situations. In all cases, timely communication with your professor is key.

*In case of illness: If you are ill please stay home! Contact the professor before class and arrange for a classmate to take notes to share.

Course Materials for Remote Instruction

Remote instruction may be necessary due to community health or weather-related events. You will need access to a webcam and microphone to participate in fully remote portions of the class. Information on how to be successful in a remote learning environment can be found at <https://online.unt.edu/learn>

Cell phone policy: Cell phones must be on silent or vibrate mode during class. Calls, texting, or headphone/earbud use are not appropriate during class. If an emergency situation arises, communicate this with your instructor and step outside the classroom.

Computer policy: Computer and internet use should *aid participation* in class. If their use becomes a distraction from class for you or your classmates this will affect your participation grade and you may be asked to leave these devices outside the classroom.

2. Read course content

Assigned readings are listed in the syllabus. All readings will be available digitally through the library or Canvas.

3. Assignments

Class participation	20%
Active participation in discussion and a 1 pg (single spaced) summary of the main argument of the assigned readings and 2-4 discussion questions.	
Midterm essay exam	30%
Final paper	50%

V. Grading Policies and Procedures

Grading rubrics will be used to evaluate class participation, assignments, and exam essays.

GRADING SYSTEM: A: 90-100%, B: 80-90%, C: 70-79%, D: 60-69%, F: 0-59

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

All work is expected to be submitted by the designated due date. Late assignments will be docked 5% for each day late (2 days late: 10% deduction, 3 days late: 15% deduction, etc.). Late assignments should be emailed to the instructor as soon as they are completed in order to avoid further grade penalty. If a student is absent from a class when an assignment is due, the student must email the assignment to the instructor the same day it is due in order to avoid penalty. No late material will be accepted after the last day of class.

* As with attendance, exceptions will only be made for emergency situations. In all cases, timely communication with your instructor is key.

AI policy

In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like

Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework (other than general search tools—like Google which now has AI components—for quick reference or brainstorming) will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the [Student Academic Integrity policy](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>).

All essays, including drafts and revisions, should be written in google docs. If the final essay is suspected of being AI generated the student may be asked to submit their doc history as evidence that their work is their own.

VI. Academic Integrity

“UNT promotes the integrity of learning processed and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the university. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the university’s actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence.” (UNT Academic Integrity Policy description, <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>)

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, incidents will be reported to the UNT office of Academic Integrity which may impose further penalty. Further incidents may result in failing the course.

According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

- a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
- b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
- c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university;
- d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or
- e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage.

The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to:

- a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and
- b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

VII. Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu>.

VIII. Accommodations for students with disabilities (ADA statement)

"The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 - The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens."

Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided by the fourth week of class. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://disability.unt.edu>. You may also contact them by phone at (940) 565-4323.

IX. Drop Information

Schedule available here: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>

X. Inclusivity, chosen names, and pronouns

UNT students represent a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The professor is committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. Therefore, a portion of the student's participation grade will reflect their ability to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal nature

Chosen Names

A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know.

Pronouns

Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction, both virtually and in-person. Just as we ask and don't assume someone's name, we should also ask and not assume someone's pronouns. You can [add your pronouns to your Canvas account](#) so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

[Texas Senate Bill 17](#), the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

XI. Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic

environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates at the following link: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/ferpa.html>

XII. Succeed at UNT

UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grown. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here's how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find Support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can achieve success, go to <http://success.unt.edu/>.

XIII. Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETE)

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught.

XIV. Course Schedule

(May change to accommodate guest presenters, unforeseen events, & student needs)

Week / Date	Theme	Readings to be discussed	Assignment due
Unit 1			
Week 1 8/18-22	Intro and overview of the course	• Read the syllabus	
Week 2 8/25-29	What do we mean by religion?	• Nongbri, Intro, ch. 1	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 3 9/1-5	What do we mean by religion?	• Nongbri, ch. 5 & 6	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 4 9/8-12	Nature religion vs revealed religion	• Intro to Hume on religion: Styers, "David Hume on Religion" • Hume, <i>Natural History of Religion</i> (selections)	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 5 9/15-19	The science of religion	• Mueller, Lectures on the Science of Religion, Lecture 1 (selections) https://www.google.com/books/edition/Introduction_to_the_Science_of_Religion/-dI3AQAAAMAAJ?hl=en	Summary response and discussion questions

Week 6 9/22-26	Anthropology of religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EB Tylor on animism and J. G. Frazer on magic, Pals, ch. 1 	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 7 9/29-10/3	Sociology of religion and religion as experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durkheim, <i>Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> (selections) • James, <i>Varieties of Religious Experience</i> (selections) 	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 8 10/6-10	Retelling the story of the study of religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chidester, <i>Empire of Religion</i>, “Preface” and “Expanding Empire” 	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 9 10/13-17	Mueller, Tylor and empire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chidester, <i>Empire of Religion</i>, “Classify and Conquer,” “Animals and Animism” 	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 10 10/20-24	Frazer and empire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chidester, <i>Empire of Religion</i>, “Ritual and Magic” 	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 11 10/27-31	Midterm exam		Midterm essay exam due 10/25
Week 12 11/3-7	Turning the tables: early critical approaches to religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On DuBois: Chidester, <i>Empire of Religion</i>, “Humanity and Divinity” and “Enduring Empire” 	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 13 11/10-14	Inventing Japanese religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storm, <i>Inventing Japanese Religion</i>, ch. 7 	Summary response and discussion questions
Week 14 11/17-21	Inventing world religions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mazuzawa, <i>The Invention of World Religions</i> (selections) 	Summary response and discussion questions
11/24-28	Thanksgiving Break		
Week 15 12/1-4	Inventing world religions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mazuzawa, <i>The Invention of World Religions</i> (selections) 	Summary response and discussion questions
Finals week 12/6-12	Essay due 12/9 by 11:59pm		