

**SCAR 3F03 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION WINTER 2023
(DRAFT ONLY—SUBJECT TO REVISION)**

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Lecture: Mon, Wed, Thu 1:30 – 2:20 p.m.
Office Hours (UH 125): [By Appointment](#)

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Course Description

An exploration of some of the ways religious phenomena are studied. Attention is also given to the history of the academic study of religion.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course students will have:

1. Become familiar with leading scholars in, and influential approaches to, the study of religion;
2. Examined the development of the study of religion from the late 19th to early 21st centuries;
3. Evaluated critically the presuppositions of, and challenges to, the academic study of religion.

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Describe key differences in two or more approaches to the study of religion and their historical significance;
2. Develop appropriate questions for future research in religious studies;
3. Evaluate the scholarly debates in the past and present concerning the study of religion as an academic field.

Required Materials and Texts

As noted in the calendar below. All readings are available through McMaster library or Avenue to Learn.

Class Format

New materials will be posted each week and it is your responsibility to keep up with the readings, assignments, and other learning tasks.

Course Evaluation – Overview

- 60% Three written assignments
- 20% Attendance, Participation, Engagement
- 20% Take-home assignment

Course Evaluation – Assignment Dates

- Assignment 1 (20%) due: 6 February, 11:59 pm.
- Assignment 2 (20%) due: 6 March, 11:59 pm.
- Assignment 3 (20%) due: 3 April, 11:59 pm.
- Take-home (20%) due: 24 April, 11:59 pm.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (9, 11, 12 Jan) Introduction—Darwin

Week 2 (16, 18, 19 Jan) Biblical Studies 1: Strauss

Readings: Frei, H. (1985). "David Friedrich Strauss." In N. Smart, J. Clayton, P. Sherry, & S. Katz (Eds.), *Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West* (pp. 215-260). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1017/CBO9780511659508>

Week 3 (23, 25, 26 Jan) Biblical Studies 2: Ehrman

Readings: Ehrman, Bart D. *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*, Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 1999. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcmu/detail.action?docID=271740> .

Week 4 (30 Jan, 1, 2 Feb) Comparative Religion 1: Max Müller

Readings: Molendijk, Arie. "Forgotten Bibles: Friedrich Max Müller's Edition of the Sacred Books of the East," 2016. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1080/09593683.2016.1224507>

Week 5 (6, 8, 9 Feb) Comparative Religion 2: Eliade

Readings: Eliade, Mircea, Joseph Campbell, Henry Corbin, C. G. Jung, Max Knoll, G. Van Der Leeuw, Louis Massignon, Erich Neumann, Helmuth Plessner, Adolf Portmann, Henri-Charles Puech, Gilles Quispel, and Hellmut Wilhelm. "Time and Eternity in Indian Thought [1951]." In *Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, Eranos 3: Man and Time*, 173-200. Princeton University Press, 1957. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1515/9781400874859>

Week 6 (13, 15, 16 Feb) Social Scientific Approaches 1: Durkheim

Readings: Thompson, P. (Ed.). (1985). Readings from Emile Durkheim. London: Routledge, <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.4324/9780203993347> (chapters 7 & 8 only)

Week 7 (20, 22, 23 Feb) Reading Week

Week 8 (27 Feb, 1, 2 Mar) Social Scientific Approaches 2: Geertz

Readings: Geertz, Clifford. "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973. <https://hdl-handle-net.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/2027/heb.01005> .

Week 9 (6, 8, 9 Mar) Feminist Approaches 1: Cady Stanton

Readings: "12 Selections from The Woman's Bible (1895, 1898)" In *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist as Thinker: A Reader in Documents and Essays* edited by Ellen Carol DuBois and Richard Cándida Smith, 282-295. New York, USA: New York University Press, 2007. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.18574/nyu/9780814785270.003.0024>

Week 10 (13, 15, 16 March) Feminist Approaches 2: Goldenberg

Readings: Goldenberg, Naomi. "What's God Got to Do with It? —A Call for Problematizing Basic Terms in the Feminist Analysis of Religion." *Feminist Theology* 15, no. 3 (May 1, 2007): 275–88. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1177/0966735006076166>

Week 11 (20, 22, 23 Mar) Contemporary Approaches 1: Cantwell Smith

Readings: Despland, Michel, and Vallee, Gerard, eds. *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality / la Religion Dans L'Histoire: le Mot, L'Idée, la Réalité*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992. (ch. 3) <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcmu/detail.action?docID=685590> .

Week 12 (27, 29, 31 Mar) Contemporary Approaches 2: Wiebe

Readings: Arnal, W., Braun, W., McCutcheon, R. (2012). *Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion*. London: Routledge, <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.4324/9781315728780> (6-31)

Week 13 (3, 5, 6 Apr) Questioning the Discipline: McCutcheon

Readings: Arnal, W., Braun, W., McCutcheon, R. (2012). *Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion*. London: Routledge, <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.4324/9781315728780> (78-94)

Week 14 (10, 12 Apr) Review

Personal Course 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/University Policies

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
85-90	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+		

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 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 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.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

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 behavior 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.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

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".

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.

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.