



**Religious Studies 0014A/1034F
Contemporary Religious Quests:
Religion and the Contemporary World
Fall 2021**

Class Meetings: Online

Class Location: Virtual

Professor: Andrew Knight-Messenger

Office: UH 363

Email: aknigh28@uwo.ca

Office Hours (via Zoom): Thursdays 2:00 PM-3:00 PM, or by appointment

Course Description:

An introduction to Religious Studies that incorporates autobiographies and/or biographies of contemporary people representing different religious perspectives and walks of life. The course introduces students to the theory of religion and focuses particularly on the tension between religious traditions and contemporary realities.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- a. Identify the basic elements, themes, and trends in the study of religion. (*Critical Thinking*)
- b. Discuss and critique the function and purpose of religion. (*Communication, Critical Thinking*)
- c. Critique, compare and evaluate aspects of contemporary religious quests. (*Critical Thinking*)
- d. Question how culture informs and lends shape to religious experience. (*Inquiry and Analysis*)
- e. Recognize and evaluate new religious phenomenon. (*Social Awareness and Engagement*)
- f. Participate in sustained academic discussion. (*Communication*)
- g. Evaluate the responses of religious movements to contemporary issues of civil liberties and social justice (*Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Valuing*)
- h. Reflect upon the impact of the questions raised by the academic study of religion to our own assumptions about religion and spiritual quests (*Self Awareness and Development*)

Prerequisite(s): None

Antirequisite(s): Religious Studies 0011, Religious Studies 1031 E, and Religious Studies 0014A/B/1034F/G

Required Readings:

The following materials are **required reading** for students in Religious Studies 0014A/1034F:

1. Paul O. Myhre, *Introduction to Religious Studies* (Winona, MN.: Anselm Academic, 2009). Available for purchase at the Western University Bookstore.
2. Other readings, which are available on OWL, online, and through Brescia and the University of Western's library systems.

Online and Electronic Course Components:

Asynchronous Learning Environment: The course is entirely asynchronous, which means you can access the weekly material at your own pace (there are no assigned meetings or lectures). However, I will be holding regular online office hours on Tuesdays from 10:00 AM-11:00 AM via video chat. Alternative arrangements may be made for office hours by e-mailing the instructor. If you would like to meet during the assigned office hour time, please e-mail me, and I will send you a video meeting link. Weekly lessons will appear on our course site on OWL at least one week before their due date.

OWL: In this course we will be using OWL for the online components of the course. Please refer to the course site on OWL for the most authoritative and up-to-date course outline, schedule, assignment guidelines, and other resources.

Digital Submissions: Reflection Papers, and Research Papers must all be submitted electronically to OWL before the due date. Written assignments will be submitted via the digital "Assignments" tab on OWL. Many file types are compatible with the submission system, including Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, PostScript, Adobe Acrobat (.pdf), or Rich Text (.rtf) files. If your word processing program uses a file type not listed here, please contact the instructor to check compatibility.

Submitting Assignments Electronically: Individual assignments submitted electronically must somehow include your last name in the filename, e.g. Smith_Assignment_5_Article_Assessments.pdf

Late Submissions: All papers (reader responses, reflections, and research papers) are due at 11:55 PM on Fridays on OWL, unless other arrangements have been made in advance with the instructor. Late assignments will be penalized 3% a day (weekends [Saturday and Sunday] will count as one day).

Disclaimer: Please note that, unless otherwise noted, the lectures, presentations, videos, and assignment descriptions in this course are the intellectual property of Andrew Knight-Messenger. Therefore, students should not share or disseminate class materials beyond the classroom.

Evaluation and Assignments

Assignment	% of Grade for 0014A	% of Grade for 1034F	Due Date
Mid-Term Test	20%	20%	October 21-22, 2021
Final "Take-Home" Exam	20%	30%	TBA (End of Fall 2021 Term)
Research Paper	N/A	20%	November 19, 2021
Reflection Paper	20%	N/A	November 19, 2021
5 Reader Response Papers – Worth 4% Each (for RS 0014A) and 2% Each (for RS 1034F)	20%	10%	5 – Throughout the Fall 2021 Term
Participation and Engagement (This Includes: Participatory Activities, Online Group Work, AND Spontaneous Submissions)	20%	20%	Throughout the Fall 2021 Term

Class Participation, and Engagement – 20%: Class participation and engagement is an important component of this course. Therefore, it is expected that all students will be 'active' participants in this course. This means completing weekly lessons in a timely fashion, being actively involved in online class activities and thoughtful discussion, and completing all assignments.

Your participation grade will be significantly influenced by your active involvement in the course, and the quality of that involvement. Lack of participation, or 'negative participation', will also significantly influence your participation grade (but in a negative way)! And just so you are aware of the types of activities or behaviours that will be considered 'negative' class participation, they include the following: talking to classmates about things that are not a contribution to the class discussion, general nonparticipation in or disruption of class/class activities, sleeping during class, coming to class late or leaving early, and distracted use of any of the following electronic devices: cell phones, tablets, iPads, and other electronic devices. Computers may be used in class but ONLY for note taking purposes. Evidence of using the computer for anything other than note taking will be considered negative class participation.

The success of this course depends on you. The students who are most successful in this course fulfill these expectations and engage in all aspects of the course.

Reader Response Papers – 20% (RS 0014 A students), 10% (RS 1034F students):

As part of students' participation and engagement marks, students will complete 5 short Reader Response Papers (150-200 words in length). One week prior to the due dates of the Reader Response Papers, the instructor will post a question related to the week's class lectures, discussion and readings. Students must post their Reader Response Papers on OWL in the class Discussion Forum. The Reader Response Papers are due by November 12, 2021. Reader Response Papers need not be written as research papers, but should be written with attention to grammar and style. Reader Response Papers may take on a variety of forms: personal reflection, response of either agreement or disagreement, a series of follow-up questions, a combination of the former, etc.

Mid-Term: Test – 20%: In week 7 of the course, we will have an online Mid-Term Test. Students are responsible for the breadth of information included in the readings and lectures from weeks 1-7. The test can be taken on our course site on OWL only once anytime between the dates of October 21-22, 2021, and must be submitted by October 21, 2021 at 11:55 PM.

Final "Take-Home" Exam – 20% (RS 0014 A students), 30% (RS 1034F students):

This is a cumulative online exam. Students are responsible for the breadth of information included in the readings and lectures from weeks 1-13, with a special emphasis upon the readings and lectures from weeks 8-13. The Final Exam will be set during the university's Fall 2021 examination period, and will be set by the Registrar's Office. The Final Exam can be taken on our course site on OWL only once. Additional details about the Final Exam Test will be posted on OWL later in the term.

Papers:

General Guidelines: Each submission should include a title page with your name, student number, e-mail address, the topic title of the assignment and the date upon which you submitted the assignment. All submissions should be double spaced and written in 12pt Times New Roman with 1" margins. Reflection Papers and the Research Paper should be submitted to Assignments on OWL.

N.B.: Additional guidelines for papers will be given in class and are available on OWL.

Research Paper – 20% (RS 1034F Students Only): RS 1034F students will write about a contemporary religious quest, figure, or movement not addressed in the course. A list of suggestions will be provided from which the student may select a topic. Students may write about a different topic with the permission of the instructor. The paper must be 1500 words in length. The due date of the Research Paper is November 19, 2021. The Research Paper will be assessed according to clarity, depth and thoughtfulness of response, attention to detail, creativity, critical analysis, and quality of research. The Research Paper should employ at least five relevant, peer-reviewed sources (journal articles, essays and/or books).

Reflection Paper – 20% (RS 0014A Students Only): In the first-term, RS 0014A students will be asked to write a paper in response to a reflection question, which will be outlined in class. The paper must be 1000 words in length. The due date of the Reflection Paper is November 19, 2021. The Reflection Paper will be assessed according to clarity, thoughtfulness of response, attention to detail, creativity, and critical analysis.

All sources employed in students' papers should be cited properly and include a bibliography. All citations and bibliographies should be complete and consistent. Papers should employ either MLA, APA, or Chicago citation style.

Course Schedule

Date	Required Reading	Assignments Due (By 11:55 PM, Fridays)	Class Topics
FALL TERM			
September 7-10, 2021 (Week 1)	Course Outline		Introduction
September 14-17, 2021 (Week 2)	Myhre, Chapters 1-2	<i>Reader Response Paper 1</i>	What is Religion and How Does One Study Religion?
September 21-24, 2021 (Week 3)	Myhre, Chapter 3	<i>Reader Response Paper 2</i>	Sacred Origin Stories and Sacred Myths
September 28-October 1, 2021 (Week 4)	"Introduction to Religious Quests" (N.B.: Available via OWL), and Gandhi website: https://www.mkgandhi.org/	<i>Reader Response Paper 3</i>	Religious Quests Case Study: Gandhi
October 4-8, 2021 (Week 5)	Myhre, Chapter 4		Religion and Truth Claims
October 11-15, 2021 (Week 6)	Myhre, Chapter 5	<i>Reader Response Paper 4</i>	Religion and Sacred Stories <i>October 11 – Thanksgiving (No Class)</i>

October 18-22, 2021 (Week 7)		<i>Mid-Term Test (Available on OWL from October 21 - 22) (20%)</i>	Mid-Term Test
October 25-29, 2021 (Week 8)	Myhre, Chapter 14		Religion and Ritual
November 1-5, 2021			FALL READING WEEK (NO CLASSES)
November 8-12, 2021 (Week 9)	Myhre, Chapter 13	<i>Reader Response Paper 5</i>	Religion and Science
November 15-19, 2021 (Week 10)	Myhre, Chapter 12	<i><u>For RS 0014A Students ONLY</u> – Reflection Paper (20%)</i> <i><u>For RS 1034F Students ONLY</u> – Research Paper (20%)</i>	Religion and Technology
November 22-26, 2021 (Week 11)	TBA		Religion and Pilgrimage
November 29-December 3, 2021 (Week 12)	Bruce Greyson, “Western Scientific Approaches to Near- Death Experiences” (N.B.: Available via OWL)		Near Death Experiences
December 6-December 8, 2021 (Week 13)			Conclusion

2021-22 BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

1. POLICY REGARDING ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

The complete policy regarding [Accommodation for Illness - Undergraduate Students](https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12) can be found at https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12.

Students who have long-term or chronic medical conditions which may impede their ability to complete academic responsibilities should seek Academic Accommodation through Student Accessibility Services (https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_10).

Personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are **not** grounds for academic accommodation.

Students who experience an illness or extenuating circumstance sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

1. Submitting a **Self-Reported Absence** form provided that the conditions for submission are met;
2. For medical absences, submitting a **Student Medical Certificate (SMC)** signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner;
3. For non-medical absences, submitting **appropriate documentation** (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to their Academic Advisor. Students are encouraged to contact their Academic Advisor to clarify what documentation is acceptable.

Requests for Academic Consideration Using the Self-Reported Absence Portal

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance of 48 hours or less that is sufficiently severe to render them unable to meet academic requirements should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours. Note that the excused absence includes all courses and academic requirements within the up to 48 hours, it is not intended to provide an excused absence from a single course while students fulfill their academic responsibilities in other courses during that time.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

1. Students will be allowed a **maximum of two self-reported absences** between September and April and one self-reported absence between May and August;
2. The duration of the absence will be for a maximum of 48 hours from the time the Self-Reported Absence form is completed through the online portal, or from 8:30 am the following morning if the form is submitted after 4:30 pm;
3. The excused absence will terminate prior to the end of the 48 hour period if the student undertakes significant academic responsibilities (writes a test, submits a paper) during that time;
4. Self-reported absences will **not** be allowed for scheduled final examinations; midterm examinations scheduled during the December examination period; or for final lab examinations scheduled during the final week of term;
5. Self-report absences may **not** be used for assessments worth more than 30% of any course;
6. Any absences in excess of 48 hours will require students to present a Student Medical Certificate (SMC), or appropriate documentation;
7. Students **must** communicate with their instructors **no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by the Self-Reported Absence form** to clarify how they will fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence.

Request for Academic Consideration for a Medical Absence

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation.

Academic accommodation for illness will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities. Minor ailments typically treated by over-the-counter medications will not normally be accommodated.

The following conditions apply for students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds:

1. Students must submit their Student Medical Certificate (SMC) along with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities. An SMC can be downloaded from http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf ;
2. In cases where there might be an extended absence or serious issue, students should submit their documentation promptly and consult their Academic Advisor for advice during their recovery period;
3. Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, scheduled tests or examinations, and other academic requirements;
4. Students **must** communicate with their instructors **no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by the SMC to clarify how they will fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence;
5. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office/Academic Advisor in consultation with the course instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements, arranging Special Exams (make-ups), re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawal without academic penalty.

The [full policy on requesting accommodation due to illness](#) can be viewed at:

http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12

2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal challenge that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds are not normally considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor (https://www.brescia.uwo.ca/enrolment_services/academic_advising/index.php). If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines; please refer to <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> or the list of official sessional dates in the Academic Calendar (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm?SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=>).

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

3. ABSENCES

Short Absences: If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

Please note that for asynchronous online courses, attendance or participation requirements maybe different than for synchronous or in-person courses.

Extended Absences: If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work, and arrange academic accommodations if appropriate and warranted.

It is important to note that the Academic Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent

absence from the class or laboratory

(http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=5&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_68).

4. SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence at:

http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_20.

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Scholastic Discipline for Undergraduate Students in the Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Academic Dean's Office, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Computer-marked Tests/exams:

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal is to be sent to the School Chair. If the response of the Chair is considered unsatisfactory to the student, they may then submit a written appeal to the Office of the Dean. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Dean, they may appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA), if there are sufficient grounds for the appeal and if the matter falls within the jurisdiction of the SRBA. For information on academic appeals consult your Academic Advisor or see the Student Academic Appeals – Undergraduate in the Academic Calendar

http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_14.

Note that final course marks are not official until the Academic Dean has reviewed and signed the final grade report for the course. If course marks deviate from acceptable and appropriate standards, the Academic Dean may require grades to be adjusted to align them with accepted grading practices.

6. PREREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written Special Permission from the Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisite(s).

7. SUPPORT

Support Services

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> . Students can access supports through Brescia's Student Life Centre (<http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/student-life/>) and Learning Skills Services at Western (<https://www.uwo.ca/sdc/learning/>)

Mental Health and Wellness

Students may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to your learning, such as increased anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, feeling down or lost, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. Services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can obtain information about how to obtain help for yourself or others through **Health & Wellness at Brescia** (https://brescia.uwo.ca/student_life/health_and_wellness/index.php) and **Health and Wellness at Western**, http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html.

Sexual Violence

All members of the Brescia University College community have a right to work and study in an environment that is free from any form of sexual violence. Brescia University College recognizes that the prevention of, and response to, Sexual Violence is of particular importance in the university environment. Sexual Violence is strictly prohibited and unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Brescia is committed to preventing Sexual Violence and creating a safe space for anyone in the Brescia community who has experienced Sexual Violence.

If you or someone you know has experienced any form of Sexual Violence, you may access resources at https://brescia.uwo.ca/safe_campus/sexual_violence/index.php .

Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy, and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.
