University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee  
Course Syllabus, Fall 2014  
REL 3040: Introduction to Religious Studies

Instructor: Theresa Gilbertson  
Office Phone Sarasota: 941-359-4485  
E-mail: gilberts@mail.usf.edu

In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USF to suspend normal operations. During this time, USF may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Canvas, Blackboard Collaborate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It’s the responsibility of the student to monitor the Canvas site for each class for course specific communication, and the main USFSM, College, and department websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information.

Course Description: This course introduces students to the academic study of religion. Religious thought and behavior are examined from a variety of methodological perspectives, including historical, phenomenological, anthropological, and sociological approaches. The first part of the semester will be devoted to reading, discussing, and writing about the theories and classical theorists of religion as well as determining a topic within the confines of the discipline that you wish to explore. Understanding the scope of methodological diversity in the field of religious studies is paramount in undertaking an in-depth view into the discipline. The latter part of the semester will be a combination of lecture and discussion with student presentations on applicable research. This course is required for both the major and the minor in Religious Studies.

Course Objectives:
- Become knowledgeable in theories of religion and corresponding theorists.
- Learn about the nature of religion and approaches to its study.
- Develop critical thinking skills by close readings on the function of religion in the lives of its practitioners and the larger culture in which it is found.
- Consider the question, Why is religion of value or interest in today’s world?

Student Responsibilities:
You must come prepared to the one mandatory online session during week 15. This course deals primarily with theory and applying theory to a variety of scenarios. If you don’t know a word or term, it is your responsibility to look it up. Expanding your lexicon is a portion of the content of this course. You will be reaching outside of your comfort zone regularly as this is a component of the definition of “learning.” In Canvas is an online course venue call Blackboard Collaborate and regular live online sessions will be offered. While these sessions are not mandatory, they are intended to give the participants the greatest edge at excellence in this course. Blackboard Collaborate sessions will be recorded provided any student arrives to participate in a live session. If no one comes, no session will be recorded! You will log into Canvas weekly to engage in the discussion threads and on-line exercises that will propel your learning experience. While the discussion threads including a critical reading
question (CRQ) are required weekly, BLOGS will be found as less-often assignments located in the Assignments section of Canvas. You will each write a critical reading question (CRQ) and respond to at least two CRQs of your peers each week. More on this will be discussed in the live online week one session

Texts Required:
If I elect to add required readings, they will be posted in “Assignments” through Blackboard. **In addition to the texts, each student is required to check their USF e-mail. If you wish to use a non-USF e-mail account, you will need to forward your USF mail to your other address since I will be sending mail to all via Canvas! Always check for updated assignments on Canvas.**

Course Requirements: Your effort required for this course will consist of successfully completing 7 segments as follows:

1. Weekly response (8 X 15pts) 120
2. Annotated bibliography 80
3. Midterm 200
4. Presentation 25
5. Final Paper 150
6. Discussion forums in Bb 75
650 points potential

Unit Tests: There will be a comprehensive midterm during the last 10 days of October. If you have done the weekly critical thinking papers/blogs and weekly discussions, this will be a breeze! It is 30% of the total points for the semester.

Presentation: You will be responsible for one in-class presentation of 10-12 minutes which will coincide with your research topic. You will be responsible for one media presentation (PowerPoint, Prezi, or Windows Media Player). Topics will be collaborated with the instructor early in the semester. These presentations will be uploaded through Assignments in Canvas and each student will narrate his or her presentation during a Blackboard Collaborate session toward the end of the semester, week 15.

Analytical/Research Paper: You will be asked to write one (2,000-2,500 words) research paper on topics derived from readings in the text books and journal articles. Topics will normally be chosen by the students; however, if you prefer, they may be assigned by the instructor. Papers must follow the guidelines for APA style research papers using the 2009-10 updated guidelines. If you do not own a style guideline book, be sure to check the online writing laboratory (OWL) at Purdue University website as linked through Canvas. Paper grading rubrics are posted under “Files” in Canvas. To make this easier for you, I have divided the paper into two components. The annotated bibliography of eight scholarly sources on your topic is worth up to 80 points. The second segment is the final paper, worth up to an additional 150 points.
Important note on electronic submissions: If you wish to submit any document electronically, please use the links in “Assignments” in Blackboard. Save your work as .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .txt, no matter what program you use to write the document. This goes for the weekly précis, too.

Grading: All assignments will receive a numerical grade. Final letter grades will be determined on an accumulated percentile basis, in accordance with the customary scale used in university courses: 

- **A+** (637-650)
- **A** (611-636)
- **A-** (585-610)
- **B+** (572-584)
- **B** (546-571)
- **B-** (520-545)
- **C+** (507-519)
- **C** (481-506)
- **C-** (455-480)
- **D+** (442-454)
- **D** (416-443)
- **D-** (390-415)
- **F** anything under 390!

Opportunity for extra credit will not be offered.

Last day to drop without penalty: **Friday, August 29**!

Make-up tests, Late Submissions, and Incompletes:
You are expected to complete all assignments on time. Falling behind hinders the process of learning. For this reason, the instructor has instituted certain policies designed to encourage the timely completion of assignments, and to discourage the taking of make-ups for inappropriate reasons. Since there is a 10 day span over which to take the midterm, no make-up date should be necessary. There are no points for late weekly assignments. Late research papers and annotated bibliographies will be penalized for latency at the rate of a grade loss per 24 hour period late.

Annotated Bibliographies and Final Papers must be submitted by the due dates indicated in the syllabus and they must follow APA writing style. Papers that are submitted late will be penalized one letter grade per day. Weekly responses are due via Blackboard the week following the posted assignment. No points awarded for late weekly papers; no hard copies accepted. There is no final exam for this class.

A grade of Incomplete (I) will be awarded only if at least one-half of your required work has been completed with a cumulative passing grade and a legitimate reason for needing to halt the educative process during the semester.

Attendance: Attendance is required for the online presentations during week 15. You will have several opportunities that week as far as both day and time go, but if you have a specific request, get it to me ASAP.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism (the presentation of someone else’s work as your own) and cheating (dishonesty or deception in fulfilling academic requirements) are unacceptable. Penalties for academic honesty, including failure of the test or assignment or failure of the course, will be assessed according to USF procedures. NOTE: I use turnitin.com so don’t even think about copying something off the web! See campus policy below.

Students with Disabilities: Per the requirements of USF policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the instructor will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Per USF policy, any student with a disability must contact Student Disability. The syllabus contains important information concerning policies and schedules. Do not discard it. It is recommended that you keep it with your class notes. If you need a duplicate copy, print it from Blackboard.
The schedule given in this syllabus is subject to change. In particular, the instructor may, if necessary, add to or deduct from specific readings listed here.

**USF Sarasota-Manatee Policies and Procedures**

**Religious Observances**
The University recognizes the right of students and faculty to observe major religious holidays. Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class for a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second week of classes.


**Disabilities Accommodation**
Students are responsible for registering with the Office of Students with Disabilities Services (SDS) in order to receive academic accommodations. Reasonable notice must be given to the SDS office (typically 5 working days) for accommodations to be arranged. It is the responsibility of the student to provide each instructor with a copy of the official Memo of Accommodation.  
www.sarasota.usf.edu/Students/Disability/

Contact Information: Pat Lakey, Coordinator  941-359-4714  plakey@sar.usf.edu

**Academic Dishonesty**
The University considers any form of plagiarism or cheating on exams, projects, or papers to be unacceptable behavior. Please be sure to review the university’s policy in the catalog, USFSM Undergraduate Catalog or USFSM Graduate Catalog and the USF Student Code of Conduct.

Undergraduate: http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/
Graduate: http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/
USF Student Code of Conduct: http://www.sa.usf.edu/srr/page.asp?id=88

**Academic Disruption**
The University does not tolerate behavior that disrupts the learning process. The policy for addressing academic disruption is included with Academic Dishonesty in the catalog, USFSM Undergraduate Catalog or USFSM Graduate Catalog and the USF Student Code of Conduct.

Undergraduate: http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/
Graduate: http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/
USF Student Code of Conduct: http://www.sa.usf.edu/srr/page.asp?id=88

**Contingency Plans**
In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USFSM to suspend normal operations. During this time, USFSM may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Blackboard, Elluminate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It’s the responsibility of the student to monitor Blackboard site for each class for course specific communication, and the main USFSM and College websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information. The USF hotline at 1 (800) 992-4231 is updated with pre-recorded information during an emergency.

**Emergency Preparedness**
It is strongly recommended that you become familiar with the USF Sarasota-Manatee
Emergency Action Plan on the Safety Preparedness site

Fire Alarm Instructions
At the beginning of each semester please note the emergency exit maps posted in each classroom. These signs are marked with the primary evacuation route (red) and secondary evacuation route (orange) in case the building needs to be evacuated.

August 25: Online sessions scheduled for 7:45am and 6pm on Monday, 7am and 8pm on Wednesday, and 8:30am and 7pm on Thursday. If you cannot make one of those sessions, be sure to watch the recordings! General discussion of what will be expected of the students during the next 16 weeks. Introduction to the authors and theorists. Homework: Read Griffiths, “The Very Idea of Religion” http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=2614 and The American Academy of Religion website, http://www.studyreligion.org/why/index.html There are seven links across the top of the homepage and you should read each of these entries within the “Why Study Religion?” website. Go to https://my.usf.edu and enter Blackboard to write your CRQ and respond to others’ discussion threads; write a 2 page précis (about 500 words) to the two on-line readings, following the “Reading Critically” guidelines posted in Files in Canvas. Drop your homework in the assignment link for Week 1 due by 5pm on Tuesday. September 2 You also need to go to the discussion board and construct a critical reading question (CRQ) based any of the readings assigned, and be sure to look for two (2) CRQs of peers to which you will reply.

September 1: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 1 readings with any students present and possibly launch a PowerPoint presentation. Homework: Read Pals, Chapters 1 and 2 on theorists Tyler, Frazer and Freud. What is important in each of these theories that you might be responsible for on a quiz? Think about that each week since the midterm exam will be on the theorists from the Pals’ book! Write a 2 page précis (+/-500 words) to the two readings, looking for content, methodology, credibility, and applicability (theses, topics, main lines of arguments; who are the theorists and why are they important? Is this concept relevant today? Why or why not?) Also, participate in the discussion thread in Canvas. Drop your homework in the assignment link for Week 2 by 5pm on September 9 to get credit!

September 8: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 2 readings with any students present and launch a PowerPoint presentation. Homework: Read Pals, Chapter 3, Durkheim. Again, what is important in this theory that you might be responsible for on a quiz? Write a 2 page précis (350-500 words) to the reading, following the “Reading Critically” guidelines (thesis, topics, main lines of arguments; who is Durkheim and why is he important? Is this concept relevant today? Why or why not?) OR participate in the BLOG question in Canvas in lieu of the short paper, but keep in mind that the blog entry should still be a minimum of 500 words! Either way, drop your homework in the assignment link for Week 3 by 5pm on September 16 to get credit! Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas.
September 15: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 3 readings with any students present and possibly launch a PowerPoint presentation. Discussion of topics suitable for research; each student will decide on a topic this week. **Homework:** Read Pals, Chapter 4, Karl Marx. Write a 2 page précis (350-500 words) to the reading, following the “Reading Critically” guidelines (thesis, topics, main lines of arguments; who is Marx and why is he important? Is this concept relevant today? Why or why not?) OR participate in the BLOG question in Canvas in lieu of the short paper, but keep in mind that the blog entry should still be a minimum of 500 words! Either way, drop your homework in the assignment link for Week 4 by 5pm on September 23 to get credit! Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas.

September 22: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 4 readings with any students present and possibly launch a PowerPoint presentation. This session will begin with a discussion on writing a thesis statement and the page setup for APA writing style that will be required for the two paper segments, including the final draft. **Homework:** Read Pals, Chapter 5, “Max Weber,” and Smart, “Methods in My Life,” in The Craft of Religious Studies (COR). Write a 2 page précis to the readings OR participate in the BLOG question in Canvas in lieu of the short paper, but keep in mind that the blog entry should still be a minimum of 500 words! Either way, drop your homework in the assignment link for Week 5 by 5pm on September 30 to get credit! Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas.

September 29: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 5 readings with any students present and launch a PowerPoint presentation. Discuss the major components of the Introduction assignment (the February 5th Elluminate Live in-class assignment) and recap the importance of the thesis statement. **Homework:** Read Pals, Chapter 6, Mircea Eliade, and Doniger, “From Great Neck to Swift Hall: Confessions of a Reluctant Historian of Religions” in COR. Write a 2 page précis to the readings OR participate in the BLOG question in Canvas in lieu of the short paper, but keep in mind that the blog entry should still be a minimum of 500 words! Either way, drop your homework in the assignment link for Week 6 by 5pm on October 7 to get credit! Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas.

October 6: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 6 readings with any students present and launch a PowerPoint presentation. **Homework:** Read Pals, Chapters 7 and 8, Evans-Pritchard and Geertz. Write a 2 page précis to the readings OR participate in the BLOG question in Canvas in lieu of the short paper, but keep in mind that the blog entry should still be a minimum of 500 words! Either way, drop your homework in the assignment link for Week 7 by 5pm on October 14 to get credit! Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas.

October 13: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 7 readings with any students present and launch a PowerPoint presentation. I also plan to begin APA Annotated Bibliography discussions. **Homework:** Read Pals, Chapter 9, “Conclusion” and Hick, “Climbing the Foothills of Understanding” in COR. Write a 2 page précis to the readings OR participate in the BLOG
question in Canvas in lieu of the short paper, but keep in mind that the blog entry should still be a minimum of 500 words! Either way, drop your homework in the assignment link for Week 8 by 5pm on October 21 to get credit! Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas.

If you have done all eight of the written assignments so far, then you are done with that portion of the homework as of this week! There are make-up options for any of you who have missed one to three of these early assignments.

October 20: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 8 readings with any students present and launch a PowerPoint presentation. More work on APA Annotated Bibliographies. **Homework:** Read Neusner, “From History to Religion” and Strenski, “The Rest is History” in COR. If you have completed 8 weekly assignments and earned full points on all of them, then you only have the discussion threads and big projects (midterm exam, presentation, annotated bibliography, and research paper) ahead of you! If you have missed any assignments OR if you have not followed the guidelines in Files and you want to try to get full points for paper that will replace a sub-par paper, then write a 2 page précis to the readings OR participate in the BLOG question in Canvas, but keep in mind that the blog entry should still be a minimum of 500 words! Either way, e-mail your homework to me for Week 9 by October 28 to get credit! Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas. **Midterm will be available starting October 21st and will be available until Halloween, midnight, October 31st.**

October 27: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. **Homework:** Read Paul Griffiths, “On the Future of the Study of Religion in the Academy,” JAAR (74) March 2006; Ellen Armour, “Response to Paul J. Griffiths,” same journal. If you have missed any assignments OR if you have not followed the guidelines in Files and you want to try to get full points for paper that will replace a sub-par paper, then write a 2 page précis to the readings OR participate in the BLOG question in Canvas, but keep in mind that the blog entry should still be a minimum of 500 words! Either way, e-mail your homework to me for Week 11 by 5pm on November 4 to get credit! Keep in mind that there is no extra credit so DO NOT DO ASSIGNMENTS THAT YOU DO NOT NEED! Your **Annotated Bibliography** is due on November 4th in the assignment link in Canvas. Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas.

November 3: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 10 readings with any students present and launch a PowerPoint presentation. **Homework** Read Paden, Religious Worlds, Introduction through Chapter 3. This is the final week to make-up any précis or BLOG points. If you have missed any assignments OR if you have not followed the guidelines in Course Documents and you want to try to get full points for paper that will replace a sub-par paper, then write a 2 page précis to the readings OR participate in the BLOG question in Canvas, but keep in mind that the blog entry should still be a minimum of 500 words! Either way, e-mail your homework to me for Week 11 by 5pm on November 11th to get credit! Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas.

November 10: Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas at a day and time to be determined by student request. I will discuss the week 11 readings with any students present and launch a PowerPoint presentation. I hope to be getting Annotated Bibliographies back to you, graded, this
Homework: Read Paden, Religious Worlds, Chapter 4 through 8. Be sure to participate in the discussion board in Canvas.

November 17: Blackboard Collaborate session time to be determined by student requests. I will discuss the week 12 readings with any students present and launch a PowerPoint presentation. Homework: Work on your final paper and presentation, if not yet delivered. Be sure to participate in the discussion thread and post your questions and comments!

November 24: Blackboard Collaborate session time to be determined by student requests. I will discuss APA writing style and the importance of a clear thesis statement with any students present and launch a PowerPoint presentation. Homework: Work on your final paper and presentation. Be sure to check the discussion thread and post your CRQ and comments on at least two peers’ CRQs!

December 1: Finish you research paper. It is due no later than 5pm on Tuesday, December 2nd! Your presentations are all due this week, too, and they should be in the assignment link for presentations by noon Monday, December 1. This way, everyone turns in their presentation at the same time so no one gets an advantage by choosing to present on Friday instead of Monday!

December 8: There is no final exam in this course. Your papers should be returned electronically this week, with the grading rubric. Study hard for the other final exams that you may have this week, and know that I wish you well in all of your future pursuits. Thank you for being my students.

Detach, sign, and return the honor pledge below. It is due by noon on Saturday, August 30.
Honor Pledge, Fall Semester, 2014

Theresa Gilbertson
USF Sarasota-Manatee C 264
Phone: 941-359-4485

In support of the University of South Florida's standards of excellence, honesty, integrity, and academic accountability, I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself at all times in accordance with university rules that prohibit cheating, plagiarism, or any other form of academic dishonesty.

As members of an academic community, in the spirit of self-motivated and self-disciplined learning, we must take greater personal responsibility for our actions and will not tolerate individual or collective inappropriate academic behaviors.

I understand that students and faculty have an ethical responsibility to ensure that the content of student work is original or cites appropriate sources for all programs at the university.

I further understand that it is my responsibility to inquire of my instructors if I have any question as to how to authenticate any information that I include in work I submit as a course assignment.

I am aware that sanctions may be imposed at the discretion of my instructors and/or through the university's Judicial Affairs system for a violation of principles outlined in this statement, including:

- Refusal to accept the work.
- Failure of a specific assignment.
- Failure in the course.
- Expulsion from the university.

My signature on this document is an acknowledgement that I have read the syllabus and understand what I will need to do to excel this semester and that I have read and understand this honor pledge and agree to abide by the terms of this agreement throughout my academic career at the University of South Florida.

Signature: _________________________________________

Username: _____________________________@ mail.usf.edu

Printed name: _______________________________________