

## Introduction to Religious Studies (A005628)

**Course size** *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

**Credits 5.0**

**Study time 150 h**

### Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2024-2025

A (semester 1)

Dutch

Gent

lecture

independent work

### Lecturers in academic year 2024-2025

Lannoy, Annelies

LW01

lecturer-in-charge

Praet, Danny

LW01

co-lecturer

### Offered in the following programmes in 2024-2025

[Elective Set Religion Studies](#)

**crdts**

5

**offering**

A

### Teaching languages

Dutch

### Keywords

Religious studies, method, theory, history of religions, comparative methodology, sociology of religion, anthropology of religion, psychology of religion, phenomenology of religion

### Position of the course

This course offers an extensive introduction to the scientific study of religion. It helps students to acquire a thorough knowledge of, and critical insight into the fundamental scientific theories and accompanying methods pertaining to the academic study of religion. The course offers students the necessary theoretical frameworks to study the various aspects of religions in different cultures of the past and the present.

### Contents

The first part of this course discusses the history of religious studies and introduces key thinkers on religion within their specific cultural and historical contexts. Thereafter follows a thorough introduction of the key concepts used in the academic study of religion (e.g. religion, ritual, myth, magic,...). Substantial attention will here go to the major problems the general use and the definition of these concepts entail. The third part of the course is dedicated to the rich array of methods currently used in the strongly interdisciplinary discipline of religious studies, among which: history of religions, sociology of religion, anthropology of religion, psychology of religion, and phenomenology of religion. On the one hand, students will get a thorough theoretical introduction of the specific research questions and theories of religion underpinning each of these methods. On the other hand, they will be stimulated to critically reflect on the possible strengths and shortcomings of these methods, and to formulate a scientifically substantiated opinion on the complex relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in religious studies. To do so, primary texts on method and theory will be discussed in class and students will formulate answers to guiding reading questions.

### Initial competences

Student have successfully finished secondary school education.

### Final competences

1 To define the major currents, thinkers and debates in the history of religious studies and to situate them in their historical and cultural contexts

- 2 To define the key concepts used in academic religious studies and to formulate the major problems the definition and the general use of these concepts entail (e.g. religion, ritual, god, myth, magic)
- 3 To distinguish and to explain the specific research questions and theoretical premises of the following research methods: history of religions, anthropology of religion, sociology of religion, psychology of religion, comparative methods, and phenomenology of religion
- 4 To critically assess and scientifically substantiate the possible strengths and shortcomings of research methods and theories with regard to specific research questions (e.g. the function of religion, the relation between religion and society)
- 5 To compare the research questions and research methods of history of religions, anthropology of religion, sociology of religion, psychology of religion, and phenomenology of religion
- 6 To formulate and substantiate a personal scientific opinion on the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in religious studies on the basis of the acquired theoretical insights on widely used methods and theories in the discipline

#### **Conditions for credit contract**

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

#### **Conditions for exam contract**

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

#### **Teaching methods**

Lecture, Independent work

#### **Extra information on the teaching methods**

Lessons (with discussions of primary texts) will be on campus (in Dutch).  
In preparation of the lectures, students will read primary texts on methods and theories in religious studies and formulate answers to guiding reading questions

#### **Study material**

Type: Syllabus

Name: Syllabus with selected chapters of handbooks on religious studies  
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty  
Optional: no  
Language : English  
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Slides

Name: Powerpoints of the lectures  
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty  
Optional: no  
Language : Dutch  
Available on Ufora : Yes

#### **References**

- John Hinnells, ed., *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, London – New York, Routledge, 2010.
- Robert A. Segal, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, Malden – Oxford – Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Michael Stausberg & Steven Engler, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, Oxon – New York, Routledge, 2011.
- Ivan Strenski, *Understanding theories of religion. An introduction*, Malden – Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2015<sup>2</sup>
- Daniel L. Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, Oxford – New York, OUP, 2014.

#### **Course content-related study coaching**

There will be ample opportunity for questions during the lectures. Students can also ask their questions after appointment with the lecturer.

#### **Assessment moments**

end-of-term assessment

#### **Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period**

Written assessment

**Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period**

Written assessment

**Examination methods in case of permanent assessment**

**Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment**

not applicable

**Calculation of the examination mark**

100% written exam

**Facilities for Working Students**

- Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance
- Possible rescheduling of an oral examination to a different time in the same academic year
- Feedback can be given by telephone or during an appointment during office hours