

Studies of Religion

LEVEL 3	15 TCE CREDIT POINTS
COURSE CODE	REL315116
COURSE SPAN	2016 — 2021
COURSE STATUS	LIVE
READING AND WRITING STANDARD	YES
MATHEMATICS STANDARD	NO
COMPUTERS AND INTERNET STANDARD	NO

Studies of Religion Level 3 examines the place and function of religious traditions and ethical perspectives in a pluralist society such as Australia within a global context

This course contributes to identifying religious diversity in Australia, the need for inter-faith dialogue and the current contribution that religious traditions make to cultural respect and social equity. In such a complex environment of cultural and religious diversity, religious frameworks can impact on essential debates and emerging issues regarding the interface of religion, ethics and society. Ethical complexities in religious and secular contexts are a constant discourse in the political, economic and cultural life of Australia as a multicultural, multi-faith liberal democracy. While Australia's foundations are secular in nature, the majority of its population claim some religious affiliation which has a strong influence on identity, values and behaviour. Religions and the spiritualities that grow from them are important drivers and dynamic shapers of social and moral debates at a local, national and global level. This course can contribute to the skilling of young Australians to be able to negotiate these complexities, fostering the harmonious co-existence of secular and multi-faith society and a deeper appreciation for religious diversity. Studies of Religion aims to develop an understanding of the unique ways that particular belief systems and cultural contexts can shape and influence the formation of an individual's worldview. By studying a number of religious traditions learners may be able to come to a greater appreciation and respect for others in their midst. The study of the interaction of religious and non-religious traditions can also help learners become conscious of particular ways they can negotiate moral complexity as they develop skills in identifying, describing and responding to their own experience. Studies of Religion adopts an inclusive and nuanced approach to ways of perceiving and interpreting religious issues. The course does not promote any particular religious tradition or viewpoint; it is designed to be available to all learners, irrespective of the existence, or nature, of any individual religious beliefs.

Rationale

Studies of Religion Level 3 examines the place and function of religious traditions and ethical perspectives in a pluralist society such as Australia within a global context. This course contributes to identifying religious diversity in Australia, the need for inter-faith dialogue and the current contribution that religious traditions make to cultural respect and social equity. In such a complex environment of cultural and religious diversity, religious frameworks can impact on essential debates and emerging issues regarding the interface of religion, ethics and society.

Ethical complexities in religious and secular contexts are a constant discourse in the political, economic and cultural life of Australia as a multicultural, multi-faith liberal democracy. While Australia's foundations are secular in nature, the majority of its population claim some religious affiliation which has a strong influence on identity, values and behaviour. Religions and the spiritualities that grow from them are important drivers and dynamic shapers of social and moral debates at a local, national and global level. This course can contribute to the skilling of young Australians to be able to negotiate these complexities, fostering the harmonious co-existence of secular and multi-faith society and a deeper appreciation for religious diversity.

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Aims

Studies of Religion aims to develop learners':

- understanding of religious affiliations, ideas, movements and belief systems that have shaped society and culture, past and present
- critical engagement in the investigation of religious traditions and sub-traditions, developing skills in research, analysis of sources, synthesis and communication of responses
- skills in applying analytical inquiry to nuanced, non-biased investigation into co-existence of religious and secular traditions in Australia and globally
- analysis of concepts of belief systems and cultural context on the development of metaphysical and ethical worldviews and comprehension of meaning and moral purpose for individuals and communities
- analysis of the contribution of religious debate to social, cultural, political and ethical issues.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this course, learners will be able to:

- correctly use specialist terms when discussing issues and concepts about religion and ethics
- clearly communicate religious and ethical ideas and arguments
- identify the role of religion in society in specific social contexts
- identify and assess beliefs, values and characteristics of religious traditions in Australia and globally
- describe ways in which wider secular society interacts with religious traditions in an Australian and global context
- describe how core religious beliefs provide guidelines for dealing with life's complexities
- describe how religion contributes to the development of human society
- identify the impact of social, political and cultural factors on a religious tradition
- outline the significant challenges faced by a religious tradition over time and its impact on society
- assess ways religious and non-religious beliefs, attitudes and values contribute to public debate concerning religious, ethical, cultural, social and political questions
- apply the processes of research to discuss characteristics and issues in pluralist societies such as Australia
- apply the principles of academic integrity
- use a range of appropriate evidence to support own arguments
- engage with others to explore religious and ethical ideas and concepts.

Access

In undertaking this course learners will engage with others in the classroom or in an online environment to participate in discussion on religious and ethical beliefs and perspectives.

Pathways

Studies of Religion Level 3 provides a pathway to Philosophy Level 3 the University of Tasmania's Philosophy 1 High Achievers Program (HAP) as well as further university studies in Religion, Philosophy, Ethics, Asian Studies, Education, Law, Journalism, Health Sciences and Social Work.

Pathways into Studies of Religion include Making Moral Decisions Level 2 and Religion in Society Level 2.

Studies of Religion has vocational links and/or future employment in Asian studies, philosophy, teaching, journalism, medicine, nursing, veterinary science, physiotherapy, social work, government positions, legal professions and court administration.

Course Size And Complexity

This course has a complexity level of 3.

At Level 3, the learner is expected to acquire a combination of theoretical and/or technical and factual knowledge and skills and use judgement when varying procedures to deal with unusual or unexpected aspects that may arise. Some skills in organising self and others are expected. Level 3 is a standard suitable to prepare learners for further study at tertiary level. VET competencies at this level are often those characteristic of an AQF Certificate III.

This course has a size value of 15.

Course Description

Studies of Religion is designed to enable learners to engage critically and authentically with a number of religious traditions and the ethical and metaphysical worldviews they represent.

Learners will study the beliefs of at least one religious tradition in detail, the core elements that are common to many religious beliefs and investigate the impact of religious traditions on Australia as a pluralist society, as well as globally.

Learners will research and investigate the traditions, ethical perspectives and worldviews of religious traditions and the impact on contemporary ethical issues. They will also have the opportunity to engage with the study of religions in ancient societies, Australian Indigenous spirituality and some of the essential components, significant challenges and ultimate questions that religious traditions have faced in the past and are still contending with in the contemporary world. Learners may analyse these contentious challenges and questions from both theist and non-theist perspectives. Learners will also investigate how religious traditions impact on groups and individuals in society, how this interaction can broaden perspectives and how social, political and cultural factors impact on religious traditions in historical and contemporary society.

Studies of Religion encompasses both secular and religious traditions.

This course is based on the following pre-suppositions:

- that in an academic setting religions have to be subjected to rigorous analysis and critique
- that even within religions there often exists a plurality of interpretations of particular beliefs and perspectives
- that learner achievement is based entirely on the ability to understand, analyse and evaluate the religious traditions under study, not on their adherence to the beliefs and values of **any tradition**.

Course Requirements

The course includes an introduction and **five** studies.

The Introduction to the Studies of Religion is **compulsory**.

Studies One, Two and Three are **compulsory**.

Studies Four and Five, are each comprised of two Extended Depth Studies (total of four). Learners choose **one from four** Extended Depth Studies.

Course Delivery

It is recommended that delivery be in order of Study, however, this is **not** prescribed.

The design time for this course is 150 hours. The suggested time spent on each Study is indicated in brackets.

NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS STUDIED

In this study, the term 'traditions' is understood to refer to continuing social organisational constructs that play an important part in maintaining and shaping culture. Traditions contain beliefs, values and ideas about existence and human experience which are expressed in a variety of ways. Every tradition has a multiple of sub-traditions with their own geographical, historical and cultural expressions.

Learners study **one** tradition or sub-tradition in STUDY ONE, however, it may be relevant to refer to other traditions and sub-traditions when it is significant to the focus of their study.

CHOICE OF TRADITIONS

One of the following religious traditions will be studied in STUDY ONE: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism or Australian Indigenous Spirituality.

Learners may opt to study a major variant of one of those traditions from those given below:

- Judaism: Orthodox Judaism, Reform Judaism
- Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana, Tibetan
- Christianity: Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Uniting Church
- Islam: Sunni, Shi'a
- Australian Indigenous Spirituality: Tasmanian Aboriginal People, Pitjantjatjara, Murrinh-Patha, Pintupi.

This course recognises that the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community is the custodian of Aboriginal culture, stories and spiritual beliefs.

Course Content

OVERVIEW

	STUDY	EXTENDED DEPTH STUDY
COMPULSORY	INTRODUCTION TO STUDIES OF RELIGION (10 hours)	
	STUDY ONE: RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS (30 hours)	
	STUDY TWO: SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE AND CHANGE – HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY (40 hours)	
	STUDY THREE: ETHICS AND MORALITY (40 hours)	
ELECTIVE Choose one depth study from either Study: Four or Study: Five (30 hours)	STUDY FOUR: THE SEARCH FOR MEANING	Topic 1: Foundational Texts and Religion Topic 2: Religion and Worldview
	STUDY FIVE: ULTIMATE QUESTIONS	Topic 3: Religion and Science – The Origin of the World As We Know It Topic 4: Why do Humans Suffer?

COURSE DETAILS

COMPULSORY STUDIES

INTRODUCTION TO STUDIES OF RELIGION (10 HOURS)

Religious traditions and beliefs are introduced with an overview of religious traditions in discussions and investigations that encourage learners to reflect on the diversity, practice and meaning of religion.

Learners engage in a general exploration of such questions and issues relating to the nature of religion, discussing similarities between religions, the historical, contemporary and geographical context of religions, how religion is characterised by sub-traditions, how religion encompasses a multi-disciplinary approach, investigations into dimensions of religions and the complexity of views on religions. The introduction provides an overview of religious traditions and beliefs and encourages critical thinking skills to prepare learners for more in-depth studies. (Refer to Appendix 2 for a list of discussion topics.)

STUDY ONE: RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS (30 HOURS)

This Study will examine in detail the core beliefs and values of **at least one** religious tradition although it may be relevant to make comparisons with other traditions to clarify the significance of a particular belief or expression of religious tradition. Responses will refer to specific social contexts, e.g. Australia. Alternative social contexts may be used in this study.

Studies will be selected from Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism or Australian Indigenous Spirituality (or a major variant of one of these).

Learners will investigate the nature and purpose of religion past and present, the specific beliefs of religious traditions and the way core beliefs help adherents of a tradition interpret their belief in a transcendent reality, providing practical and ethical implications for their lives.

Learners will study the ways in which core beliefs of the chosen tradition provide guidelines about: how one ought to live as a human being; how humans may relate to the world around them; how human beings may view suffering, death and the afterlife; and the historical context in which religious traditions developed.

Studies will also explore the contribution of religion to the development of human society and the ways in which those core beliefs find concrete expression in each tradition through interrelated aspects that are evident in many religions including: formal statements of belief, myths and stories, sacred texts, religious writings and the story of the founder, sacred rituals, symbols, social structures, ethical teachings and principles oral and written, and the religious experience or spirituality of groups and individuals (refer to Appendix 1). There are exceptions; while not all of the above elements exist in indigenous spiritual beliefs, the concrete expression of beliefs is achieved through other records such as artwork, music and dance. Oral traditions and connection to country also assume a greater importance in such spiritual beliefs.

The learner will gain key knowledge and understanding of:

- the role of religion in society in specific social contexts
- how faith responses vary (devotee, indifferent, atheist, agnostic)
- the expression of religious traditions and sub-traditions in society.

For at least one religious tradition the learner will gain key knowledge and understanding of:

- what the tradition believes about the nature of the divine and the metaphysical
- what the tradition understands to be the purpose and meaning of human existence. Learners will need to consider how the tradition views the nature of the human condition
- how the tradition views the relationship between human beings and the world and evaluate the implications of these beliefs for the way adherents ought to view and 'live' that relationship
- how believers in the tradition explain the existence of suffering
- how death and the afterlife are understood in the tradition
- how the religious tradition is expressed through interrelated elements.

STUDY TWO: SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE AND CHANGE – HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY (40 HOURS)

Religious beliefs and traditions have influenced the social structure and continuity of civilisations throughout history. This study investigates the characteristics of religion and belief systems in **one** society analysing the impact of religion on the individual and community and the social, political, technological and cultural contexts, including internal and external events, which impacted on the religious tradition and society. The study of religion in societies investigates the universality and diversity of human experience and beliefs systems that created shared identity through investigating many interrelated fields of study including religion, society, culture, politics and geography.

This study investigates how notions of orthodoxy (STUDY ONE) are expressed in specific social, political and cultural contexts whether historical or contemporary.

Learners will examine **one** significant challenge encountered by a religious tradition within the context of a key period of change. The significant challenge may be of historical or contemporary significance and may be chosen from an historical event (or events), a movement, a person, or an issue, and may be internal to the tradition, or emerge from the relationship of the tradition to the wider society. Learners will analyse the impact of the challenge on the religious tradition and the responses of the religious tradition to the challenge.

Learners will research and engage critically with religious, historical and archaeological texts as well as other primary and secondary sources. This involves interpreting, critically analysing and evaluating source evidence and formulating and defending positions and perspectives. Wide research and analysis of sources will be undertaken and learners are to consider the context, purpose and bias of sources as well as relevance, reliability and authority in their discussions, responses and support of opinions.

The religious tradition selected in this study must differ from that which has been covered in STUDY ONE.

Examples of issues for study include but are not limited to:

TRADITION	HISTORICAL	MODERN (20 th and 21 st Centuries)
<i>ANCIENT SOCIETIES</i>		
Sumer (Iraq)	Assyrian Christianity of the 1 st and 2 nd Centuries	Christian persecution post Iraq War
Mayan (Mesoamerica: includes Aztec and Inca)	Impact of Spanish colonisation of the Americas	Religious conflict in Mexico (e.g. The Acteal tragedy) Christianity and conflict in Latin America

Nordic (Northern Europe)	The Christianisation of Scandinavia	Anti-Semitism and persecution of Muslims modern day Sweden
Celtic (Europe)	Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul (58-51 BCE – fall of Celtic polytheism)	Irish Civil War and the secession of the Irish Free State in 1922
Taoism (China)	Fall of the Ming Dynasty	Persecution of Taoists during the cultural revolution
Australian Indigenous Spirituality expressed by at least one Aboriginal Nation	European settlement of Australia/spirituality of an Aboriginal Nation	Stolen Generation

TRADITION	HISTORICAL	MODERN (20 th and 21 st Centuries)
<i>CHRISTIANITY</i>	Christ, the creeds and the early Church The Enlightenment The Reformation	Vatican II Communism Darwinism The findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2013)
<i>ISLAM</i>	The Crusades	Attack on Twin Towers
<i>HINDUISM</i>	The Nineteenth Century Hindu Renaissance	Indian independence
<i>BUDDHISM</i>	The spread of Mahayana Buddhism north of the Himalayas prior to 1000 CE	Invasion of Tibet
<i>JUDAISM</i>	The Fall of Jerusalem (70 CE)	The Holocaust

The learner will gain key knowledge and understanding of:

- one challenge or issue that has impacted significantly on a religious tradition (or traditions)
- internal and external challenges to one or more religious traditions during the period of the era or event investigated
- the historical, social and religious context of the particular challenge
- the impact of the challenge on the religious tradition(s)
- how one or more religious traditions responded to a significant internal or external challenge and evaluate the outcome for the tradition
- the effects of the response both within the religious tradition(s), and in its relationship to the wider society and/or other religious communities
- the context, purpose and bias of sources as well as relevance, reliability and authority.

STUDY THREE: ETHICS AND MORALITY (40 HOURS)

This study examines ethics as a discipline that articulates the thinking that helps an individual develop a moral stance. Ethical processes underpin human decision-making and ethical choices form the core of every level of human existence – personal, social, political, national and global.

Ethics can be derived from the guidance of a particular religion or belief system but ethics need not be dependent on religious belief. Ethics is a process of devising systematic approaches to making decisions investigated through the dimensions of human experience. There is also a plurality of views as a consequence of differing ethical perspectives, sometimes presenting as conflict and tension in society.

Religious belief systems can be a powerful means of communicating and reinforcing particular ethical and moral beliefs and practices. An ethical standpoint is often adopted uncritically and unconsciously as it can be absorbed from family, religious tradition and culture, often without reflection. The impact of ethical perspective and decisions on ethical issues can have far reaching consequences. This study encompasses some of the key ethical perspectives, the study of normative action to ensure what is reasonable and well-founded in personal beliefs and actions as well as the action of institutions that society helps to shape.

Learners will undertake an introductory investigation of a variety of ethical codes of world religious traditions and other ethical frameworks (such as Natural Law Ethics, Virtue Ethics, Situation Ethics, Kantian Ethics, Utilitarian Ethics) and the impact these perspectives have on contentious social debate and how they inform personally.

Learners will investigate the alignment of religious traditions with normative ethical systems in key categories of chosen ethical perspectives (such as deontological, teleological or virtue ethics):

- **action-based theories** focus upon the actions a person performs. Actions are judged morally right based upon how well they conform to a set of guiding principles or duties
- when actions are judged morally right based upon their consequences, it is considered teleological or consequentialist
- virtue ethics emphasizes the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to the approach which emphasises duties or rules (deontology) or that which emphasises the consequences of actions (consequentialism).

This is an analytical study of contemporary ethical debates in the public arena in a pluralist society such as Australia. Learners will apply the framework of two ethical perspectives to an issue and analyse the philosophical underpinnings of the framework to explain how and why a particular framework would lead to a particular decision about the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of the issue. In this study, different ethical and moral approaches are accepted, so long as they are responsible and well supported by legitimate evidence.

Examples of inquiries may include:

- the exclusion of women from leading formal ritual on the basis of being women remains a controversial ethical issue in some religious traditions because of cultural prohibition or theological doctrine
- the discriminatory treatment by some secular and religious traditions towards homosexual men and women and/or same-sex marriage continues to be a divisive ethical issue
- fundamentalist interpretation of religious and non-religious doctrines and sacred texts can create radicalised responses
- how is moral responsibility for the ecological crisis and the use of natural resources articulated by religious traditions? How do ethical responses to environmental issues differ?
- how do religious traditions promote social justice? Discuss in relation to human rights violations
- how have religious traditions responded to events such as a war, rebellion or political turmoil? How have opposing ethical perspectives contributed to resolution or impeded the resolution of the event or issue?
- ethical debate abounds on issues of medical intervention and criminal justice. How have ethical perspectives impacted on one of these debates? Are their responses mutually exclusive?

On the completion of this study learners will be able to explain and evaluate the systematic approaches to making ethical and moral decisions investigated through the dimensions of human experience and the ways in which religious traditions promote and transmit ethical and moral values.

Learners will gain key knowledge and understanding of:

- a working definition of ethics
- the historical, cultural and religious contexts that have influenced the development of ethical codes and frameworks in Australia and globally
- how religious systems provide systematic approaches to addressing ethical and moral issues
- a variety of ethical codes of world religious traditions and other ethical frameworks (such as Natural Law Ethics, Virtue Ethics, Situation Ethics, Kantian Ethics, Utilitarian Ethics)
- different interpretations of ethical codes and approaches, not only between different secular and religious traditions, but also within these traditions
- ways in which ethical codes influence people's lives
- ethical issues that are of vital importance to human life and be able to articulate some of the key questions that need to be raised in relation to those issues
- how to analyse key issues in contemporary Australian society from different ethical perspectives
- the contribution to debate of religious and non-religious communities and groups in pluralist society.

EXTENDED DEPTH STUDIES (30 HOURS)

Learners will select **one** topic to develop an Extended Depth Study from:

EITHER Study: Four *OR* Study: Five

<i>EITHER</i>	Study: Four THE SEARCH FOR MEANING	Topic 1: Foundational Texts and Religion
		Topic 2: Religion and Worldview
<i>OR</i>	Study: Five ULTIMATE QUESTIONS	Topic 3: Religion and Science – The Origin of the World As We Know It
		Topic 4: Why do Humans Suffer?

STUDY FOUR: THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

Religious communities look to the tenets and traditions of their doctrine not just to respond to major personal and faith issues, but to maintain continuity in a world of opposing viewpoints of contrasting religious beliefs and that of secular society.

All religious traditions change over time as they respond to advances in knowledge, technology and changes in the needs of their community and society. Religions attempt to maintain their original vision, their integrity and their convictions while encountering these changes. There are some within every tradition who resist change in order to maintain the existing beliefs and structures and there are others who seek to change beliefs and structures in the light of new experience, new understandings and new knowledge.

In this study learners will explore religious traditions, origins and/or ethical frameworks and offer a detailed explanation and evaluation of individual and collective religious identities and traditions in specific contexts.

Topic 1: Foundational Texts and Religion

A 'foundational text' refers to a body of writings held to be the authoritative core for a particular tradition.

Sacred texts occupy a unique place in most religious traditions. Traditions grow and develop as a consequence of the special relationship with a set of texts, and these usually serve as a foundation for its social structures, its values, rituals and beliefs. These texts contain the key stories that give the tradition its distinctive characteristics, shape and flavour.

This topic will investigate in depth at least one foundational text. References to other foundational texts as a comparison may be relevant.

There are often conflicting views concerning methods of interpretation and analysis of texts: they may be viewed as important ancient documents but not as revelatory documents; a literalist approach may interpret texts as being the direct will or revelation of an ultimate reality; a critical or hermeneutic reading, may suggest that texts although revelatory need to be read critically against the backdrop of the cultural and socio-political context from within which they emerged.

In this topic, learners will interpret and synthesise research referring to religious texts and records to explain how the context of events, people, places, historical and sociocultural conditions, institutions and worldviews influenced the formation of the tradition in its foundational period.

Major themes will be identified and discussed as well as investigating traditional readings of text and acknowledge 'alternative readings' of a text and the function of textual criticism. They will also examine the ways in which texts can help adherents interpret life experiences such as suffering, joy, wonder, death and dying, and assess the ways in which texts are read in a contemporary context to provide moral and spiritual guidance and to help interpret life experiences.

Examples of foundational texts include:

- Hinduism: Shruti (Vedas, including the Rigveda; also major text types of Samhitas, Aranyakas, Brahmanas, Upanishads); Bhagavad Gita
- Buddhism: The Tripitaka and the Dhammapada; Lotus of the Good Law; Tibetan Book of the Dead
- Judaism: The Hebrew Bible (or Hebrew Scriptures); Tanakh (Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim); The Talmud
- Christianity: The Christian Bible (new testament and the gospels, early Christian texts)
- Taoism: The Dao de Ching, also Chuang Tzu, and the I Ching
- Islam: The Qur'an, also Hadith and the Sunnah.

The learner will gain key knowledge and understanding of:

- foundational texts from at least one religious tradition and how they became canonical for that religion
- sociocultural conditions, institutions and worldviews of the society out of which the tradition emerged and developed during its foundational period
- the significance of major themes in foundational texts
- questions of authorship, alternate readings and textual criticisms
- how to examine and investigate the place and use of scripture in a believing community and the ways in which texts can help adherents interpret life experiences
- the way texts have provided, and continue to provide, practical and moral guidance.

Topic 2: Religion and Worldview

This topic investigates the impact of contemporary issues on worldview and the search for meaning in contemporary society, such as Australia (alternative contemporary societies may be studied).

Australia is generally an inclusive secular society. European settlement of Australia took place at the time of the French Revolution and as other western societies were moving towards a post-protestant Christianity. Immigration has brought a multiplicity of religious expressions to this country. Cultural and technological globalisation means that ancient religions and pre-modern religions exist alongside modern philosophies and religiosities. In this complexity, Australia's broad cultural tolerance is an excellent context for the study of the religious traditions, ethical perspectives and worldviews that operate in our public square and how private faith and public reason intersect.

In this topic, learners will compare worldviews of two religious/non-religious traditions and factors impacting on the expression of worldview in a contemporary society in which complex historical, socio-cultural and socio-political factors interact. The comparison must include at least one religious tradition.

The religious traditions may be investigated through a specific identified context or challenge.

Learners will investigate how a comprehensive belief and ethical system supports believers in the contemporary context and how this impacts on the individual's understanding of their significance as a being in reality, time and context who seeks and affirms personal meaning in nature, with others, with themselves and in many cases in relationship with a cosmic realm or a god or gods.

Examples of inquiries may include:

- how religious beliefs contribute to self-understanding as a being, with both a metaphysical and physical reality
- how human nature possesses personal, communal and moral qualities
- how attributed divine qualities – such as eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, merciful, loving etc. impact on worldview (i.e. belief in a divine being or power) and how this is expressed in contemporary society
- how the distinct cosmologies of religious traditions support diverse interpretation of issues such as life after death, human equality or the significance of the natural world
- how various religious expressions are examples of dynamic living religion in that they evidently change in response to their circumstances with developments in religious doctrinal or textual interpretation and religious practice
- how religious and non-religious worldviews respond to the nature of external reality. Is the world created or autonomous, chaotic or orderly, matter or spirit?
- how cultural trends in the West have impacted on religion in contemporary society
- how atheists use philosophy to engage in critique of religion.

The learner will gain key knowledge and understanding of:

- the historical, socio-cultural, socio-political and religious contexts in which worldviews are expressed in contemporary society
- contemporary factors or contexts that have impacted significantly on religious traditions undermining or threatening worldviews
- the ways in which religious traditions respond to specific contexts and impact on the continuity of religious traditions
- the effects of the response both within the religious tradition, and in its relationship to the wider society and other religious and secular communities
- the impact of social and cultural trends on worldview, whether religious or non-religious, and the interaction between the two sectors
- how the individual's private faith intersects with public reason and the impact of ethical perspectives on law.

STUDY FIVE: ULTIMATE QUESTIONS

This study offers the opportunity to delve into how religious traditions deal with the 'ultimate questions' of human existence as they are concerned with some of the most challenging and confronting questions a human being can ask. These questions are of vital import to all humanity irrespective of personal belief or religious affiliation and incorporate beliefs around origin, guilt, meaning, spirituality and death. Religious belief systems have a particular interest in these questions and have sought to provide their own distinctive responses to them.

In this study learners will assess and discuss one key 'ultimate question' and its impact on contemporary society.

Topic 3: Religion and Science: The Origin of the World as we Know it

Scientific advances have now provided a sophisticated account of how the universe came into being. The scientific theory of the origin of the universe seems to contradict much of what is claimed in some religious texts (for example, Jewish and Christian texts).

Many mainstream faith traditions now accept that the scientific theory is the most plausible account of how the universe physically came into being and how life evolved, but also argue that the textual explanations express important truths and offer an elucidation of the meaning of the universe. There are some people within religious traditions who continue to insist on a literal interpretation of their sacred texts. There are also some in the scientific community who argue that the science now completely negates the content and value of those sacred texts. Most who belong to faith traditions, attempt to integrate these different accounts (the scientific and the religious), claiming that they both express truth but serve different purposes and functions.

In this topic, learners will explore the difficult questions and dialogue concerning the relationship between the religious and scientific traditions concerning whether: the scientific understanding and interpretation of the world is antithetical to religious belief; the need for belief in an ultimate reality has been superseded by science; despite tensions, conflicts and paradoxes, science and religion can complement each other, rather than conflict; whether religious and scientific beliefs can co-exist harmoniously; scientists and religious believers approach issues from different presuppositions, consequently mutual communication and dialogue is rendered profoundly challenging.

Examples of inquiries may include:

- is the relationship between religion and science characterised by conflict or by concord? Is one antithetical to the other?
- how are the cosmological, empirical and metaphysical beliefs about the origins of the world distinct and how does this create debate?
- are creationism and Darwinism forms of faith in that they both require an element of trust needed to believe in them? How are they philosophically distinct?
- were we created as the product of purposeful intelligence or did we evolve from countless cosmic incidents?
- how are religious approaches to life different to non-religious approaches (e.g. atheists, agnostics, existentialists, Marxists)? How do they respond to the science of evolution?

The learner will gain key knowledge and understanding of:

- the scientific method and the theological method of approaching questions of truth, whether cosmological, empirical or metaphysical
- the beliefs about the origins of the universe of at least one religious tradition
- different ways of understanding how the universe and life came into being (a scientific understanding must be included)
- contemporary scientific understanding including a rudimentary comprehension of the thinking of contemporary physicists/cosmologists in relation to the origin of the universe and a contemporary biology in relation to the evolution of species
- the epistemic differences between a strictly scientific approach to phenomena and a faith-based approach to phenomena
- how scientific beliefs and religious beliefs about the origins of the universe can co-exist harmoniously.

Topic 4: Why do Humans Suffer?

Religious and secular traditions understand and interpret suffering in a variety of ways. Some frame the problem in terms of the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent divine being, while others do not frame the presence of suffering in terms of the existence of a god at all.

In this topic, learners will think about the place of suffering in the world and will examine different responses to questions that are offered by theists and non-theists. Learners study different beliefs, ideas and arguments about suffering, and also consider how people respond to suffering at a practical level.

Examples of inquiries may include:

- how do the beliefs of religious traditions vary in relation to the existence of personal and communal suffering? What meanings can suffering have for adherents of different traditions? How does this differ from non-theistic beliefs?
- how does the understanding of suffering in religious traditions inform personal or doctrinal responses to suffering and how does this differ from non-theistic beliefs? Is suffering a proof of the non-existence of a benevolent all-powerful god?
- why does a good omnipotent being allow suffering? Can good come from suffering? How do theists and non-theists respond to this question?
- how do individuals and communities translate their beliefs into responses to suffering at the practical level?

The learner will gain key knowledge and understanding of:

- how religious and secular traditions understand and interpret suffering in different ways
- the way adherents of **at least one** religious tradition explain and interpret human suffering and assess the ways in which this view affects their view of human existence

- the way adherents of **at least one** non-theistic worldview explain and interpret human suffering and assess the ways in which this explanation affects their view of human existence
- the arguments, conversations and dialogues that are taking place between theist and non-theist thinkers concerning this question in a contemporary context
- whether suffering is proof of the non-existence of a benevolent, all-powerful god. If there is a good omnipotent being why is suffering allowed?
- the variety of ways people respond to suffering at a practical, experiential level
- whether suffering generates understanding personally or doctrinally.

Work Requirements

STUDY ONE: RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS (30 HOURS)

Learners will complete two essays for this study.

Learners will provide an overview of at least one religious tradition and the ways in which core beliefs provide guidelines about: how one ought to live; how humans may relate to the world around them; how human beings may view suffering, death and the afterlife and the historical context in which religious traditions developed. Studies include an analysis of formal statements of belief, myths and stories, sacred texts and religious writings, sacred rituals, symbols, social structures, ethical teachings and principles oral and written, and the religious experience or spirituality of groups and individuals. Learners will produce a minimum of **two** written responses to this study. This will be at least **one** research essay of 1500–2000 words. Recommended total word limit: **3000 words**.

STUDY TWO: SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE AND CHANGE – HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY (40 HOURS)

Learners will explore a significant challenge encountered by a religious tradition or belief system by examining key people, events and the influence of political, social, cultural, technological and historical forces. They will discuss the impact of the significant challenge on the religious tradition and the response of the religious tradition to that challenge. Learners will produce a minimum of **two** written responses to this study. This will be at least **one** research essay of 1500–2000 words. Recommended total word limit: **3000 words**.

STUDY THREE: ETHICS AND MORALITY (40 HOURS)

Learners will research and discuss in detail a contemporary ethical debate and explain the impact on ethical decision making by analysing the philosophical underpinnings of two (2) ethical frameworks. They will explain the complexities surrounding ethical decisions analysing public discussion on ethical debates and develop supported viewpoints on contemporary ethical issues in pluralist society. Learners will produce a minimum of **two** written responses to this study. This will be at least 1 research essay of 1500–2000 words. Recommended total word limit: **3000 words**.

EXTENDED DEPTH STUDY – SELECT ONE TOPIC FROM STUDY FOUR OR FIVE (30 HOURS)

Learners will research a chosen topic to develop an Extended Depth Study of **2000–3000 words** that will be internally assessed. Through systematic research, conversation and exchange of ideas, learners will critically analyse source material to synthesise responses to key inquiry questions posed by the learner that inform the direction of the study. This may include issues of authorship, textual criticism and the relevance and purpose of sources. Learners will engage in either the analysis of the ‘search for meaning’ or ‘ultimate questions’.

STUDY FOUR: THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

Topic 1: Foundational Texts and Religion

Learners will analyse of how the social, political and religious contexts of societies influenced the formation of traditions and canonical texts. Learners will undertake analysis of **one** foundational text including authorship, institutions, themes, worldviews, ‘alternate readings’ and textual criticisms and be able to offer a detailed explanation and evaluation of individual and collective religious identity and traditions in specific contexts.

Topic 2: Religion and Worldview

Learners will analyse the worldviews of **two** religious traditions and compare and evaluate the significance of the historical, socio-cultural, socio-political and religious contexts impacting on worldview in contemporary society. Studies will evaluate the ways in which religious traditions respond to specific challenges; the impact on continuity of religious traditions; the interaction between religious and secular communities; how faith supports individuals and communities and how private faith and public reason intersect.

STUDY FIVE: ULTIMATE QUESTIONS

Topic 3: Religion and Science: The Origin of the World As We Know It

Learners will define and analyse the different ways of understanding how the universe came into being, explore some of the conversations and dialogues that are taking place between theist and non-theist perspectives in the contemporary world and consider whether religious beliefs and scientific beliefs about the origins of the universe can co-exist harmoniously.

Topic 4: Why do Humans Suffer?

Learners will investigate the way a specific religious community or communities have confronted the question of human suffering. They will outline **at least one** theist and **at least one** non-theist way of explaining and interpreting the existence of suffering in the world and engage with some of the conversations and dialogues that are taking place between theist and non-theist thinkers concerning this question in a contemporary context. Learners will demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of the complexity of this issue and evaluate the various ways people respond to suffering at a practical, experiential level.

Assessment

Criterion-based assessment is a form of outcomes assessment that identifies the extent of learner achievement at an appropriate end-point of study. Although assessment – as part of the learning program – is continuous, much of it is formative, and is done to help learners identify what they need to do to attain the maximum benefit from their study of the course. Therefore, assessment for summative reporting to TASC will focus on what both teacher and learner understand to reflect end-point achievement.

The standard of achievement each learner attains on each criterion is recorded as a rating 'A', 'B', or 'C', according to the outcomes specified in the standards section of the course.

A 't' notation must be used where a learner demonstrates any achievement against a criterion less than the standard specified for the 'C' rating.

A 'z' notation is to be used where a learner provides no evidence of achievement at all.

Providers offering this course must participate in quality assurance processes specified by TASC to ensure provider validity and comparability of standards across all awards. To learn more, see TASC's [quality assurance processes and assessment information](#).

Internal assessment of all criteria will be made by the provider. Providers will report the learner's rating for each criterion to TASC.

TASC will supervise the external assessment of designated criteria which will be indicated by an asterisk (*). The ratings obtained from the external assessments will be used in addition to internal ratings from the provider to determine the final award.

Quality Assurance Process

The following processes will be facilitated by TASC to ensure there is:

- a match between the standards of achievement specified in the course and the skills and knowledge demonstrated by learners
- community confidence in the integrity and meaning of the qualification.

Process – TASC gives course providers feedback about any systematic differences in the relationship of their internal and external assessments and, where appropriate, seeks further evidence through audit and requires corrective action in the future.

External Assessment Requirements

The external assessment for this course will comprise:

- one 3 hour written exam. The exam will assess criteria 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

For further information, see the current external assessment specifications and guidelines for this course which can be found in the Supporting Documents below.

Criteria

The assessment for Studies of Religion Level 3 will be based on the degree to which the learner can:

1. use ideas and concepts in discussing religious traditions and ethical perspectives *
2. structure and communicate ideas and information *
3. analyse religious and non-religious traditions and ethical perspectives*
4. use evidence to support own interpretations and religious and ethical arguments of others*
5. analyse the expression of religious and ethical viewpoints in society*
6. undertake research about religious and ethical issues
7. engage with others to identify and assess religious and ethical ideas and concepts
8. use resources and organisational strategies

* = denotes criteria that are both internally and externally assessed

Standards

Criterion 1: use ideas and concepts in discussing religious traditions and ethical perspectives

This criterion is both internally and externally assessed.

Related to the study of religious traditions and ethical perspectives, the learner:

Rating A	Rating B	Rating C
correctly uses a wide range of terminology and specialist terms to clarify meaning	uses relevant terminology and correct usage of a range of specialist terms	uses a limited range of relevant specialist terms
selects and uses a wide range of ideas, concepts and information of others in own responses	selects and uses a range of ideas, concepts and information of others in own responses	selects and uses a limited range of ideas, concepts and information of others in own responses
describes accurately and in detail concepts and ideas making relevant connections	describes concepts and ideas making relevant connections	outlines concepts and ideas
explains beliefs, values and characteristics of expressions of religious tradition and ethical perspectives	describes beliefs, values and characteristics of expressions of religious tradition and ethical perspectives	identifies beliefs, values and characteristics of expressions of religious tradition and ethical perspectives
discusses comprehensive and detailed explanations of the relationship between different aspects of religious and non-religious viewpoints	explains the relationship between different aspects of religious and non-religious viewpoints	identifies religious and non-religious viewpoints and offers explanations of those views
clearly identifies information, images, ideas and words of others used in the learner's work	clearly identifies information, images, ideas and words of others used in the learner's work	differentiates information, images, ideas and words of others from the learner's own
clearly identifies sources of the information, images, ideas and words that are not the learner's own. Referencing conventions and methodologies are followed with a high degree of accuracy	clearly identifies sources of the information, images, ideas and words that are not the learner's own. Referencing conventions and methodologies are followed correctly	identifies the sources of information, images, ideas and words that are not the learner's own. Referencing conventions and methodologies are generally followed correctly
creates appropriate, well structured reference lists/bibliographies.	creates appropriate, structured reference lists/bibliographies.	creates appropriate reference lists/bibliographies.

Criterion 2: structure and communicate ideas and information

This criterion is both internally and externally assessed.

The learner:

Rating A	Rating B	Rating C
uses clear, detailed and cohesive structure in written responses	uses a clear, effective structure in written responses	uses a clear, basic structure in written responses
structures ideas to effectively compose coherent and cohesive arguments in analytical responses	structures ideas to compose coherent arguments in analytical responses	structures main ideas to compose arguments in analytical responses
clearly and accurately communicates own ideas, arguments and points of view in written responses	communicates own ideas, arguments and points of view in written responses	communicates own basic ideas, arguments and points of view in written responses

clearly and accurately communicates ideas, arguments and points of view of others in written responses	communicates ideas, arguments and points of view of others in written responses	communicates basic ideas, arguments and points of view of others in written responses
accurately uses complex grammatical conventions, language, spelling and punctuation in written responses	accurately uses grammatical conventions, language, spelling and punctuation in written responses	uses appropriate grammatical conventions, language, spelling and punctuation in written responses
synthesises a wide range of appropriate sources to develop detailed, analytical interpretations and arguments.	uses a range of appropriate sources to develop own interpretations and arguments.	uses a limited range of appropriate sources to support own interpretations and arguments.

Criterion 3: analyse religious and non-religious traditions and ethical perspectives

This criterion is both internally and externally assessed.

The learner:

Rating A	Rating B	Rating C
critically analyses information, ideas and issues concerning religious and non-religious traditions and issues	analyses information, ideas and issues concerning religious and non-religious traditions	discusses information, ideas and issues concerning religious and non-religious traditions
describes and analyses relevance, reliability and authority of sources in written responses	explains relevance, reliability and authority of sources in written responses	describes relevance, reliability and authority of sources in written responses
describes and analyses differing interpretations of sources based on context, purpose and bias	describes differing interpretations of sources based on context, purpose and bias	identifies differing interpretations of sources based on context, purpose and bias
describes and analyses rationale used by differing religious and non-religious traditions concerning religious and ethical perspectives and issues	describes rationale used by differing religious and non-religious traditions concerning religious and ethical perspectives and issues	identifies main rationale used by differing religious and non-religious traditions concerning religious and ethical perspectives and issues
provides in depth explanation and critical analysis of the work of others to support own analysis and interpretation.	provides relevant explanation and analysis of the work of others to support own analysis and interpretation.	provides relevant explanation and assessment of the work of others to support own analysis and interpretation.

Criterion 4: use evidence to support own interpretations and religious and ethical arguments of others

This criterion is both internally and externally assessed.

The learner:

Rating A	Rating B	Rating C
uses a range of credible evidence and sources when discussing religious beliefs, values and practices	uses credible supporting evidence when discussing religious beliefs, values and practices	use a limited range of credible evidence when discussing religious beliefs, values and practices
synthesises a sophisticated, coherent and evidence-based position on issues	synthesises a reasoned position on issues using evidence based information	presents a position on issues using limited evidence based information

justifies own point of view or assertion using a range of evidence	explains own point of view or assertion using supporting evidence	discusses own point of view or assertion using limited supporting evidence
uses a range of critical analyses of others to support own arguments.	uses critical analyses of others to support own arguments.	refers to critical analysis used in arguments of others.

Criterion 5: analyse the expression of religious and ethical viewpoints in society

This criterion is both internally and externally assessed.

The learner:

Rating A	Rating B	Rating C
analyses and critically evaluates how religious and ethical perspectives provide a sense of meaning	analyses and compares how religious and ethical perspectives provide a sense of meaning	discusses how religious and ethical perspectives provide a sense of meaning
analyses and critically evaluates significance to the individual and collective of religious and ethical ideas and viewpoints	analyses significance to the individual and collective of religious and ethical ideas and viewpoints	discusses significance to the individual and collective of adopting religious and ethical ideas and viewpoints
analyses similarities and differences between ideas, values, practices or arguments of religious and non-religious traditions and ethical perspectives	describes similarities and differences between ideas, values, practices or arguments of religious and non-religious traditions and ethical perspectives	identifies similarities and differences between ideas, values, practices or arguments of religious and non-religious traditions and ethical perspectives
evaluates strengths and weaknesses of religious and ethical perspectives in relation to specific issues.	explains strengths and weaknesses of religious and ethical perspectives in relation to specific issues.	describes strengths and weaknesses of religious and ethical perspectives in relation to specific issues.

Criterion 6: undertake research about religious and ethical issues

The learner:

Rating A	Rating B	Rating C
locates a wide range of primary and secondary sources relevant to religious, non-religious and ethical beliefs and issues	locates a range of primary and secondary sources relevant to religious, non-religious and ethical beliefs and issues	locates a limited range of primary and secondary sources related to religious, non-religious and ethical beliefs and issues
effectively uses a range of appropriate tools and strategies to collect and organise information	uses a range of tools and strategies to collect and organise information	uses a limited range of tools and strategies* to collect and organise information
identifies and records selective and relevant ideas, information and images for use in a range of own responses	identifies and records a range of ideas, information and images for use in own responses	identifies and records a limited range of ideas, information and images for use in own responses
analyses and evaluates relevance and relative significance of information to issue	analyses relevance and relative significance of information to issue	assesses relevance and relative significance of information to issue
analyses and evaluates reliability, contestability and validity of selected information, its origin, purpose and context.	analyses reliability, contestability and validity of selected information, its origin, purpose and context.	assesses reliability, contestability and validity of selected information, its origin, purpose and context.

*Tools and strategies used to collect and organise information include, but are not limited to, *graphic organisers, note taking, use of categories to organise information.*

Criterion 7: engage with others to identify and assess religious and ethical ideas and concepts

The learner listens and responds to the ideas of others in discussion. In oral discussion the learner:

Rating A	Rating B	Rating C
analyses ideas and interpretations of others and explains differences to own	clearly identifies interpretations and ideas of others and describes differences to own	identifies interpretations and ideas of others differing from own
discusses ideas cohesively and in depth with others	discusses ideas appropriately with others	discusses basic ideas appropriately with others
contributes effectively and in depth to a range of discussions related to religious and ethical issues	contributes effectively in discussions related to religious and ethical issues	contributes basic ideas to discussions related to religious and ethical issues
listens and critically evaluates the ideas and concepts of others providing effective in-depth responses related to religious and ethical issues	listens and evaluates the ideas and concepts of others providing effective responses related to religious and ethical issues	listens and discusses ideas and concepts of others related to religious and ethical issues
uses considered, rational and reasoned argument to persuade others in a range of discussions.	uses considered argument to persuade others in specific contexts.	uses own ideas to persuade others.

Criterion 8: use resources and organisational strategies

The learner:

Rating A	Rating B	Rating C
effectively manages a range of inquiries and responses within proposed timelines	effectively manages inquiries and responses within proposed timelines	manages inquiries and responses within proposed timelines
proposes and negotiates complex, measurable, achievable and realistic goals	proposes and negotiates measurable, achievable and realistic goals	proposes and negotiates with support measurable, achievable and realistic goals
critically evaluates progress using oral and written communication, and assesses impact on goals and plans	reflects on progress using oral and written communication, assesses impact on goals and plans	reflects on progress towards meeting goals using oral and written communication, and uses prescribed strategies to meet goals
plans future actions, effectively adjusting goals and plans where necessary	plans future actions, adjusting goals and plans where necessary	uses prescribed strategies to adjust goals and plans where necessary
uses technology and a range of critical thinking strategies to find innovative solutions to questions and problems.	uses technology and critical thinking strategies to find solutions to questions and problems.	uses technology and prescribed strategies to find solutions to questions and problems.

Qualifications Available

Studies of Religion Level 3 (with the award of):

EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

HIGH ACHIEVEMENT

COMMENDABLE ACHIEVEMENT

SATISFACTORY ACHIEVEMENT

PRELIMINARY ACHIEVEMENT

Award Requirements

The final award will be determined by the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification from 13 ratings (8 from the internal assessment, 5 from the external assessment).

The minimum requirements for an award in Studies of Religion Level 3 are as follows:

EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT (EA)

11 'A' ratings, 2 'B' ratings (4 'A' ratings, 1 'B' rating from external assessment)

HIGH ACHIEVEMENT (HA)

5 'A' ratings, 6 'B' ratings, 2 'C' ratings (2 'A' ratings, 2 'B' ratings, 1 'C' rating from external assessment)

COMMENDABLE ACHIEVEMENT (CA)

8 'B' ratings, 4 'C' ratings (2 'B' ratings, 3 'C' ratings from external assessment)

SATISFACTORY ACHIEVEMENT (SA)

11 'C' ratings (3 'C' ratings from external assessment)

PRELIMINARY ACHIEVEMENT (PA)

7 'C' ratings.

A learner who otherwise achieves the rating for a CA (Commendable Achievement) or SA (satisfactory Achievement) award but who fails to show any evidence of achievement in one or more criteria ('Z' notation) will be issued with a PA (Preliminary Achievement) award.

Course Evaluation

The Department of Education's Curriculum Services will develop and regularly revise the curriculum. This evaluation will be informed by the experience of the course's implementation, delivery and assessment.

In addition, stakeholders may request Curriculum Services to review a particular aspect of an accredited course.

Requests for amendments to an accredited course will be forwarded by Curriculum Services to the Office of TASC for formal consideration.

Such requests for amendment will be considered in terms of the likely improvements to the outcomes for learners, possible consequences for delivery and assessment of the course, and alignment with Australian Curriculum materials.

A course is formally analysed prior to the expiry of its accreditation as part of the process to develop specifications to guide the development of any replacement course.

Course Developer

The Department of Education acknowledges the significant leadership of Dr Hottes and the contribution of Susan Bunkum, Simone McManus, Tony Brennan and Professor Dirk Baltzly in the development of this course.

Expectations Defined By National Standards

There are no statements of national standards relevant to this course.

Accreditation

The accreditation period for this course is from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2020.

Version History

Version 1 – Accredited on 14 July 2015 for use from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2020. This course replaces Studies of Religion (REL315111) that expired on 31 December 2015.

Version 1.a - Accreditation renewed on 22 July 2020 for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021, with the following amendments: minor refinements to terms; and minor changes to criteria standard elements (C3 E5, C7 E2 & E3).

Appendix 1

INTRODUCTION TO STUDIES OF RELIGION

FORMAL STATEMENTS of BELIEF

Formal religious belief is underpinned by authoritative statements of belief and the doctrine or formula of religious belief specific to the religious tradition. Core statements of belief are formally expressed in worship, rituals and other practices.

MYTHS and STORIES

Religious traditions and belief systems are perpetuated through a system of concepts that are important to adherents of that community. The myths, narratives and stories that make statements about and explain the supernatural or sacred are an interrelated aspect of religious traditions. Myths, narratives and stories may also explain morality, theology and mystical experience for adherents. These stories make sense of life, provide access to the scriptures and celebrate tradition.

Sacred texts serve as a foundation for a religious tradition's social structures, values, rituals and beliefs. These texts also contain the key narratives that give the tradition its distinctive shape and flavour.

SACRED TEXTS

The term 'texts' refers to a body of writings held to be the authoritative core for a particular tradition. Sacred texts occupy a unique place in most religious traditions and usually serve as a foundation for its social structures, its values, rituals and beliefs. These texts usually contain the key stories that give the tradition its distinctive shape and flavour.

Texts are problematic documents, however, as there are often conflicting views concerning methods of interpretation and analysis.

RITUALS AND SYMBOLS

Ritual can be described as the practice or lived expression of beliefs in a formal collective context. Rituals are a form of structured action or prescribed procedures that are designed to open up the individual person or community to the action of the sacred. Rituals are an essential component of every major religious belief system and these may include prayer, modes of dress, asceticism, rites of passage and calendrical rites.

Symbols of religious expression are invested with meaning that helps define the principles and practice of a particular tradition. Certain figures, marks, symbols or icons signify a religious message, meaning or divine being such as the cross in Christian Faith.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE, PRACTICES AND FESTIVALS

The structures, practices and festivals of a tradition influence the way it is experienced by groups and individuals within it. Life experience shapes identity in a profound way, and for large numbers of people in Australia and throughout the world, being part of a religious tradition is a significant aspect of their life experience. Affiliation to a particular tradition contributes to the shape of individual identity and worldview. There is always an ongoing dynamic or dialogue between the individual and beliefs, structures and practices of the tradition.

LIVED TRADITIONS

Lived traditions refers to the interplay between personal experience and the beliefs of a tradition. It is designed to examine a single individual's unique relationship with, and response to, a particular tradition. There exists a dynamic interplay between beliefs and personal experience and the ways in which this creative relationship can lead to reinterpretation and transformation both of the individual and, on occasion, the tradition as well. A study of a lived tradition will investigate **two** sub-traditions with diverse variations and unique interpretations on the core tradition's beliefs, texts and other expression of religious tradition.

Appendix 2

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR INTRODUCTION TO Studies of Religion

- Religion is a term for which there is no clear cut definition or one that is agreed upon by scholars. Provide a definition – any definition will by its nature have limitations
- How are religions similar/different to each other? Are there some consistent themes/issues/elements/practices that are apparent between religions?
- The nature of religion as a distinctive response to the human search for meaning in life and to make sense of the world. Myths and religious symbols are coded means whereby human beings uncover the deepest concerns explored in their search for meaning
- Religions have been therefore a means of answering some of the most significant universal questions that confront humans
- The way that humans have developed answers to ultimate and significant questions have varied throughout time and place – a system of answers shared by a significant number of people is called a worldview. How does worldview impact on society?
- the term 'Religion' often has negative connotations; it is often linked to institutions that people wish to reject or avoid. Significant numbers of people prefer to distance themselves from 'institutional religion' by referring to themselves as 'spiritual'
- Religious traditions can be viewed as a rock in times of uncertainty providing a tradition, a community, a moral compass; religious traditions can also be viewed historically as a source of conflict and violence, so much so, there is a move away from using the term altogether due to the negative connotations that accompanies the term
- The study of religion encompasses multi-disciplinary approaches – anthropological, sociological, psychological, historical, philosophical and theological
- Types of religion defined by geographical origin: Asian – Buddhism and Hinduism; Middle Eastern – Judaism, Islam and Christianity
- Belief in a god or gods or the specification of one god is not a prerequisite for a definition of religiosity. What are Monotheistic Religions, Polytheistic Religions, Atheistic?
- Ninian Smart's dimensions of religion – how do these dimensions or similar ones proposed by other scholars of religion help define religion?
- Religious traditions characterised by a variety of forms creating multiple sub traditions (e.g. Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox etc) and denominations (e.g. Roman Catholic, Uniting Church, Greek Orthodox)
- Karl Marx – "Religion.... is the opium of the people". Is this an atheistic view or is it a critique of society when religion becomes complicit in social inequity?

Appendix 3

GLOSSARY

Term	Explanation
Analyse	Examine methodically and in detail, typically in order to explain and interpret it.
Apply	Use, utilise, employ in a particular situation, discussion or response.
Appropriate	Suitable or proper in the circumstances; suitable for a particular response; fitting.
Assess	Make a judgement of value, quality, outcomes or results.
Complicit	Involved with others in an activity that is unlawful or morally wrong.
Construct	Put together a response to a topic, question or investigation.
Cosmology	A philosophical, religious, or mythical explanation of the nature and structure of the universe; religious cosmology (also mythological cosmology) is a way of explaining the origin, the history and the evolution of the cosmos or universe based on the religious mythology of a specific tradition. Religious cosmologies usually include an act or process of creation by a creator deity or a larger pantheon (all the gods of a people considered as a group).
Critical analysis	The classification of something with respect to its worth; a serious examination, constructive criticism or judgement of something.
Critically engage	The process of creating a critical response to an idea, theory, thesis or hypothesis that defines the question or argument and provides critical analysis and interpretation; may define alternative solutions or hypotheses.

Term	Explanation
Define	State meaning and identify essential qualities.
Deity	A god or goddess of a polytheist religion, having divine status, quality or nature; the creator or supreme being in a monotheist religion such as Christianity.
Describe	Provide characteristics and features.
Dialogue	A discussion (written or spoken) directed towards exploration of a particular subject or resolution of a problem.
Discuss	Identify issues and provide points for and/or against.
Divine	Addressed, appropriated, or devoted to God or a god; religious; sacred.
Effective	Successful in producing a desired or intended result.
Engage	To draw into, involve or attract attention.
Essential	Absolute, necessary; indispensable.
Ethical perspective	A view held by adherents of a particular religious tradition or ethical perspective toward contentious or moral issues; moral perspective; the standards or views by which a person, group or organisation conducts itself.
Evaluate	To determine the importance, effectiveness, or worth of ideas and concepts.
Evangelical	Of or according to the teaching of the gospel or the Christian religion; includes belief that essential spiritual truth is found in the bible; a focus on the atoning for Christ on the cross; the belief that human beings need to be converted and the belief that the gospel needs to be expressed in effort.
Evidence	Information or resources helpful in forming a conclusion or judgement.
Experiential	A process of learning through experience; reflecting on how to do something.
Explain	Relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and or how.
Foundational texts	A text that acts as the foundation for the beliefs and traditions of an institution or religious tradition; the basis on which a religious tradition is founded.

Term	Explanation
Hermeneutics	The science of interpretation, especially of the Scriptures; the branch of theology that deals with the critical explanation or interpretation of a text such as the Bible.
Human condition	The irreducible part of humanity; includes concerns such as the meaning of life and the broader social, cultural and religious arrangements or structures that make up human lives.
Identify	Recognise and name.
Implications	The relationship between statements that holds true when followed logically; the conclusion that can be drawn from something although it is not explicitly stated: implied or suggested as naturally to be inferred or understood.
Institutional religion	A system of thoughts, actions and beliefs that is shared by a group and that gives the members an object of devotion; a code of behaviour and a frame of reference by which individuals may relate to their group and their universe.













Integrate	Combine elements.
Interact	To act upon each other or together; to talk or act with others.
Investigate	Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about.
Justify	Support an argument or conclusion.

Term	Explanation
Metaphysics	Metaphysics is a traditional branch of philosophy concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of being and the world, e.g. existence, objects and their properties, space and time, cause and effect, and possibility. Metaphysics denotes philosophical inquiry of a non-empirical character into the nature of existence.
Multi-disciplinary	Relating to, or making use of several disciplines at once: a multidisciplinary approach to learning or interpretation. To interpret texts or religious traditions using anthropological, sociological, psychological, historical, philosophical and theological approaches.
Nuanced	Expression or appreciation of subtle shades of meaning.
Omnipotent	Having unlimited or universal power, authority, or force; all-powerful; omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God.
Omniscient	Having total knowledge; knowing everything: an omniscient deity.
Organise	Systematically order and arrange.
Outline	Use general terms to indicate the main features of an idea or concept.

Term	Explanation
Pluralist	The co-existence of ethnic, cultural and religious groups within one society.
Prescribed	A stated rule or authority that a particular action or procedure should be carried out.
Principles	A basic truth or theory; an idea that forms the basis of something.
Range	A number of different things of the same general type; breadth.
Reflection	To write a statement detailing ideas, impressions and character of events.
Relevant	Applicable and pertinent.
Religiosity	The quality of being religious; piety; devoutness.
Religious tradition	A set of beliefs, customs and usages viewed as a coherent body of precedents influencing the present; mode of thoughts, beliefs or behaviour followed by a people continuously from generation to generation.

Term	Explanation
Secular	Of or relating to worldly things or to things that are not regarded as religious, spiritual, or sacred; temporal; not pertaining to or connected with religion.
Select	Choose in preference to another or others.
Strategy	A plan of action intended to accomplish a specific goal.
Synthesis	The combining of the constituent elements of separate material or abstract entities into a single or unified entity.
Theist	The belief in one God as the creator and ruler of the universe, without rejection of revelation.
Theological	The systematic and rational study of concepts of God and of the nature of religious truths.
Transcendent	The concept of being entirely beyond the universe (not a living being); beyond or above the range of normal or merely physical human experience. Transcendental; religious and philosophical properties of being.
Variant	Differing from others of the same kind or differing in standard or interpretation: religious variant.
Worldview	A particular philosophy of life or conception of the world.

Supporting documents including external assessment material

-  [REL315116 Assessment Report 2016.pdf](#) (2017-07-21 01:05pm AEST)
-  [REL315116 Exam Paper 2016.pdf](#) (2017-07-21 01:05pm AEST)
-  [REL315116 Exam specifications 2016-2020.pdf](#) (2017-07-26 04:32pm AEST)
-  [REL315116 Exam Paper 2017.pdf](#) (2017-11-23 05:15pm AEDT)
-  [REL315116 - Studies of Religion Marking Guide - 2017.pdf](#) (2018-01-02 03:13pm AEDT)
-  [REL315116 Assessment Report 2017.pdf](#) (2018-03-05 12:02pm AEDT)
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