



## Course Syllabus

### HONR 300 Religion, Animals, & Being Human

---

#### Course Information

**Course Identification:** HONR 300, "Religion, Animals, & Being Human"

**Number of Credits:** 4

**Delivery Mode:** Face to Face

**Course Schedule:** Fall 2022, MWF 1-1:50 PM (Hollenbeck 334)

**Faculty:** Dr. Travis Proctor

**Email:** [proctort@wittenberg.edu](mailto:proctort@wittenberg.edu) | **Phone:** 937-327-7403

**Office :** Hollenbeck 320 | **Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 12-2 PM, or by appointment.

#### Course Description

This course provides an in-depth exploration of the complex interactions between religious traditions, ideas and practices surrounding the animal, and understandings of "human" identities and natures, including:

- (1) the cultural construction of religions, animals, and humans as categories
- (2) the role of animals as part of religious belief and practice, and
- (3) the challenge that the "question of the animal" has presented in recent theorizations of the nature of and future of humanity and religion.

#### Course Outcomes

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

1. Interpret religious, cultural, and scientific understandings of the relation between religion, animals, and humans by discussing key historical works in this area.
2. Compare scholarly analyses of the relation between religion and animals.
3. Articulate the significance of cultural understandings of religion and animals to contemporary societies and ecosystems through written assignments and in-class presentations.
4. Connect in-class lessons and discussions to contemporary issues of significance.
5. Carry out a multi-stage research project on religion and animals.



## Program and General Education Outcomes Integration

This course supports students' mastery of the following outcomes supported by the Religion program:

1. Exploring the depth and diversity of human experience,
2. Reading, interpretation, analysis, critical thinking, writing, and speaking.

This course satisfies the **LO10 (Humanities)** general education outcome by helping students analyze problems, issues, or representations using methods appropriate to the humanities..

This course also satisfies the **LO2 (Written Communication)** general education outcome by helping students learn to write effectively, considering audience and purpose

## Required Textbooks and Materials

Donovan Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Duke University Press, 2015).

Michael J. Curley, *Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Nature Lore* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

Daniel Capper, *Learning Love from a Tiger: Religious Experiences with Nature* (University of California Press, 2016).

All other course readings will be made available on the course page in Moodle.

## Course Assessments

### Course Attendance and Participation (20%)

Each class session builds upon previous course materials and is designed to prepare you for future class meetings, so it is imperative that you attend class faithfully. Plan to be in-class and engaged except when significant personal emergencies (illness, family emergency) or excused schedule conflicts (extra-curricular activities) prevent you from doing so. Whenever such situations arise, **communicate with me early and often** (by email or at office hours) so that we can determine an appropriate plan for make-up work and getting you back on track.

**Attendance alone is not sufficient for doing well in this course.** The format for our class meetings will primarily consist of interactive lectures as well as small- and large-group discussions, all of which require your frequent participation. Thus, you are expected to contribute regularly to class discussions with questions, comments, and analyses of the readings and class topics. This consists of three items, all of which are required:

- (1) pre-class preparation through close reading of the reading assignments,
- (2) attentive presence in the classroom,



(3) constructive, vocal contributions to class discussions and diligent engagement in class activities.

Make sure to bring your readings and reading notes with you to class so as to facilitate class discussion.

Productive discussions are built on foundations of mutual empathy and trust. For this class, please treat every student and every concept you encounter with scholarly respect. It is acceptable and encouraged for you to speak from your own experiences and understandings, though your observations should stem primarily from your scholarly engagement with the readings, discussions, and lectures. Relatedly, all students are expected to respect others students' perspectives. As scholars of religion, it is not our duty to evaluate the truth or validity of any tradition. We can only examine the evidence we have, so that we might situate the tradition's beliefs, practices, teachings, and products in the broader context of global religions.

You will be evaluated based on the following rubric:

Excellent (90-100%)	Good (80-89%)	Adequate (70-79%)	Minimal (60-69%)	Marginal (0-59%)
You're present, prepared, and engaged for (nearly) every class. You make frequent contributions to class discussion, and consistently refer to the readings, lecture, and class discussions from other weeks. You encourage other students' comments and questions in a productive and respectful manner.	You're present and prepared in (nearly) every class. You offer thoughtful questions and comments that demonstrate your preparation for discussions and attention to readings and lectures.	You're present and prepared for most classes. You limit your contributions to several surface-level observations or clarifying questions about lectures or readings.	You're present and prepared for a majority of classes. You usually make a single comment during discussions in response to another student's observations or insights ("I agree with them").	You miss several classes, <b>or</b> are not prepared for class, <b>or</b> do not regularly engage with class activities/discussions.

(Course Outcomes: 2, 3, 4, LO10)



### **Reading Annotations (20%)**

You will be required to make and submit annotations of the required course readings. This will entail identifying a quote or key phrase that is of interest in the required reading, typing it or writing it on your annotation sheet (this can be a piece of paper or a word .doc), then writing your own note of explanation, comment, or question underneath the selected portion of text. For each class, you are to come to class having done at least four thoughtful annotations of the assigned reading. Annotations are required for each class, though I will only pick them up for grading about 1-2 times per week. Annotations will be graded on a Credit/Partial Credit/No Credit rubric, with students' two lowest annotation scores being dropped in final grade calculations. For more details, see the [Reading Annotations Direction Sheet](#), posted in Moodle.

(Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, LO10).

### **Final Research Paper: Religion & Animals (60% total)**

For your final assignment, you will be required write a 10-12 page research essay exploring the intersection of Religion & Animals. The paper should be double-spaced, 1" margins, with 12 pt. Times New Roman font. These papers are due on the day of our final exam (see course schedule below). Late papers will not be accepted.

This final paper will give you the opportunity to go beyond our syllabus and explore a certain topic in greater depth. Your research topic should relate to our intersecting explorations of religion, animals, and human identity/culture, but should dig deeper into the intersection of a selection of these topics (i.e., it should, in some way, go beyond what we have read or discussed in class, whether by exploring a new topic or delving deeply into what we've covered).

Topics could include (but are not limited to):

- researching a particular religious community, movement, or group, whether from history or today, and how understandings of animals have influenced their religious beliefs or practices
- researching the social history of a particular nonhuman animal or animal ecosystem, and how religion and social hierarchies have exerted impacts upon it (or, perhaps, how religious behaviors appar among such animal groups).
- exploring a particular text, film, or other primary source that discusses the intersections of religion and animals.
- examining the ways some of our course themes of religion and animals are presented in the media (broadly construed).

A recommended resource for you as you write your paper is the article by Faye Halpern et al. on “A Guide to Writing in Religious Studies” (posted on Moodle). To help you formulate, organize, and ultimately write your final research essay, you will be required to submit a series of essay-related tasks.

(1) Mid-Term Comparative Source Review (15%) (Due October 14<sup>th</sup> via Moodle)

As part of your initial exploration of your final research paper topic, you will be required to identify, read, and provide a comparative review of two academic sources pertaining to your planned final research paper topic.

The sources must consist of one each of the following

- 1) A scholarly, peer-reviewed article from a reputable academic journal.
- 2) A book (or chapter from a book) that is scholarly, peer-reviewed, and from a reputable academic press.

Once you have identified your pertinent sources, please provide a 3-4 page (double-spaced, 12 Point Times New Roman font, 1” margins) comparative review, exploring how they converge or diverge in their analyses of your chosen topic. Examples of article/book reviews will be provided on Moodle. Your comparative review will be due via Moodle before class on October 14<sup>th</sup> and graded on a 0-100 scale, and worth 15% of your overall grade.

(2) Essay Topic, Thesis, & Outline (5%) (Due November 9<sup>th</sup> via Moodle)

You will be required to submit an initial paper topic, thesis & outline of your final paper on November 9<sup>th</sup>, via Moodle. Your topic should consist of one-two-sentences that describe the focus of your essay, while your thesis should represent a provisional outline (in one-two full sentences) of the persuasive argument you plan to make. Your outline should include the major sections of your paper (usually 3-4 total), with 2-3 sub-points, important quotes, and/or important sources for each of the sections. The topic/thesis/outline task will be graded Credit/No Credit, and is worth 5% of your overall grade.

\*Note: You are allowed to change your topic and thesis after submitting the topic/thesis/outline, but this should demonstrate your initial explorations into topics of interest that will inform your final research paper. Please share with me any post-deadline changes to your topic or thesis as they develop.

(3) Middle Draft (10%) (Due November 30<sup>th</sup>, via Moodle)

You will be required to turn in a “middle draft” of your final paper. That is, a version of your paper that is not a “first” or “rough” draft, but is not yet your “final” draft. The paper should represent a substantially developed thesis, main argument, and sufficient sub-arguments with ample evidence. The essay should be framed by an introduction that orients the reader to your main points and lines of argumentation, as well as a conclusion that restates yours overarching argument(s) while gesturing towards potential future research or the implications of your findings.

The draft should be approximately 5-7 pages (double-spaced, 12 Point Times New Roman font, 1” margins), with appropriate formatting and minimal typos or errors. The draft is due via Moodle on November 30<sup>th</sup>. I will submit the drafts to the Writing Center WRAT program so as to provide you external feedback on your paper. The Middle Draft will be graded on a Credit/No Credit basis, and is worth 10% of your overall grade.

(4) Final Paper (30%) (Due Date December 14<sup>th</sup>, 3PM via Moodle)

Your final paper will represent the culmination of the writing process. It should be finalized in consultation with our class discussion as well as the feedback you receive via the WRAT program. The paper should be 10-12 pages (double-spaced, 12 Point Times New Roman font, 1” margins), with appropriate formatting and no typos (make sure to spell-check and proof-read!). The essay must include at least two external sources (whether primary or secondary) – these will most likely be the two sources featured in your comparative source review. The final essay is due to me via Moodle on the day of our final exam (see course schedule below). The paper will be graded on a 0-100 scale, and worth 30% of your final grade.

(Course Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, LO2, LO10).

## **Course Outline, Schedule, and Due Dates**

### **Unit I: Introducing Religion & Animals**

#### **August**

#### **29<sup>th</sup>: Course and Community Introductions**

Reading Assignment: The Course Syllabus (Moodle)



### **31<sup>st</sup>: Introducing Religious Studies**

Russel McCutcheon, "What is the Academic Study of Religion?" (Moodle)

J.Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious" (Moodle)

## **September**

### **2<sup>nd</sup>: Introducing Animal Studies**

Paul Waldau, "Opening Doors"

### **5<sup>th</sup>: No Class (Labor Day)**

### **7<sup>th</sup>: Studying Animals and Religion I**

Kimberley Patton, "'Caught with Ourselves in the Net of Life and Time':  
Traditional Views of Animals in Religion" (Moodle)

### **9<sup>th</sup>: Studying Animals and Religion II**

Aaron Gross, "The Absent Presence: Animals in the History of the Study of  
Religion" (Moodle)

## Unit II: Animals in Religion

### **12<sup>th</sup>: Studying Animals and Religion III**

Capper, "Introduction" (from *Learning Love from a Tiger*)

### **14<sup>th</sup>: Judaism & Sacrifice**

Jonathan Klawans, "Sacrifice in Ancient Israel" (Moodle)

### **16<sup>th</sup>: Judaism, Animals, & the Human**

Rachel Neis, "The Reproduction of Species: Humans, Animals and Species  
Nonconformity in Early Rabbinic Science" (Moodle)



**19<sup>th</sup>: In-Class Workshop: Formulating Effective Arguments in Religious Studies Writing**

Faye Halpern et al., "A Guide to Writing in Religious Studies" (Moodle)

**21<sup>st</sup>: Christianity I: Introductions**

Capper, Ch. 1: "All The Christian Birds Chanted"

**23<sup>rd</sup>: Christianity II: Speaking Animals**

Laura Hobgood-Oster, "And Say the Animal Really Responded: Speaking Animals in the History of Christianity" (Moodle)

In-Class Workshop: Conducting Religion Research at Wittenberg

**26<sup>th</sup>: No Class (Reading Day)**

Begin reading *The Physiologus* (Introduction + pgs. 3-23)

**28<sup>th</sup>: No Class (Reading Day)**

Continue reading *The Physiologus* (pgs. 23-67)

**30<sup>th</sup>: Christianity III: Animals as Symbols: *The Physiologus***

Patricia Cox Miller, *In The Eye of the Animal* (selections on Zoomorphism and *The Physiologus*) (Moodle)

**October**

**3<sup>rd</sup>: Islamic Traditions**

Capper, Ch. 2: "The Donkey Who Communed with Allah"

**5<sup>th</sup>: Indigenous American Cultures I**

Capper, Ch. 4: "Sharing Mayan Natural Souls"

**7<sup>th</sup>: Indigenous American Cultures II**

David Kinsley, "The Mistassini Cree: Hunting as Religious Ritual" (Moodle)



**10<sup>th</sup>: Asian Traditions I: Himalayan Traditions**

Capper, Ch. 5: "Friendly Yetis" (Moodle)

**12<sup>th</sup>: Asian Traditions II: Japanese Traditions**

Barbara Ambros, "Vengeful Spirits or Loving Spiritual Companions? Changing Views of Pet Spirits [in Japan]" (Moodle)

**14<sup>th</sup>: Class Discussion: Mid-Term Comparative Essays**

No Reading Assignment

Mid-Term Comparative Essays Due via Moodle, 1 PM.

**17<sup>th</sup>: No Class (Fall Break)**

Unit III: Religion without Animals: Religious Vegetarianism

**19<sup>th</sup>: No Class (Reading Day)**

Porphyry of Tyre, *On Abstinence from Killing Animals* (selections) (Moodle)

**21<sup>st</sup>: Religious Vegetarianism I: Ancient Religion and Sacrificial Animals**

Travis Proctor, "Belly-Demons: Clement of Alexandria and Demonic Sacrifice" (Moodle)

**24<sup>th</sup>: Religious Vegetarianism II: Judaism and Buddhism**

Ellen Posman, "Veggieburger in Paradise: Food as World Transformer in Contemporary American Buddhism and Judaism" (online)

Unit IV: Human Evolution, Animals, and Religion

**26<sup>th</sup>: Animals as "Religious" Beings I**

Andrew Aghapour and Aaron Gross, "What if Animals Believe in God?" (Moodle)

Barbara King, "When Animals Mourn" (Moodle)

**28<sup>th</sup>: Animals as “Religious” Beings II**

Donovan Schaefer, “ Do Animals Have Religion? Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Religion and Embodiment” (Moodle)

**31<sup>st</sup>: Religion and Human Evolution I: Sigmund Freud**

Sigmund Freud, “Totem and Taboo” (from *The Freud Reader*) (Moodle)

**November**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Religion and Human Evolution II: Georges Bataille**

Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, chs. 1-2 (Moodle)

**4<sup>th</sup>: Religion and Human Evolution III: Georges Bataille**

Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, ch. 3 (Moodle)

**7<sup>th</sup>: Religion and Human Evolution IV: Reimagining Religion and the Human**

Aaron Gross, “After the Subject: Hunter-Gatherers and the Reimagination of Religion” (Moodle)

**9<sup>th</sup>: Animals within Humans**

Denise Kimber Buell, “The Microbes and Pneuma That Therefore I Am” (Moodle)

[Topic/Thesis/Outline Due via Moodle](#)

**11<sup>th</sup>: Humans as Animals (Figuratively)**

Ken Stone, “The Dogs of Exodus and the Question of the Animal” (Moodle)

**14<sup>th</sup>: Affect, Animality, and Religion: Introductions**

Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, “Introduction”

**16<sup>th</sup>: Religion, Language, and Affect**

Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, Ch. 1 (“Religion, Language, and Affect”)

**18<sup>th</sup>: No Class (Reading Day)**

Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, Ch. 2 (“Intransigence”)

**21<sup>st</sup>: No Class (Reading Day)**

Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, Ch. 4 (“Compulsion”)

**23<sup>rd</sup>: No Class (Thanksgiving Break)**

**25<sup>th</sup>: No Class (Thanksgiving Break)**

**28<sup>th</sup>: Primatology and Islamophobia**

Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, Ch. 5 (“Savages”)

**30<sup>th</sup>: Evolution and Affective Economies**

Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, Ch. 6 (“Accident”)

Middle Draft Due via Moodle

**December**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: The Waterfall Dance, Pt. I**

Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, Ch. 7 (“A Theory of the Waterfall Dance”), Pt. I (pgs. 178-192)

**5<sup>th</sup>: The Waterfall Dance, Pt. II**

Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, Ch. 7 (“A Theory of the Waterfall Dance”), Pt. II (pgs. 192-205)

**7<sup>th</sup>: Affect, Animality, and Religion: Conclusions**

Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, “Conclusion: Under the Rose”

**9<sup>th</sup> (LDOC): Concluding Conversation**

C.M. Chin, “After Post, or, Animal Religion in an Age of Extinction” (Moodle)



**Final Paper Due: December 14<sup>th</sup>, 3 PM (via Moodle)**

**Fine Print, Resources, and Other Information**

**Grading Scale**

In this class, you will not be graded on your beliefs, opinions, or theological/political positions. Instead, you will be graded on how well you articulate your thoughts and positions, how closely you read the assigned texts, and how well you develop skills in thinking critically and synthetically about the themes and issues of the course.

A: 93-100 A-: 90-92	Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment that can reasonably be expected of students at a given stage of development
B+: 87-89 B: 83-86 B-: 80-82	Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development.
C+: 77-79 C: 73-76 C-: 70-72	A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development.
D+: 67-69 D: 63-66 D-: 60-62	A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment.
F: 0-59	For whatever reason, an unacceptable performance. The F grade indicates that the student's performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content.

**Statement on the Expectation of Work**

In this course, students should expect to spend at least twice as much time out of class doing work for the course as they spend in class. Thus, you should plan to devote approximately 7.5 hours per week to outside-of-class preparation. This includes reading the required materials in advance of class, taking detailed notes, writing weekly position papers, studying for the final exam, and preparing for in-class debates. .

**Accessibility and ADA Accommodation**

Wittenberg University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including



mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision and neurological, or temporary medical conditions, etc.), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, you must register with the Accessibility Services office by emailing [accessibilityservices@wittenberg.edu](mailto:accessibilityservices@wittenberg.edu). You can also find information on the Accessibility Services webpage found at [www.wittenberg.edu/success](http://www.wittenberg.edu/success). Please note that services are confidential, may take time to put into place, and are not retroactive. The Accessibility Services Office is located in the COMPASS: Sweet Success Center, Thomas Library, on the first floor.

### **The Writing Center**

For your written assignment(s) in this course, you are encouraged to take advantage of the resources and assistant provided by the Wittenberg Writing Center. The Wittenberg Writing Center supports students at any stage of the writing process, for any writing assignment. You can brainstorm an idea, revise a draft, look over citations, or edit sentences with a peer advisor. The advisors represent a range of disciplines, and they are practiced at working with you to determine the best way to address an assignment. You can stop in for a session, or schedule one Moodle. The Writing Center also offers email appointments--you can upload a draft and receive written comments and suggestions. For more information, visit [www.wittenberg.edu/writingcenter](http://www.wittenberg.edu/writingcenter), or stop into the Writing Center in Hollenbeck 112.

### **CLAC (Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum) Enrichment Opportunity**

If you have either completed or are currently enrolled for a Language course (Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish) beyond 112, you are eligible to enroll for a Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum (CLAC) module associated with this class and earn one credit for that module. Please let me know if you are interested in pursuing this opportunity.

### **Ethics and Integrity**

As outlined in the Wittenberg University Student Handbook, all students are expected to participate in this course and complete assignments with academic integrity. This includes the proper acknowledgment of sources that are used for course writing assignments as well as studying for and taking exams without undue external assistance.

Any written assignment completed for this course should cite all sources consulted, with appropriate citation that links the sources to the specific information the source provided (i.e., through footnotes or parenthetical citations). (See Course Policy on citation, below). The rule of thumb is that, when in doubt, cite any source that helped you formulate the thought or idea that you're writing down, but especially if you are

quoting or using certain phrases from a particular source. If you are ever unclear about whether you need to cite a source or not, cite it. Failure to cite your sources properly is plagiarism, and will result in a violation of academic integrity.

For any exam(s) in this class, you should prepare for and take the exam without any undue assistance. This means that while you are allowed to study alongside fellow students in preparation for the exam, the materials you use to study for the exam should be substantially your own. During the exam, you are not allowed to use any external resources (e.g., phones, computers, notes, textbooks) unless stated otherwise in course policies. Failure to abide these guidelines constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

I am required to report all academic integrity violations to the Wittenberg administration, which could result in punitive measures. Additionally, instances of academic plagiarism on assignments for this course will result in severe grade deductions and possible failure of the assignment and/or course.

## Course Policies

### 1. Citation Format:

All of your written assignments will require you to cite the sources that you use. Religious Studies typically uses Chicago citation style. If you are unfamiliar with this style, please consult The Chicago Manual of Style Online (<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>).

### 2. In-Class Digital Device Policy

Laptops are only permissible in the classroom for specific class activities, including note-taking and accessing course readings. Studies have shown that the use of computers for reading and note-taking are inferior for purposes of memorization and comprehension, and so I would encourage you to use alternative methods to access the readings and take notes by hand if possible (for this class and others). **Cell-phone use during class time is not permitted**, and so make sure you have alternative methods of accessing the readings.

### 3. Assignment Submission Policy

All written assignments should be submitted via hard-copy in-class on the provided due date. Electronic submission of assignments will not be accepted.

Late assignments are not typically accepted,

#### 4. Online Source Policy

The internet can be a wonderful repository of readily-available information. It can also be a black hole of poorly-sourced speculation, distortion, and fabrication. One of the goals of a college education is to train you in discerning the former from the latter. Towards such an end, this class introduces you to peer-reviewed, vetted scholarship in order to familiarize yourself with scholarly discourses and methodologies. Scholarly sources are written by experts with formal academic training in the areas in which they are writing, are vetted by fellow experts in the field, and are published by academic presses. For your assignments and class work, you are expected to use only sources that meet these standards. Thus, to make sure you gain familiarity with such scholarly sources, **internet websites (blogs, Wikipedia, other webpages, etc.) are not an allowable source** for any assignment in this course.

#### **Syllabus Change Statement**

Just like religious scriptures, course syllabi are “living documents” that evolve and shift in response to their cultural contexts and situations. Thus, I reserve the right to adjust this syllabus and content to meet the changing needs of you (the students) and to address course outcomes. In the event of substantive changes, you will be notified via an announcement in class or in Moodle. The most recent edition of the syllabus will always be posted to the Moodle course page.