

Foundation Course on Religion
Unit 1
ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION

1. Religion, a Global Human Activity

Right from the dawn of human consciousness, religion has asked the deepest questions humans can think about. Through the ages, it has been shaping politics, law, history, economics, science and arts. It has taken a central place in the lives of all civilizations and cultures.

While modern insights from a wide range of scientific disciplines have changed our view of the world, religion persists in variety and is often on the rise. We find it everywhere: on television and in film, music, art, literature and architecture. Our calendars are dotted with religious festivals. We encounter religion at the centre of global issues, cultural and political conflicts. We see it in the lives of the people we know and love, and in ourselves, as we live out and grapple with our own religious faith.

Scholars of religious studies do acknowledge that the struggle for religious freedom and beliefs had a complex and controversial history for centuries. It had often led to tragic conflicts and bloodshed in many parts of the world. At the same time, they also remind us that religion accounts for profound thoughts and intense spiritual experiences humanity ever had. It inspires believers to incredible commitment to human welfare – to forthright altruistic action even at the cost of one's own life. The American Academy of Religion (AAR), world's largest association of renowned scholars from all over the world in the field of religious studies, comments: "For both practitioners and observers – for everyone who wants to be informed about the world around them – religion is an intensely curious phenomenon that calls out for better understanding."¹

1.1. Academic study of religion

The academic study of religion – also known as religious studies – teaches the history, scripture, creed, code, cult, and community organization of faith communities as well as their reinterpretations over time. It is founded on the premise that religion, each in its own unique way, has always had a deep influence to the growth of civilizations and cultures. Hence all religions are treated with equal respect, and they are approached collectively as a rich subject for academic study.

The origin of the academic study of religion as we have today in many universities across the world began with the 19th century encounters that took place between renowned western and eastern scholars of religion. They were instrumental to introduce religion as part of liberal arts in centres of higher education. Their aim was to preserve and promote the rich spiritual, moral and cultural values found in the religious traditions for human advancement.

Religious Studies Research Report

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The Top Books of the Year Religious Studies Research Report The year 2023 has witnessed a remarkable surge in literary brilliance, with numerous engrossing novels enthralling the hearts of readers worldwide. Lets delve into the realm of top-selling books, exploring the fascinating narratives that have enthralled audiences this year. Religious Studies Research Report : Colleen Hoover's "It Ends with Us" This touching tale of love, loss, and resilience has gripped readers with its raw and emotional exploration of domestic abuse. Hoover expertly weaves a story of hope and healing, reminding us that even in the darkest of times, the human spirit can succeed. Uncover the Best : Taylor Jenkins Reids "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo" This intriguing historical fiction novel unravels the life of Evelyn Hugo, a Hollywood icon who defies expectations and societal norms to pursue her dreams. Reids captivating storytelling and compelling characters transport readers to a bygone era, immersing them in a world of glamour, ambition, and self-discovery. Discover the Magic : Delia Owens "Where the Crawdads Sing" This mesmerizing coming-of-age story follows Kya Clark, a young woman who grows up alone in the marshes of North Carolina. Owens weaves a tale of resilience, survival, and the transformative power of nature, entrancing readers with its evocative prose and mesmerizing setting. These top-selling novels represent just a fraction of the literary treasures that have emerged in 2023. Whether you seek tales of romance, adventure, or personal growth, the world of literature offers an abundance of compelling stories waiting to be discovered. The novel begins with Richard Papen, a bright but troubled young man, arriving at Hampden College. Richard is immediately drawn to the group of students who call themselves the Classics Club. The club is led by Henry Winter, a brilliant and charismatic young man. Henry is obsessed with Greek mythology and philosophy, and he quickly draws Richard into his world. The other members of the Classics Club are equally as fascinating. Bunny Corcoran is a wealthy and spoiled young man who is always looking for a good time. Charles Tavis is a quiet and reserved young man who is deeply in love with Henry. Camilla Macaulay is a beautiful and intelligent young woman who is drawn to the power and danger of the Classics Club. The students are all deeply in love with Morrow, and they are willing to do anything to please him. Morrow is a complex and mysterious figure, and he seems to be manipulating the students for his own purposes. As the students become more involved with Morrow, they begin to commit increasingly dangerous acts. The Secret History is a masterful and thrilling novel that will keep you wondering until the very end. The novel is a warning tale about the dangers of obsession and the power of evil.

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