

RS 200: Understanding Religion  
Christian Brothers University

#### Course description

From the course catalog: "Understanding Religion" is "an introduction to religion through a comparative study of all aspects of religious experience in Christianity and other religious traditions. This course will address existential and theological questions through a study of scriptures, sacred reality, symbol, ritual, and ethics."

This course will be taught as an introduction to the academic study of religion. As such, we will employ the following methods of inquiry: anthropological, philosophical, psychological, sociological, and theological. Some of the questions with which we will wrestle include: What is the purpose of religion? What is the origin of religion? What are the roles of symbols, rituals, communities, myths/narratives, and ethical systems in religion(s)? What can we infer about religion via contemplation of varying religions?

The weekly lectures will be divided into theoretical and practical components. More specifically, the first half of every week will introduce students to a prominent theory of religion. The second half of every week will then shift to a brief examination of a major world religion. Conversation is welcomed and expected despite the lecture format, and it is my hope that students will integrate the theoretical and practical components of the course in order to better understand the landscape of all that we call "religion." Ideally, as the course progresses, students will begin to evaluate the success of each theory of religion in light of the various religious traditions we will explore.