**Wayland Baptist University**

Plainview Campus

School of Religion and Philosophy

**Wayland Mission Statement**

Wayland Baptist University exists to educate students in an academically challenging,   
 learning-focused and distinctively Christian environment for professional success and   
 service to God and humankind.

**RLGN 5311 VC 01 New Religious Movements**

Spring 2014

Richard William Shaw

806.291.3409 office 806.291.0111 home 806.543.8871 cell

[shawr@wbu.edu](mailto:shawr@wbu.edu)

Office hours:

Monday 8:00 AM until 10.00 AM

Tuesday 9.30 AM until 12 Noon

Wednesday 8:00 AM until 12 Noon

Thursday 9.30 AM until 12 Noon

Friday 1.30 PM until 4 PM

BFCC 3

**Catalog Description:**

“Introduction to the history and thought of religious or spiritual groups founded after 1800, which evidence deviant beliefs and/or practices from established denominations or religions. Major attention will be given to Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Science, New Age Movements, and other groups which have a significant presence in the United States.”

**Prerequisites**

RLGN 1301 and RLGN 1302.

Enrollment in RLGN 0001 is required, if credit has not been earned before.

**Required textbooks and resource material**

1. Martin, Walter, and Ravi Zacharias. *The Kingdom of the Cults.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Bethany House Publishers, 2003.
2. Bible

**Optional materials**

* Stark, Rodney. *Discovering God: The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief.* New York, New York: HarperCollins, 2007.
* Braswell, George W., Jr. *Understanding Sectarian Groups in America.* Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, 1994

**Course outcome competencies**

After this semester the student should be able to:

* 1. Be able to identify the fundamental beliefs and define the basic vocabulary of the prevalent new religious movements, including, but not limited to the following:
     1. Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)
     2. Jehovah’s Witnesses
     3. Seventh Day Adventists
     4. Theosophy
     5. Christian Science
     6. Astrology
     7. Wicca, Satanism, and Witchcraft
     8. UFO Religious Groups
     9. The Nation of Islam
     10. Santería
     11. Baha’i
  2. Be able to discuss the significant historical events, persons, and psychological and sociological factors related to the origin and development of new religious movements.
  3. Be able to identify areas of commonality and difference between Christianity and new religious movements which might promote effective witness.

**Disability statement**

“In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), it is the policy of   
Wayland Baptist University that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity in the university. The Coordinator of Counseling Services serves as the coordinator of students with a disability and should be contacted concerning accommodation requests at (806) 291.3765. Documentation of a disability must accompany any request for accommodations.”

**Course requirements and grading criteria**

Each student is required to . . .

1. Each week read the reading assignments listed in column 3 prior to participation in   
 the discussion board, or the completion of the application exercise. Upon   
 completion of the reading assignment, and viewing and studying the lecture   
 material, the student will answer questions indicating her grasp of the material and   
 her ability to apply the knowledge gained. Ten points per week can be earned,   
 depending on the thoroughness, concision, and articulation. A minimum of four   
 posts with substantive material is considered adequate participation (five points) for   
 a passing grade.

A Note About Reading:

RLGN 5311 is a graduate level course. As such, each reading must be done carefully   
 and critically. I do not expect you to agree with everything you read. In fact, I   
 would be quite anxious if you did. I encourage you to mark those issues with

which you take issue, in which you find interest, or from which you experience   
 discomfort or question.

2. Write a research paper following the guidelines of the School of Religion and   
 Philosophy of Wayland Baptist University. Students will write a paper with   
 a minimum of 8 to 10 pages of text excluding cover page, table of contents,   
 appendices, and bibliography. The paper is to follow the guidelines stipulated in   
 the *Wayland Baptist University School of Religion and Philosophy Style Guide.* The   
 paper will be double-spaced using a 10 or 12 point font.

The topic of the paper may be chosen from any aspect of any of the new religious   
 movements, or the relationship/interface between aspects of any of the new   
 religious movements. I will work with the student in selecting and refining the   
 topic. The important dates related to this paper include

* March 3, topic due (10 points)
* March 20, bibliography due (10 points)
* March 31, outline due (10 points)
* April 25, rough draft due (30 points)
* May 10, final draft due (40 points)

Suggested topics include

* A Comparison and Contrast of Evangelical Christianity and Mormonism
* The Empowerment of Women within Wiccan Communities
* The Role of Leadership among Jehovah’s Witnesses
* The Historical Development of Santería and its Diaspora Communities
* Becoming a Scientologist: Process and Purpose
* The Theological and Moral Strength of Christian Science

The research paper will be graded using the following metric:

Form: The grade on form is determined by such matters as spelling, grammar, syntax, writing style, neatness, and proper technical form.

Presentation: This area includes the clarity of the definition of the task, the organization of the content, the arguments and logic used, and the completeness with which the assignment is carried out.

Research Methodologies: The final draft must demonstrate a thorough use of books   
 and articles listed in the bibliography.

A minimum of five books and five print or electronic articles is required.

3. Respond to questions posted on the discussion board within the time allowed (one   
 per week) and participate in the discussion. Upon completion of the reading   
 assignment, and viewing and studying the lecture material, the student will answer   
 questions indicating her grasp of the material and her ability to apply the knowledge   
 gained. Ten points per week can be earned, depending on the thoroughness,   
 concision, and articulation. A minimum of four posts with substantive material is   
 considered adequate participation (five points) for a passing grade.

4. A final examination will be taken, monitored by a proctor. The student will take the   
 examination without the use of textbooks, the Bible, notes, access to the Internet,   
 other people, or any other learning materials.

5. Application Assignments, of which there will be ten, one per week for each of the   
 first ten weeks of the course. Students will respond in a timely, thorough fashion to   
 the assignment provided by the professor under “Application Assignments.” A   
 maximum of ten points can be earned for each application assignment.

**NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED**

**GRADING CRITERIA**

The grading scale of the university catalogue is followed in this course:

A 90-100% Cr for credit

B 80-89% Ncr no credit

C 70-79% W for withdrawal

D 60-69% I for incomplete

F below 59% X no grade given

IP in progress

**This schedule is subject to change:**

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| **DATES** | **TOPIC** | **READINGS (Read prior to coming to the first class of the week.)** |
| Week 1, February 24 | Introduction:  Methods of studying new religious movements  Definitions  Worldview and paradigm  History of study of NRMs  Reasons to study NRMs | MZ, Chapters 1, 2, and 3  Braswell, Introduction (optional) |
| Week 2, March 3 | Christian Science  Theosophy | MZ, Chapters 5 and 8  Braswell, Chapter 4 (optional) |
| Week 3, March 17 | UFO Religious Groups  Zen Buddhism  Soka Gakkai | MZ, Chapter 9 and 14  Braswell, Chapter 7 (optional) |
| Week 4, March 24 | Wicca, Satanism, and Witchcraft, Astrology, Spiritism, and Spiritualism | MZ, Chapter 7 and 15  Braswell, Chapter 5 (optional) |
| Week 5, March 31 | Santería and the Rastafarians | MZ, Chapter 11 |
| Week 6, April 7 | Krishna Consciousness, Baha’i and the Nation of Islam | MZ, Chapter 10  Braswell, Chapter 6 & 8 (optional) |
| Week 7, April 14 | Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) | MZ, Chapter 6  Braswell, Chapter 1 (optional) |
| Week 8, April 21 | Jehovah’s Witnesses | MZ, Chapter 4  Braswell, Chapter 2 (optional) |
| Week 9, April 28 | Seventh Day Adventists | MZ, Chapter 12 |
| Week 10, May 5 | Scientology | MZ, Appendix B |
| Week 11, May 12 | FINAL EXAMINATION |  |

**Instructor’s Perspective:**

This course is being taught at a Baptist university by a Baptist instructor. The student should realize that the course will reflect the instructor’s point of view on the issues related to biblical interpretation. I do not demand that the student agree with my understandings or interpretations. However, I do insist that the student reflect upon and consider various understandings of the Bible and new religious movements which will be presented in this course. Because this is a senior-level class, major scholarly opinions on important issues will be presented. I encourage the student to determine her/his own informed perspective. I will award the student a grade on the basis of academic achievement, mastery of the material, and the ability to articulate his/her knowledge of the subject matter.