



# Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

## Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

# Theories of Religion

Course Code	G_BATRSPC122
Credits	6
Period	P1
Course Level	100
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Religion and Theology
Course Coordinator	prof. dr. C.A.M. van den Berg
Examiner	prof. dr. C.A.M. van den Berg
Teaching Staff	dr. M. Dorobantu, prof. dr. C.A.M. van den Berg
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Seminar

## Course Objective

After finishing this course, the student:

- has acquired knowledge of (early) modern and contemporary theories of religion;
- has acquired insight into the shifting concerns that inspired the modern history of Western scholars studying religion as a human phenomenon;
- is able to explain and evaluate the functions and merits of academic definitions of religion in the historical and philosophical light of (early) modern and contemporary scientific developments;
- is able to position themselves within current debates in the field of religious studies.

## Course Content

In this course we explore how religious studies came to be a field of its own accord. When religion first became a topic of scholarly interest, it was often in relation to other ('more important') phenomena such as the working of the human mind, culture in general, or the economy. The study of religion was therefore spread over disciplines as varying as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics. It may not come as a surprise that a widely accepted definition of religion is lacking. In fact, as will be discussed in-depth in this course, the question of definition is also a question of who gets to define, that is, who gets to authoritatively speak about the phenomenon known as religion. Who gets to distinguish religion from (for instance) spirituality, sacred from profane, and religious thought from religious embodied practice? Current debates in religious studies address precisely these questions, increasingly drawing attention to the fact that the study of religion has gendered, racialized and (post)colonial dimensions. This course will thus introduce the theories of the founding thinkers in religious studies, as well as contemporary discussions in which their legacy is sometimes criticized and rejected, while at other times it is reintroduced in innovative ways.

## Additional Information Teaching Methods

Seminars

## Method of Assessment

Written exam (70%)

Oral presentation (30%)

## Literature

Mandatory literature:

- Pals, Daniel L. Ten Theories of Religion. Fourth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. [Note: The book must be acquired before the start of the course.]

- Additional articles [Note: Further details will be made available via Canvas.]

- PowerPoints and hand-outs [Note: Further details will be made available via Canvas.]

## Explanation Canvas

The course manual with detailed information will be made available via Canvas.