**HON 340**

**The Scientific Study of Global Religion: A Podcast**

**Jordan P. LaBouff, Ph.D.**

**Spring 2018**

**Office:** Little Hall 352

**Office Hours:** By appointment

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**Class:** TR 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM, Estabrooke 138

**Course Syllabus**

**Course Overview:**

This is an experimental project-based course designed to learn about the scientific study of global religions by creating a podcast that attempts to address central questions on that topic.

Major goals

* Understand and develop skills in the Scientific Study of Religion
  + Locating, reading, and interpreting research
  + Broadening perspectives beyond North American Protestants
* Understand and develop skills in Scientific Communication
  + Interpreting research for the public
  + Balancing accuracy and accessibility
  + Interviewing researchers
* Understand and develop skills in Podcast Production
  + Practice scriptwriting and storyboarding
  + Design, record, edit, produce a segment

**Assignments/Plans/Expectations**

See below for details on assignments and grading breakdown.

**Grading Breakdown:**

Grading is a necessary evil. Part of my job as an educator is to provide a brief summary of how each person performed in this course relative to the goals set forth here. The way I am required to do that is through the assignment of letter-based grades. Therefore, this course will follow the following grading breakdown. I will assign a range of grades demonstrating your overall progress and demonstrated growth in the course.

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Class Participation and Assignments 15%

Podcast Reviews 10%

Topic Preparation 15%

Storyboarding and Scripting 10%

Segment Creation 30%

Individual Goals 10%

Final Episode and Reflection 10%\_

100%

Final grades will be assigned as follows (note, cutoffs may be lowered but will never be raised):

Grade Percent

A 92+

A- 90-92

B+ 87.5-89.9

B 82-87.4

B- 80-81.9

C+ 77.5-79.9

C 72-77.4

C- 70-71.9

D+ 67.5-69.9

D 62-67.4

D- 60-61.9

F 59.9 or lower

**Course Policies**:

It is important that we understand the policies of the course up-front so that any confusion is about our material, not our plan. Please take a moment to carefully consider these policies and refer to them first if you have a question about how to take care of something in the future.

A community like this requires mutual respect. Please respect your colleagues and the context by refraining from eating, or engaging in any other distracting task (e.g., using the phone, social media, etc.) in class. Each of you are adults, and I know you will treat this course and one another as something worthy of your time and respect. Indeed, all of our course policies could be effectively summed up with a phrase from a not-too-distant civilization, “Be excellent to each other.” (Bill & Ted, 1989).

*Attendance:*

This course does not have an official attendance requirement. You have elected to take and honors course so I expect you will elect to come to class. Obviously, you cannot participate and demonstrate your preparation if you fail to attend class.

If you are going to miss class for illness, bereavement, or a university-excused reason, you should contact me via-e-mail at your earliest opportunity. The deadlines in our course have been developed to encourage your best work by spreading it out across the semester, allowing time for editing and rewriting. Therefore, barring extreme circumstances, late work will be penalized one letter grade for the first day it is late and will not be accepted more than one day late. You are welcome to turn in work early and receive more feedback.

*Student Honor Code*

This course is built upon a community of mutual respect. The greatest violation of that community is any instance of cheating, plagiarism, or other form of academic dishonesty. I consider violations of this sort to be the cardinal sin of academia, and I take them very seriously. I have absolutely no tolerance for it. Any instance of academic dishonesty in the course may result in the assignment of an “F” and full prosecution allowed by the University.

Two tips to keep you from running afoul of this problem: 1.) If you have any doubt in your mind whether or not your academic behavior is plagiarism then cite the source from which you are drawing. 2.) If your choice is between academic dishonesty or not completing an assignment, you are much better off simply not completing the assignment.

*Course Data*

Over the course of our time together, you will come to know that I am extremely interested in data. I want to be able to see how things grow, change, and develop through our interventions. As a part of this interest, I will be providing you will surveys throughout the semester that I will ask you to complete (anonymously) and return to me. It is important to note that it is not a course requirement for you to complete these surveys and questionnaires. Refusing to complete them will not impact your performance in the class in any way. These data are simply being collected in order to make the course better and better. If you ever have questions about these course data, please feel free to ask me.

*Students with Disabilities or Special Needs*

If anyone feels that they may require additional assistance in order to meet the goals and requirements of this course please see me privately. The staff of the Disability Support services (East Annex: 581-2319) coordinates accommodations and services for UM courses. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation and have not contacted them, please do so as soon as possible.

*Contacting Me*

I know that your schedules are tightly constrained, so meeting during those hours might be impractical. If you need to contact me, the easiest way *by far* is via e-mail. That can allow us to set a mutually convenient time to meet, and often routine “business” can be handled entirely this way. Even if you can come by during formal office hours, please send me an e-mail first so that I know to expect you. I can let you know if I have already committed to meeting with another student during that time, and we can find a mutually acceptable time to meet outside of those hours.

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| Date | Topic | Assignment / Notes |
| Tues 1/23 | *Welcome and introductions* |  |
| Thurs 1/25 | *What makes a good scientific communication podcast?* | *Podcast Review 1* |
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| Tues 1/30 | *The scientific study of global religions - 1* |  |
| Thurs 2/1 | *The scientific study of* ***global*** *religions – 2* | *Topic idea due* |
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| Tues 2/6 | *Research skills in the science of religion* |  |
| Thurs 2/8 | *Identifying and shaping interesting questions – workshop* | *Podcast Review 2* |
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| Tues 2/13 | *Scientific communication – 1* | *Topic plan due* |
| Thurs 2/15 | *Scientific communication – 2* |  |
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| Tues 2/20 | *Storyboarding – 1* | *Podcast Review 3* |
| Thurs 2/22 | *Storyboarding – 2 – Workshop* |  |
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| Tues 2/27 | *Interviewing for scientific communication* |  |
| Thurs 3/1 | ***No Class – Society for Personality and Social Psychology annual conference*** | *Storyboard due* |
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| Tues 3/6 | *Scriptwriting – 1* |  |
| Thurs 3/8 | *Scriptwriting – 2 - Workshop* |  |
|  | Spring Break – *Maine Science Festival w/ Krulwich!* |  |
| Tues 3/20 | *Progress Report: Episode design and team organization* | *Script draft 1 due* |
| Thurs 3/22 | *Audio recording – 1* |  |
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| Tues 3/27 | *Audio recording – 2* |  |
| Thurs 3/29 | *Editing – 1* | *Script final due* |
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| Tues 4/3 | *Editing – 2 – Workshop* |  |
| Thurs 4/5 | *Episode design – Workshop* | *Intro segment due* |
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| Tues 4/10 | *Storytelling* |  |
| Thurs 4/12 | *Music and Assets* |  |
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| Tues 4/17 | *Framing research and making claims* | *Draft full segments due* |
| Thurs 4/19 | *Publishing a Podcast* |  |
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| Tues 4/24 | *Production – 1* |  |
| Thurs 4/26 | *Production - 2 – Workshop* | *Final Segments Due* |
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| Tues 5/1 | *Final production* |  |
| Thurs 5/3 | ***Celebration – Finished episodes published and public*** | *Episodes & Reflection due* |
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Tentative class schedule – subject to change