

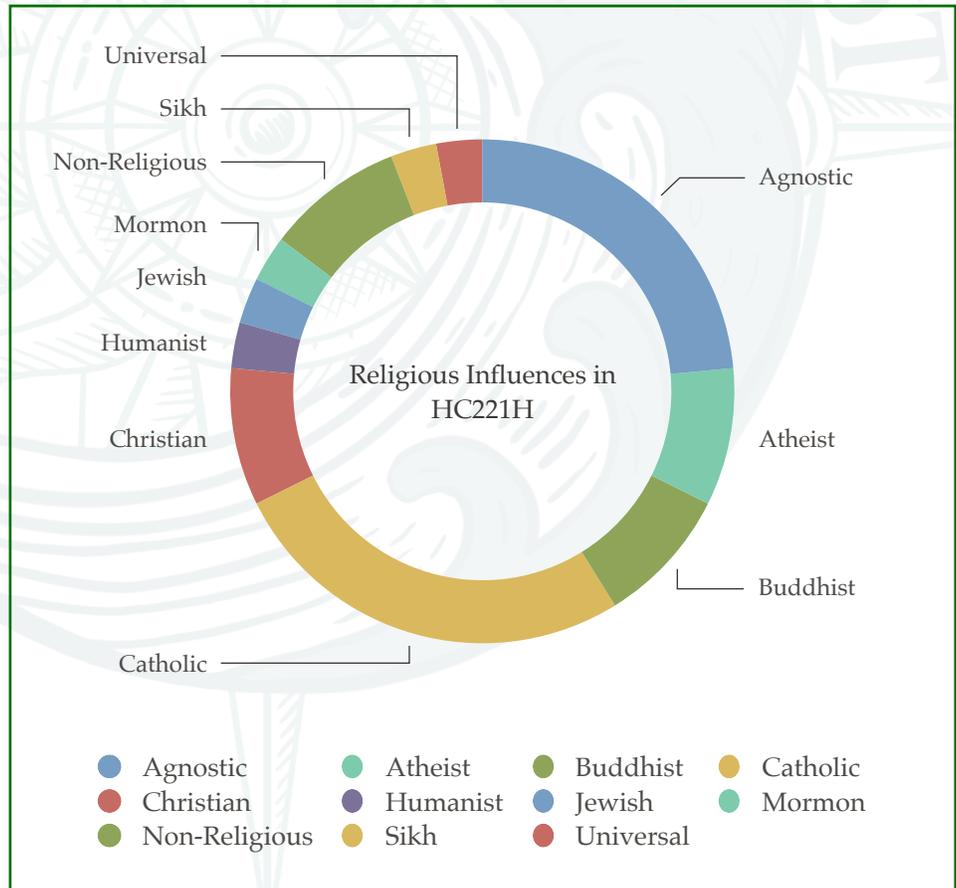
Religion—What is it?

Defining religion was an ongoing discussion during the course. These are some of the definitions we started out with, and students provided their own definitions that evolved over several weeks.

- "Religion is the belief in an ever living God, that is, in a Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe and holding moral relations with mankind" (James Martineau, 19th C).
- Religion is the "feeling of absolute dependence"; "the consciousness that the whole of our spontaneous activity comes from a source outside of us" (Friedrich Schleiermacher, 18th-19th C).
- Religion is "a set of rituals, rationalized by myth, which mobilizes supernatural powers for the purpose of achieving or preventing transformations of state in man or nature" (Anthony Wallace, 20th C).
- "Religion is only the sentiment inspired by the group in its members, but projected outside of the consciousness that experiences them, and objectified" (Emile Durkheim, 19th-20th C).
- Religion is "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of Nature and of human life" (James G. Frazer, 19th-20th C)."
- "The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods." (Oxford Languages Dictionary, 21st C).

Religions Represented:

After the students read Aslan Reza's "God: A Human History," they wrote their own personal "History of God." The chart below represents the family backgrounds and influences of the student class population. Although, most students identified themselves personally as agnostic. Many claimed that atheism seemed to be a stretch, since they could not rule out that one day science may provide evidence of God's existence.



Cinematic Religion: Evaluating Cinematic Portrayals of the Divine with University Students in an A-religious Setting
 in Academic Teaching and Biblical Studies at Society of Biblical Literature
 By Erica Mongé-Greer, erica@ericamg.com, 11/19/2022

Example of an Ethical/Theological Discussion:

One of the ethical questions that was raised by several films had to do with celibacy. The slide image below show some of the complexities brought up in the UK based series, *Fleabag*, Season 2, *A Love Story*. The show icon was a photo of the main character styled as the Madonna.



Fleabag S2 The Hot Priest & The Atheist

- ◊ "I Believe God Meant For Me To Love People In A...Different Way. I Believe I'm Supposed To Love People As A Father."
- ◊ "We're Not Gonna Have Sex. I Know That's What You Think You Want From Me, But It's Not. It Won't Bring Any Good."
- ◊ "I'm Not Being Churchy, I'm Trying To Get To Know You."
- ◊ "I Can't Have Sex With You Because I'll Fall In Love With You. And If I Fall In Love With You, I Won't Burst Into Flames But...My Life Will Be F***Ed."



Celibacy

- ◊ Can. 277 §1. "Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and therefore are bound to celibacy which is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and are able to dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and humanity." Vatican (https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib2-cann208-329_en.html#TITLE_III.)
- ◊ "Maybe because so few of us would be able to give up something so fundamental for something so abstract, we protect ourselves from the nobility of a priest's vows by jeering at him when he can't live up to them, always and forever." Anne, in *The Sparrow* by Mary Doria Russell

Top 10 Films in Papers/Essays:

More than 50 films and series were referenced in assignments, assessments, and papers. The top ten (by frequency) that showed up in student assignments included a variety of genres: comedy, drama, musical, Bollywood, Belgian comedy, French Passion, Detective Serial, and Horror.

