

Course Description

**FND 1000: *Critical Approaches to Religion and Gnosticism.* (3 Cr Hrs.)**

Instructor(s):	Troy Pierce <a href="mailto:revtroy@gnosis.org">revtroy@gnosis.org</a> Phone: 801-928-8091
Course Length:	16 Weeks/Topics
Prerequisites:	None.
Course Elements:	<i>Required:</i> Texts. Online texts. Recorded lectures. Participation in discussions. <i>Optional:</i> Conference call or online chat discussion (indiv. phone call or email). Online research.
Course Format(s):	Online. Group or Individual. Credit or Continuing Education
Assignments:	Some participation in online discussions (indiv. email discussion). Weekly topical assignments (1 or 2 pages). Final written paper/project (≈10 pages). Total (30+ pages).
Required Texts:	Weston, A. (2000). <i><a href="#">A Rulebook for Arguments</a></i> . (Third edition). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.  Palmer, H. (ed.) (1998). <i><a href="#">Inner knowing</a></i> . New York: Putnam.  Course Readings. (Available online)

**Overview:**

This is an introductory course that provides familiarity with different ways to understand and approach the complex subject of religion, with an emphasis on Gnosticism. Students will: examine the most basic assumptions made in considering religion, consider the strategies for religious knowledge and authority, explore the various ways in which we can approach the meaning of religious texts, take a critical look at argumentation, and examine various religious organizational forms.

This core course is a required first course for Spiritual Ministry and Gnostic Studies programs. It covers the different frameworks and methods of approaching Religion, Spirituality, and Gnosticism that will be used in subsequent coursework.

**Learning Goals:**

- To understand and apply the methods and frameworks covered in examining religious approaches, texts, and structures as a foundation to further study and future coursework.
- To become familiar with the different types of knowledge and developmental epistemology.

To gain an understanding of the fundamental role of paradigms in considerations of religion.  
 To understand different relationships to, and goals of, religious teachings.  
 To become familiar with different dimensions of, and differences in, religious experience.  
 To be able to consider sacred stories & texts within different approaches and perspectives.  
 To explore the uses, applications, and limitations of argumentation in religion.  
 To apply critical thinking skills in examining religious arguments through understanding assumptions, faulty reasoning, and common fallacies.  
 To develop a framework for examining religious organizations along multiple dimensions.

<b>Content Outline</b>	
<b>I. Approaching Religion</b>	
Week/Topic 1	<b>The Complexity of "Religion"</b>
2	<b>Understanding Frameworks for Meaning</b>
3	<b>Different "Voices" &amp; Ways of Experiencing</b>
4	<b>Types of Knowing &amp; Epistemological Development</b>
5	<b>Knowing &amp; Certainty in Religion</b>
<b>II. Approaches to Sacred Stories &amp; Texts</b>	
6	<b>Approaching Story &amp; Ontological Approaches</b>
7	<b>Cultural &amp; Informational Approaches</b>
8	<b>Psychological Approaches</b>
9	<b>Developmental Approaches</b>
10	<b>Experiential &amp; Participatory Approaches</b>
<b>III. Critical Thinking in Religion</b>	
11	<b>Argumentation in Religion</b>
12	<b>Examining Religious Arguments I</b>
13	<b>Examining Religious Arguments II</b>
<b>IV. Organizational Approaches in Religion</b>	
14	<b>Functions of Religious Organization</b>
15	<b>Organizational Strategies</b>
16	<b>Abusive &amp; Manipulative Organizations</b>

### **Course Grading:**

40% - Weekly/Topical Assignments applying methods & approaches covered in topic (1-2 pages).  
 10% - Topical course discussion participation (indiv. email, subs. longer weekly assignments).  
 30% - Final Assignment: Integrative paper/project applying methods & approaches covered in the course (≈10 pages).  
 Total: 30+ pages