

RLGN 101 INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE STATEMENT ON RELIGIOUS LITERACY¹

At the end of the semester, you will be asked to reflect on, first individually and then in conversation with your classmates, why learning about religion matters in the college classroom. **You will first write a short, 300-word individual statement, and a second, 500-word revision of the statement to be prepared in groups.**

INDIVIDUAL STATEMENT

To prepare your individual statement on why learning about religion matters in the college classroom, consider the following questions:

1. What are the issues related to religion that you think matter most today?
2. What were the ideas/arguments from our lectures, readings, and discussions this semester that you found most important, meaningful, or powerful?
3. What about them was so important, meaningful, or powerful to you? Did it have something to do with the questions that the scholars tackled? The misunderstandings, stereotypes, or common understandings they thought to challenge? The decisions that they made for representing a person, a community, or a religion in an unconventional or inspiring way?
4. Are there ways that insights from our lectures, readings, and section discussions can be useful for taking up the issues you mentioned in Step 1?
 - a. If so, great! State those as part of your advocacy for religious literacy, remembering that this refers to work done inside and outside the walls of academia. Cite the readings that inspired these ideas.
5. Are there ways that the insights from our readings were lacking in their ability to address the issues you care about?
 - a. If so, that's equally important! State those as part of the steps future classes on religious literacy must take to step up to the challenges of the twenty-first century. Cite the readings that inspired these ideas.
6. Begin your statement with the following, "I, a student of RLGN101, believe that religious literacy matters in the 21st century because..."

COLLECTIVE STATEMENT

¹ Inspiration for this assignment comes from: Paredes, Alyssa, and Felipe Coimbra Moretti. 2024. "The Political Statement: Thinking Beyond the End-of-Term Paper." Teaching Tools, *Fieldsights*, March 21. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/the-political-statement-thinking-beyond-the-end-of-term-paper>

Learning to work in groups is critical because all meaningful responses to social projects are born of community-based work. For the second, group-based version, you will be put in groups with the intention of replicating the democratic process, where people bring many, often conflicting commitments and priorities.

To draft your collective statement:

1. Find a time for all group members to meet either in person or virtually.
2. Exchange your statements and read through all of them.
3. Identify commonalities and disagreements and decide on the portions that elicited the strongest assent from all.
4. Should the collective statements be a combination of each cause addressed in the individual statements? Or should you choose one overarching problem to serve as the goal of your group? Both approaches could make for interesting, creative, and inciting statements, as long as the final assignments reflected your collective efforts in drawing out the commonalities across each cause.

This is not only a pedagogical goal, but a political one as well: the statement is, after all, an exercise in listening, discussing, and getting us to break out of the paradigm of single-issue politics on campus today.

BEST PRACTICES FOR GROUP WORK

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Make sure to clearly indicate each group members' contribution in both the written statement and the presentation.
2. A few options to assign individual tasks:
 - a. Have a conversation and each person can claim the task they feel most equipped to do (let people do what they are best at)
 - b. Elect a group leader and have the group leader assign tasks
3. Split the work fairly at the beginning and ensure we hold each other accountable, be vocal about assigning work fairly and completing tasks on time.
4. Plan ahead of time.

SUGGESTIONS SPECIFIC TO THE WRITTEN COLLECTIVE STATEMENT

1. On coming to a consensus:
 - a. Everyone can share their statements, and choose one that is most frequently brought up or repeated
 - b. Everyone can discuss their statements and the group as a whole will find common ideas across all of them
2. On the co-writing process:
 - a. This could be done via Zoom or in person, as long as it works for all group members
 - b. You could (1) assign half of the group to brainstorm and the other half doing transcription; (2) everyone write in the same document at the same time; (3) everyone is responsible for a certain section and then the group compiles the final statement later; or (4) have a couple of group members create a first draft, and edit back and forth as a group.

SUGGESTIONS SPECIFIC TO THE ORAL PRESENTATION

On the presentation day, you could elect some speakers, or you can have the whole group doing the presentation together

GRADING RUBRICS

You will receive the grade first by submitting your individual statement (5%, graded by the instructor), then as a group on the how you presented your statement (5%, graded by everyone in the class) and the quality of your collective written statement (5%, graded by the instructor).

GRADING RUBRICS FOR WRITTEN STATEMENT:

You will receive the grade based on on the quality of your written statement (5%, the rubric is the same for both individual and collective statements). You will receive 1% for “excellent,” 0.8% for “good,” 0.6% for “fair,” and 0.4% for “needs improvement” on the following five categories. This assignment is graded by me:

1. Genre: the written statement is a statement (i.e., not only a demonstration of knowledge, but an argument based on knowledge acquired in class) about why learning about religion matters in the college classroom; it also raises an important and/or timely issue(s) about learning religion in the college classroom
2. Demonstration of Knowledge: the written statement showed mastery over class materials and used class readings and materials in a critical way
3. Analysis and Argument: the written statement shows synthesis of ideas, in-depth analysis and evidence of original thought; it makes a strong, clear, and insightful argument
4. Organization: the written statement is well organized with a beginning, middle, and end; there is a strong organizing theme, with clear main ideas and transitions
5. Style: the written statement is free of distracting spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors; absent of fragments, comma splices, and run-ons; All primary and secondary sources were cited properly

GRADING RUBRICS FOR GROUP PRESENTATION:

You will receive the grade as a group on the how you presented your statement (5%). You will receive 0.5% for “excellent,” 0.4% for “good,” 0.3% for “fair,” and 0.2% for “needs improvement” on each of the following ten categories. This assignment is peer-graded:

1. The presentation is a collective statement (i.e., not only a demonstration of knowledge, but an argument based on knowledge acquired in class) about why learning about religion matters in the college classroom.
2. The presentation showed mastery over class materials and used class readings and materials in a critical way.
3. The presentation raised an important and/or timely issue(s) about learning religion in the college classroom.

4. The presentation used effective audio-visual aid to make its point.
5. All primary and secondary sources were cited properly.
6. The presentation is well organized with a beginning, middle, and end. There is a strong organizing theme, with clear main ideas and transitions.
7. The speakers used a clear voice and speak at a good pace so audience members can hear presentation. They did not read off slides (if used).
8. The speakers held the attention of audience with the use of direct eye contact, bodily language, and other oral delivery skills.
9. The speakers managed their time well and answered audience questions with explanation and elaboration.
10. The presentation demonstrated insight from a group conversation, not an individual project. The group worked together to deliver the collective statement well and effectively.