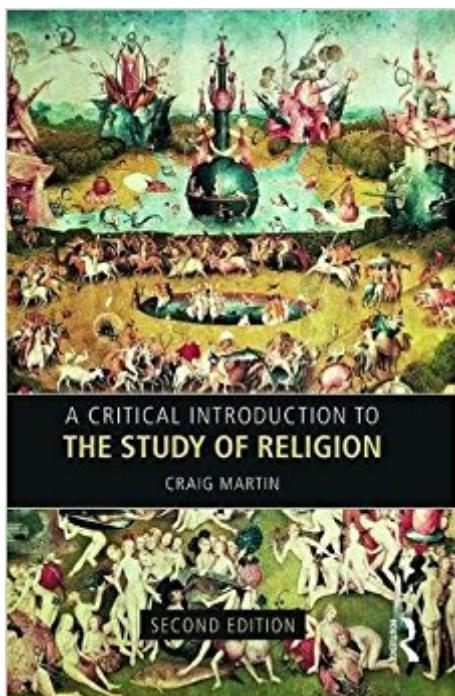


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# A Critical Introduction To The Study Of Religion



## **Synopsis**

A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion introduces the key concepts and theories from religious studies that are necessary for a full understanding of the complex relations between religion and society. The aim is to provide readers with an arsenal of critical concepts for studying religious ideologies, practices, and communities. This thoroughly revised second edition has been restructured to clearly emphasize key topics including: Essentialism Functionalism Authority Domination. All ideas and theories are clearly illustrated, with new and engaging examples and case studies throughout, making this the ideal textbook for students approaching the subject area for the first time.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

The best textbook for teaching an introductory course in religious studies has just gotten better with a new edition. Martin Ås ability to make critical theory not only understandable, but also useful, to beginning students, is the primary strength of his book. His choice of examples, illustrating the complex theoretical issues he addresses, guarantees student learning will be both significant and Ås dare I say it Ås enjoyable. Charles William Miller, University of North Dakota, USA Å A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion provides key strategies for disentangling the category "religion" and examining religious traditions as complex social phenomena. The text is an effective introduction to explanatory socio-functional approaches, which enable students to ask new sets of questions of their subject. The second edition is a comprehensive model for a new vision of Religious Studies. Kristian Petersen, University of

Nebraska Omaha, USA

Craig Martin is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at St. Thomas Aquinas College, USA.

This book is a fascinating survey of ideas relating to the study of religion. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it for my class, and I honestly think about the concepts and frameworks discussed in Martin's work often in my day-to-day life. I wish all of society could read this book; the insights it provides are truly profound. I would consider "A Critical Introduction" a must-read.

Craig Martin is beyond words. This text is not only a critical introduction to the study of Religion, but also to society and living life. It explains how our systems work and how they are reinforced. It made me think deeply and be able to articulately understand the way in which social norms are constructed and reified as well as authority, the habitus, and several other ideas. This book is PHENOMENAL. I already bought 5 copies to share with others. MUST READ

The book had a lot of helpful information in it but, the Kindle Edition had terrible formatting issues. Which made it hard to read some parts in the book.

Very interesting approach

A very good summary introduction to religion. It allows for a taste of the study and a direction for study.

This author has really great ideas, but the style is plodding and much too detailed. I was initially excited about his ideas but found that this book doesn't fit my needs for an Intro to Religious Studies text.

Martin's arguments tend to only be as strong as his examples. Much of the book is plagued by ill thought out examples that Martin fails to fully understand the implications of, particularly when attempting to explore issues of gender and sex as examples of his concepts. Conversely, his final chapter shows Martin at his best, as the book "In His Steps" provides Martin with a clear example to work with that requires little mental acrobatics to apply Martin's categories to. Furthermore, "In His Steps" works for Martin because criticizing it lacks the danger of marginalizing already marginalized

peoples like Martin's gender examples do, or of reinforcing Western views of religion and culture, as Martin nearly does when trying to use Navajo rituals as examples of Structure. This book is good for those with a pre-existing bias in favor of religion in terms of piercing those biases, but should not be taken at face value by anyone lacking a foundation in the field or outside information.

When one reads a book on comparative religion there are a few things they might expect. The first is an interesting read that is written in such a manner that you have trouble putting it down. In this regard, Martin succeeds perfectly. His book is written in such a way that it sucks you in and you've read it all in the space of roughly a day and aren't sure quite how that happened. So a point to this book there. Another thing you might expect is critical thinking in regards to the topics at hand. Martin certainly rises to the challenge, but I feel he falls short. He often starts looking at something in a novel and critical way, and then rapidly switches to another example that seems only loosely connected. It was as if he wanted to look at all the major faiths of the world, but then decided to only give them a cursory glance and assume he was an expert. Definitely loses points here, he may be clear about what he believes, but he is, in my opinion, bad at his follow through and bad at backing up his claims. Finally, you might (and should) expect that, regardless of personal beliefs, the author and text would, at least, be respectful of and, hopefully, be reverent of the faiths and cultures which are being investigated. As any good ethnographer knows, it is crucial to remain in an objective standpoint while also actively participating and respect is paramount. Martin, however, completely falls apart here. The entire book uses language and sentence structures that imply, very strongly, that no matter what one believes, this belief is flawed and foolish. The author comes off as arrogant and very clearly an atheist who only performed and gathered what little research they did in order to pick specific points to scoff at and belittle. I'm not a particularly religious person and various people in my class are agnostic or atheistic and we all found his oversimplification, glossing over of important and minute details, and word choice to be offensive and insensitive to those of faith. On this he loses almost all remaining points. If it weren't for this aspect I would give his book a 3 star review, it was an easy read that was clearly laid out, but it was a little shallow for my tastes in some places, that is forgivable; his complete and utter disrespect as well as his disregard for the subtle intricacies of various faiths, however, is not only unacceptable but also invalidating of his argument. For this reason, I can only give him two stars at best. It's not a bad read, but it is frustrating at points and, while supposedly scholarly, feels more like a fluff piece you would read on a beach than a critical analysis of religion from multiple perspectives.

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