

Some guidance when writing the book review

1. Read the book! While you should give some space to outlining the content, make sure that you *evaluate* the book's content. Ask the question – What is (or are) the author(s) trying to say? Then ask how clearly (or otherwise) they make the case and then evaluate whether or not the argument(s) is (are) convincing. The examiners will be looking for clear evidence that you have read the book.
2. If you can find other reviews of the book in academic journals (such as *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Numen*, *Religion*, or on the Web) then incorporate some of the analyses you find there into your answer. Work that demonstrates some level of research alongside reading the book will impress the examiners.
3. Book reviews sometimes refer to the scholarly field in general. This might be difficult for you, but you might like to try comparing the book with the content of other books you have read for the module.
4. Try to see what, if any, contribution the book makes to our understanding of the topic in religious studies. The examiners will be looking for knowledge and understanding as they read the review. This includes knowledge and understanding of the field *per se* as well as the book itself. Perhaps you can make reference to something you have read in other books or to something mentioned in the seminars or to something discussed in the lectures.
5. Remember, you are most concerned with religious studies and only secondarily with the content of the book. This highlights that the book review is to be more evaluative and critical than descriptive.
6. The book review should be formatted in the same way as the example.
7. Students will be tested on their understanding of the place of the book in the field study, their critical evaluation of the book's argument(s), clarity of presentation and autonomy of thought.