

guidance for writing the book review

1. Read / re-read the book (Rodrigues and Harding's *Introduction to the Study of Religion*. Routledge (2009))! While you should give some space to outlining the content, **make sure that you evaluate the book's content** (identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the book, followed by your overall academic judgment of it). Ask the question: What is main aim of the book? Then ask how clearly / adequately (or otherwise) do the authors present their study and then evaluate it (how valuable is the study?). The examiners will be looking for clear evidence that you have read the book and engaged with it critically.

2. It is important that your book review is very clearly structured as follows:

Introduction: overview and summary of the book.

Main body: evaluation of book, identifying main strengths and weaknesses, and possible comparison with other books.

Conclusion: your final academic 'judgment' of the book, and what you consider to the significance (or lack of) of the book.

It is worthwhile to compare the book with other published texts that aim to present the same kind of study (concerning the academic study of religion). Work that demonstrates some level of research alongside reading the book will impress the examiners. Many other books have been published (mainly edited volumes), such as the following:

[*The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*-OUP \(2016\)](#)

[*The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*-Blackwell \(2006\)](#)

[*The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*-Routledge \(2005\)](#)

It is important to note that the above texts are edited volumes (i.e. they comprise of various chapters authored by various writers), unlike the text you are reviewing: *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (which is written by the two authors: Rodrigues and Harding). There are many other texts that deal with very specific approaches to / methodologies in the study of religion, and you might want to compare specific chapters or issues examined within to these other texts. For example, Rodrigues & Harding discuss the problem(s) of defining 'religion' in the first chapter, which is an issue examined in much more detail in Crawford's book: [*What is Religion?* Routledge \(2002\)](#). Another example might be the discussion of the insider/outsider approach to the study of religion, which the authors address in various chapters in the book (mainly in chapters 2 and 6), whilst McCutcheon's edited volume examines different dimensions of this issue: [*The Insider-Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion. A Reader-Continuum* \(2005\)](#).

3. Developing an evaluation of the book is important, and examiners will be looking for this as it reflects a critical engagement with the text. What do you think are the main strengths and weaknesses of the book? For example, a reader might consider that the insider / outsider issue is a very significant one in the field of the study of religion. Whilst the authors do address this throughout the book, it might be a weakness that this is not addressed in a focused 'stand-alone' chapter. Another reader might not think this to be a significant weakness, hence it is important that you develop your own view(s) / reflections. Another potential weakness might be the way the book is structured (for example, consider chapter 5 in relation to the other chapters). What do you think was the most significant / interesting approach examined within the book, and why do you think that this is a strength? It is worthwhile to develop such a critical engagement by referencing other readings of the module (for example, you might consider that the authors' discussion of the 'psychological approaches' to be a particular strength, hence you might want to reference Main's chapter (in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*) in your discussion to support your view).

4. When writing your review, it is important that you show how you developed your views by engaging with other academic texts, and citing these in your review.

5. Try not to cite more than 5 academic (peer-reviewed) texts in your book reviewed, which should be listed in the bibliography.

6- The book review should not exceed 1000 words (excluding the bibliography). You are allowed to exceed the 1000-word limit by 10% only (i.e., if the book review is more than 1100 words, then there will be a penalty applied).