

“The best work in Religious Studies starts with definitions which, to the uninitiated, might seem like academic navel gazing. This important book provides a great entrée into that conversation and why it matters. In clear, concise responses to the question ‘what is religion?’ key thinkers in the field show the work done by classification systems that sort the ‘religious’ from the ‘not religious.’ They show what is hidden when definitions remain implicit and taken for granted and who benefits. This should become a key resource for the study of religion.”

—Julie Ingersoll, Professor of Philosophy & Religious Studies,
University of North Florida

Controversies over how to define the word “religion” have persisted for decades, culminating in those who now choose to study the word itself and not just what it is said to name. *What Is Religion? Debating the Academic Study of Religion* invites readers to eavesdrop on scholarly debates over the limits of, and uses for, a word commonly used but infrequently defined in a precise manner. This volume takes the temperature of the modern field of Religious Studies by inviting a diverse group of international scholars to offer their own substantive contribution that builds on the shared opening prompt, “Religion is . . .”

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