Atheism: A Very Short Introduction
Julian Baggini

Atheism is often considered to be a negative, dark, and pessimistic belief that is characterized by a rejection of values and purpose and a fierce opposition to religion. Atheism: A Very Short Introduction sets out to dispel the myths that surround atheism and show how a life without religious belief can be positive, meaningful, and moral. The book presents an intellectual case for atheism that rests as much upon positive arguments for its truth as on negative arguments against religion. It also confronts the failure of officially atheist states in the twentieth century.

Martyrdom: A Very Short Introduction
Jolyon Mitchell

Martyrdom: A Very Short Introduction provides a historical analysis of the concept of martyrdom to shed light on how it has evolved and the different ways in which it is used today. A sharply contested term and act, martyrdom has a long history of provoking controversy. Suicide attacks have made recurring questions about martyrdom more pertinent to current discussions. What is martyrdom? Why are some people drawn towards giving up their lives as martyrs? How are martyrs made and what place does religion play in inciting and creating martyrs? Why are some martyrs and martyrdoms remembered more than others? How helpful is the distinction between active and passive martyrdoms?

Monasticism: A Very Short Introduction
Stephen J. Davis

Monasticism is a social and religious phenomenon that originated in antiquity, which remains relevant in the 21st century. Monasticism: A Very Short Introduction discusses the
history of monasticism from the earliest evidence for it, and the different types that have
developed. It considers where monasteries are located around the world, and how their
settings impact the everyday life and worldview of the monks and nuns who dwell in them.
Exploring how monastic communities are organized, this VSI also looks at how all aspects
of life are regimented. Finally, it discusses what the stories about saints communicate
about monastic identity and ethics, and considers what place there is for monasticism in the
modern world.

Religion in America: A Very Short Introduction
Timothy Beal

Religion in America: A Very Short Introduction offers an overview of the history of religion
in America, from Native American traditions to the present day. Religion in contemporary
America takes many forms, including popular and counter-cultural groups; ‘hybrid’
religious identities; new religious movements; and ‘outsider religion’. Three major forces
shape the present and future of religion in America: first, unprecedented religious diversity,
which will continue to grow in the coming decades; second, the information revolution and
the emergence of a new network society; and third, the rise of consumer culture. Taken
together, these forces offer the potential to create a new American pluralism that could
enrich society in unimaginable ways.

Saints: A Very Short Introduction
Simon Yarrow

Saints: A Very Short Introduction looks at the origins, ideas, and definitions of sainthood,
sanctity, and saints in the early Church, tracing their development in history and explaining
the social roles saints played in the ancient, medieval, and modern worlds. It considers the
treatment of saints as objects of literary and artistic expression and interpretation, and as
examples of idealised male and female heroism, comparing Christian saints and holy figures
to venerated figures in other religious cultures, including Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism.
It concludes by considering the experiences of devotees to saints, and looking at how saints
continue to be a powerful presence in our modern world.