African American Religion: A Very Short Introduction
Eddie S. Glaude Jr.

African American Religion: A Very Short Introduction explores the history and circumstances of African American religion through three examples: conjure, African American Christianity, and African American Islam. It argues that the phrase “African American religion” is meaningful only insofar as it describes how through religion, African Americans have responded to oppressive conditions. This bold claim frames the interpretation of the historical record of diverse religious experiences in the African American community. The common tendency to racialize African American religious experiences as an inherent proclivity towards religiousness is rejected and instead the focus is on how religious communities and experiences have developed in the African American community and the context in which these developments took place.

Agnosticism: A Very Short Introduction
Robin Le Poidevin

Agnosticism: A Very Short Introduction asks if there is more to agnosticism than merely the absence of belief. What is agnosticism? Who were the first to call themselves ‘agnostics’? Agnosticism is something we encounter in science and ethics and should be considered as an historical and cultural phenomenon. It is not confined to the religious sphere. Some of the preconceptions and assumptions amongst both believers and non-atheists are examined and the philosophical case for agnosticism is set out. Agnosticism is a more complex attitude than simply a failure to either commit to, or reject, religious belief.

Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction
Malise Ruthven
Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction investigates its historical, social, religious, political, and ideological roots, and tackles the polemic and stereotypes surrounding this complex phenomenon — one that eludes simple definition, yet urgently needs to be understood. Since it was coined by American Protestant evangelicals in the 1920s, the use of the term ‘fundamentalist’ has expanded to include a diverse range of radical conservatives and ideological purists, not all religious. Fundamentalism could now mean both militant Israeli settlers as well as the Islamist radicals who oppose them, it can mean Christians, Hindus, animal liberationists, and even Buddhist nationalists.

Humanism: A Very Short Introduction
Stephen Law

Humanism: A Very Short Introduction explores how humanism uses science and reason to make sense of the world, looking at how it encourages individual moral responsibility and shows that life can have meaning without religion. Are atheism and humanism ‘faith positions’? Without God is there morality? Without God do we have a purpose? Religion is currently gaining a higher profile. The number of faith schools is increasing, and religious points of view are being aired more frequently. As religion's profile rises, those who reject religion can find themselves misunderstood and misrepresented. This VSI examines the arguments about the existence of God, and explores the role humanism plays in moral and secular societies.

Paganism: A Very Short Introduction
Owen Davies

This Very Short Introduction explores the meaning of paganism from the ancient world to the present day through a chronological overview of attitudes towards its practices and beliefs. Despite the expansion of Christianity and Islam, Pagan cultures continue to exist around the world, whilst in the West new formations of paganism constitute one of the fastest-growing religions. Focusing on paganism in Europe, but exploring the nature of paganism globally, this VSI looks at how Europeans discovered new cultures through colonial expansion, missionary work, and anthropological study. Contemporary social paganism can be a liberating and social force, and the idea of a global Pagan theology is now on the religious map.
Ritual is part of what it means to be human. It defines and enriches culture, but what is ritual? What are the various kinds of ritual? Is ritual tradition bound and conservative or innovative and transformational? Ritual: A Very Short Introduction describes a number of specific rites and explores ritual from theoretical and historical perspectives. It focuses on the places where ritual touches everyday life; shows how ritual is an important vehicle for group and identity formation; how it generates and transmits beliefs and values; how it can be used to exploit and oppress; and how it has served as a touchstone for thinking about cultural origins and historical change.

Secularism: A Very Short Introduction
Andrew Copson

Until the modern period, the integration of church and state had been taken for granted. But from the 18th century onwards, some European states began to set up their political order on a different basis. The rule of law through non-religious values embedded in constitutions became the foundation of some states—a movement we now call secularism. Secularism: A Very Short Introduction tells the story of secularism and considers the role of secularism when engaging with some of the most contentious political and legal issues of our time: ‘blasphemy’, ‘apostasy’, religious persecution, religious discrimination, religious schools, and freedom of belief and freedom of thought in a divided world.

Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction
Philip Sheldrake

Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction explores the historical foundations of spirituality and considers how it came to have the significance it is developing today. It has been suggested that ‘spirituality’ has become a word that ‘can define an era’. Why? Because paradoxically, alongside a decline in traditional religious affiliations, the growing interest in spirituality is a striking aspect of contemporary western cultures. Spirituality refers to the deepest values and sense of meaning by which people seek to live. Sometimes these values are conventionally religious. Sometimes they are associated with what is understood as ‘the sacred’ in a broader sense — that is, of ultimate rather than merely instrumental importance.
Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction
Malcolm Gaskill

Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction explores why witches still feature so heavily in our cultures and consciousness. From childhood most of us develop a sense of the mysterious, malign person, usually an old woman. Tracing the history of witchcraft from the ancient world to contemporary paganism, this VSI reveals how it has meant different things to different people and that in every age it has raised questions about the distinction between fantasy and reality, faith and proof. It uses stories, court records, and myths to examine the witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and explores the reinvention of witchcraft — as history, religion, fiction, and metaphor.