Modern Analysis of Religion
REL 6013
Mondays 6:25-9:05pm
Fall 2012

Room: PC 425
Instructor: Whitney Bauman
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Office Hours: By appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Religion, if nothing else, is about re-reading and re-connecting human beings into some sort of meaningful narrative about reality. In this sense, religion is part of what it means to be human: regardless as to whether one is atheist, agnostic, or a believer that identifies with some sort of faith tradition, we all, as human beings make meaning out of our daily lives. Furthermore, religion has historically shaped societal institutions such as economics and politics and therefore, the study of these religious influences is important. Finally, religions matter bodies in the world: they shape what becomes societal norms for eating, dressing, sexuality, gender, race, and relationships to the rest of the natural world. This course is a seminar-style course aimed at introducing MA students to the various issues associated with the contemporary study of religion. We will explore methods in religious studies from the 19th century to the present and ask questions such as: What is religion and why does it matter? How does religion function in our daily lives to affect institutions, identity, and the rest of the natural world? How does the context of globalization and the plurality of religious expressions change the identity of religious traditions? What new expressions of religion are emerging in the context of what contemporary sciences tell us about the human being and the rest of the natural world around us?

AIM OF THE COURSE
This course will provide students with the theoretical tools and methods for analyzing the function of religion in contemporary societies, and will provide critical thinking skills for dealing with multi-religions in a given context.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
On completing this course, students will know the relevant “methods” used in the academic study of religion and be familiar with some of the research tools of the field. Furthermore, each student will be given the tools to critically analyze the ways in which religions (and meaning-making practices in

1 Syllabus is subject to change. Required purchased text, course requirements, and course time will not change, but some of the reading materials may depending on the context of the Fall 2010 semester.
general) effect institutions, bodies, daily life, and human relationships with the rest of the natural world.

**REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Class Participation—30%**

The first step to doing well in this class is to show up! You can’t be a part of the learning community if you are not present. If you have to be absent from the course, please notify me ahead of time. Any more than two absences (unless there are extenuating circumstances) will result in a lowering of your participation grade. One absence is a free-bee. The second you must justify to me. *(Just attending all sessions gets you 10 points.)*

The second step to doing well in this course is to read the materials. I trust that you will read the materials for each week’s class. **Further, each of you will sign up for one date to lead the group reading discussion. (This will count for 10 points)**

The third step to doing well in the class is to speak up during course discussions. I realize that we all exist on a spectrum between introversion and extroversion, but remember that the classroom is as good as all of the voices therein. We all lose if we don’t hear your voice at some point(s) throughout the semester. *(This will count for 10 points)*

The classroom is a community of learners. That is, we are all in the process of critically engaging the lectures and course materials together. Learning should be a collaborative process and it will take all of us to learn this semester. Having said that there are some ground rules that should be followed in course discussions and assignments.

1. **Confidentiality:** Sometimes we are exploring serious issues in the course that may be hard to speak about or give voice too. I expect that students will respect one another’s privacy in this course and allow room for this type of exploration.

2. **Trust and Respect:** The classroom is a learning community and it is only as good as the relationships of the people that make up the classroom. Give your classmates the benefit of the doubt before jumping to conclusions about what is said. Also, be sure to state your opinions, questions, ideas and beliefs in a way that is not intentionally disrespectful to others in the class.

3. **Academic Honesty:** In all written materials, students will be expected to cite sources. Plagiarizing and “Copying” from other students may result in a failing grade. Grading for written assignments will follow the Rubric that is handed out on the first day.

4. **Students** should be aware of everyone in the classroom and enable each person to contribute to the conversation. Likewise, each participant should refrain from dominating class discussion.

5. **In order to facilitate dialogue, on discussion days we may break out into small groups.**

3. **Investigation of an Academic Journal: Research Methods—30%**

Each student is expected to research a peer-reviewed, academic journal in the field of Religious Studies. There are plenty in the FIU library. Please ok your journal with me during class on **September 10th**. The point of the project is to look over the publication history of the journal and answer the following three (interrelated) questions in 5-7 pages: 1) Give a history of the journal: where is it published, what academic fields are represented in the journal, who are the primary (if any) theoretical figures that publish in it, and what questions does it explore. 2) Given the Editorial Mission of the journal, what are two major issues or debates that the journal has focused on in the last 10 years? (pick two) And 3) How does the journal problematize the issue of “religion”: is it theoretical / religious, practical, economic, sociological, etc.? Included here may be the description(s)
of the way the journal examines religion: comparative, single tradition, religion in some broader sense, religion and culture, religion and gender, etc? Using the Three subheadings, your analysis should be 5-7 pages, double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 inch font. These will be shared with other members of the course and turned into me on September 24th, so bring enough copies for the whole class (or we can choose to share them on blackboard). We will discuss them during class on October 1st. The point of this project is to analyze various ways of looking at the study of religion from academic perspectives. It should be seen as a way, also, to help you focus in on a method for your final paper.

4. Final Paper—40%
Each student is expected to write a final paper for the course of no more than 20 pages. This paper should use one or more of the methodological approaches in the course to analyze a contemporary issue such as: religious responses to sexuality, gender, or race; religious responses to evolution or other issues in modern science; inter-religious conflicts; critical analyses of the role of religion in economics, globalization, or (historically) colonization; problems in the contemporary interpretation of religious texts; religion, peace and conflict; religion and war; the rise of fundamentalism in the face of Western Modernity; analyzing “environmentalism,” “sports,” and other emerging meaning making practices from a particular method; or critically analyzing the value of one or two methods discussed in the course. These are just examples and other topics are welcomed. The abstract for this paper will be due in class on October 8th. We will all discuss these abstracts on October 15th. The final paper will be due on December 6, 2012, by 5:00pm.

PLAGIARISM POLICY
This course adheres strictly to FIU’s plagiarism policy:

This Policy views plagiarism as one form of academic misconduct, and adopts the definition of the university’s Code of Academic Integrity, according to which plagiarism is:

the deliberate use and appropriation of another’s works without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for the ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is guilty of plagiarism.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Term papers acquired online or from other sources;
2. Copying of original material without attribution;
3. Use of other students’ work;
4. Copying and pasting, verbatim, information from Internet sources, without quotation marks and correct citation.

Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and a referral to the College of Arts and Sciences Dean of Students for academic misconduct.

GRADING SCALE
A  96-100  C  72-77
REQUIRED TEXTS
Seth Kunin, *Theories of Religion: A Reader* (Rutgers University Press, 2006) TOR

IMPORTANT WEB RESOURCES
American Academy of Religion: [www.aarweb.org](http://www.aarweb.org)
Religion in the Schools: [http://www.aarweb.org/Public_Affairs/Religion_in_the_Schools/default.asp](http://www.aarweb.org/Public_Affairs/Religion_in_the_Schools/default.asp)
Religion and Science: [www.counterbalance.org](http://www.counterbalance.org)
Religion and Ecology: [http://forc.research.yale.edu/](http://forc.research.yale.edu/)
Religion and Nature: [www.religionandnature.com](http://www.religionandnature.com)
Religion and Race: [http://dlxs2.library.cornell.edu/r/racrel/](http://dlxs2.library.cornell.edu/r/racrel/)
BBC, Religions: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/)

IMPORTANT DATES
August 20: Choose Discussion Date
September 10: Choose Journal To Research
September 24: Journal Research due to rest of class
October 1: Discussion of Journal Research
October 8: Turn in Abstracts
October 15: Discussion of Abstracts
December 6: Final Paper Due
SCHEDULE

**Week 1, August 20:** Introduction: History of “Religious Studies”; go over course syllabus.

Online Reading: “Guideline for Teaching Religion in the Public Schools” (40 pages)

**Choose Discussion Weeks**

**Week 2, August 27:** Historical Sources of Major Perspectives
   Library Research Guide
   **Reading:** Pals, 3-123.

**September 3, Labor Day, No classes!**

**Week 3, September 10:** Phenomenology and Symbols
   Field Research Workshop
   **Reading:** Kunin, 109-174.

**Choose Journal to Research**

**Week 4, September 17:** Phenomenology, Symbols, and Materialism (The Death of God/Transcendence)
   **Reading:** 124-197.

**Week 5, September 24:** Anthropological Approaches
   **Reading:** Kunin, 175-296.

**Distribute Journal Research to Other Class Members**

**Week 6, October 1:** Socio-Cultural Approaches
   **Reading:** Pals 198-267.

**Discussion of Journal Research in Class**

**Week 7, October 8:** Psychological Approaches
   **Reading:** Kunin, 435-498.

**Turn in Abstracts**

**Week 8, October 15:** Critical, Secular, Perspectives: Methods
   **Reading:** RTR, Part I: Map

**Discuss Paper Abstracts in Class**
Week 9, October 22: Critical, Secular, Perspectives: Focus, Religion and “The Public Sphere”
Reading: RTR, Part II: Text.

Week 10, October 29: Critical, Secular, Perspectives: Focus, Gender, Sexuality, and Race
Reading: RTR, Part III: Body.

Week 11, November 5: A Post-Structural Methodology: God After God
Reading: Kearney, 1-100.

Week 12, November 12: A Post-Structural Method: God After God
Reading: Kearney, 101-186.

November 19, 2012: AAR meeting in Chicago. No class work on Final papers during this time and catch up on readings!

Week 13, November 26: A Contemporary Approach to Religious Pluralism
Reading: Tweed, 1-122.

Week 14, December 3: A Contemporary Approach to Religious Pluralism
Reading: Tweed, 122-186.

Final Papers due by Thursday, December 6, 5pm.