Instructor: Steven M. Vose  
Class Hours: R 5:00-7:40
Office: DM 359-A  
Classroom: DM 193
Office Hours: T 12:30-1:45, R 3:30-5:00, or by appointment
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Course Description:
This Seminar will examine some of the most influential theories and methodologies in the study of religion. Beginning with an investigation into the historical meanings of “religion” and the modern construction of it as a discrete category of academic discourse and object of analysis, the course will proceed to examine some of the major works that have brought various perspectives to bear on the development of new theories of religion or of aspects of religious behavior. The theories and schools investigated in this seminar include: phenomenology, mysticism, psychoanalysis, history of religions, sociology, anthropology, feminism, lived religion, structuralism and post-structuralism. Each theoretical work is paired with a salient critique to show how the field has developed and continues to progress. Additionally, students will practice formal writing in Religious Studies using Chicago citation styles. Students lead class discussions and present their research papers at the end of the course.

Course Objectives:
• To introduce students to several influential theories and methodologies in the academic study of religion and the critiques of those theories.
• To learn how knowledge about religion is constructed, disseminated, critiqued and advanced in academia.
• To foster critical thinking skills that will help students to evaluate claims and arguments.
• To build formal writing and presentation skills, including proper attribution of sources.
• To introduce students to graduate-level library research techniques.

Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this course, students will:
• Be able to summarize and critically evaluate the positions of a number of influential theories of religion or aspects of religious behavior.
• Have led a seminar discussion on a set of readings and presented an outline of them.
• Build formal writing and citation skills through response papers and a research project.
• Know how to conduct library research using article databases and library resources.

Course Grading, Requirements and Expectations:
1. Weekly Response Papers, 800-1,000 words, due Wednesdays at 11:59 PM. (25%)
2. Class Participation: Attendance, Discussion, and Final Presentation (25%)
3. Discussion Leader and 1,000-1,200-word review (sign-up in class) (20%)
4. Research Paper, 4,000-5,000 words, topic selected with instructor (30%)
The grade for the paper will be broken down as follows:

a. Paper Topic: Due Fri., Sep. 23 at 11:59 PM (5%)
b. Annotated Bibliography: Due Fri., Oct. 28 at 11:59 PM (5%)
c. Title & Abstract: Due Fri., Nov. 18 at 11:59 PM (5%)
d. Final Draft: Due Fri., Dec. 9 at 11:59 PM (85%)

-Weekly Response Papers take the place of exams. They are due on the Wednesday of each week at 11:59 PM, posted to Turnitin dropboxes on Blackboard. These consist of two parts: 1) Summarize the central argument of the main reading(s) for the week, demonstrating your understanding of the main ideas in one or more of the readings; 2) Address any aspect of that week’s readings relevant to your own interests in the study of religion. Citations from the readings and a reference(s) page in a Chicago style (notes-bibliography or author-date) are required. No outside research is needed, though readings marked “Optional” may be consulted and cited for clarification—they should not be discussed at length, however. These papers are your opportunity to raise questions that you wish to discuss in class and to organize your thoughts for a more productive class discussion. You are encouraged to make connections between readings within and across weekly topics. Late response papers will receive no credit.

-Class Participation is crucial to a successful seminar. This is the course in which you transition from student to scholar by working collaboratively with your colleagues to understand the texts and to develop your individual research questions. Come to class with the readings completed; bring questions and make connections with other readings. Mark passages that speak to a particular topic of class or personal interest, or that were difficult to understand. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in the discussion. The December 8 class meeting will be a symposium in which students will make 10-minute presentations of their research with 5 minutes for questions; it comprises 10% of the total participation grade.

-Each student will Lead Discussion of one week’s readings. A sign-up sheet will be circulated during the second class meeting. The weekly discussion leader must submit to Turnitin by the Friday at 11:59 PM of his/her week (that is, the day after the class meeting) a review of 1,000-1,200 words, to be subsequently distributed to the class, summarizing the main reading(s) for that week, highlighting its (their) contributions to the field of scholarship, and explaining the critiques of the theory. During the class meeting, the discussion leader should present a 10-minute summary of the main text(s) and generate questions for class discussion. Additionally, the presenter should give a brief overview of the scholar’s (or scholars’) career, referencing other major writings. The discussion leader does not have to submit a response paper on the week that s/he leads class discussion. In the case that more than one student must present in class on a given week, please consult with the instructor about how to divide the written work.

-The Research Paper will be due on Friday, December 9 at 11:59 PM, posted to Turnitin. There are deadlines to submit a topic, annotated bibliography, and abstract (all submitted to Turnitin) over the course of the semester (see above). Students must discuss their paper topics with the instructor (during office hours) by Thursday, October 6. Additionally, papers must be properly referenced using a Chicago citation system. See below for the policy on late papers.

Policies:
1. Written assignments must be double-spaced, with 1” margins all around, in 12-point, Times New Roman (or equivalent) font.
2. **Late papers** (i.e., reviews and assignments related to the final research paper) will lose a full letter grade per day and will not be accepted after four days beyond the due date. **Late weekly response papers will not be accepted.**

3. All student work must conform to University policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the assignment or course, and may include referral for disciplinary measures.

4. Work will be graded only if posted to the proper Turnitin dropbox; the instructor will not grade work submitted by email. In cases of technical difficulties, the work may be emailed to confirm on-time submission *only*. In such cases, the work must be submitted to Turnitin within 12 hours of the original due date/time without changes to the emailed document.

5. Students should expect that their views and opinions will be challenged, both by the instructor and fellow classmates. Students should expect to feel that they are being pushed out of their “comfort zone” to some extent in the interest of learning. To create a rich and safe learning environment, we must foster an atmosphere of respect for the various perspectives each of us brings to the seminar.

**Grading scale** (*note that grading scales have changed for 2016-17 across FIU*):

A 93-100  A- 90-92  B+ 87-89  B 83-86  B- 80-82  C+ 77-79  
C 73-76  D 60-72  F 0-59

**Required Texts** (These are also on Course Reserve at Green Library [GL]):


- All other readings are on Blackboard (Bb) or are e-books available through the library website.

**Recommended Texts:**

These books are very helpful references for some of the most important foundational theorists of religion. Several readings from these volumes are posted on Blackboard as weekly readings.


Schedule of Readings and Class Meetings:
* “OPTIONAL” readings supplement and summarize the main readings for the week. They may aid in understanding of the main texts but should not be discussed at length in response papers.
* “Further Reading” books provide additional resources to aid in developing research topics.

**Constructing “Religion”**

Week 1 (Aug. 25):
- **Class:** Introductions, Overview of course, Sign-up for discussion leaders

Week 2 (Sep. 1):
- **Reading:** 1) W.C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (esp. chs. 1-3, 5, 6, 8); 2) T. Asad, “Reading a Modern Classic: W.C. Smith’s *The Meaning and End of Religion,*” 18 pp. (Bb).
- **Further Reading:** T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, Johns Hopkins, 1993.

**Phenomenology and the “Scientific Study of Religion”**

Week 3 (Sep. 8):

Week 4 (Sep. 15):
- **Reading:** Psychoanalysis and the “Origin” of Religion: Sigmund Freud
  1) Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*;
- **OPTIONAL:** 1) Amy Hollywood, “Acute Melancholia,” 22 pp.; *Amy Hollywood, Acute Melancholia - Address at Harvard Divinity School* (A webcast of this lecture);
  2) Olson, “Psychology of Religion” (Bb).

Week 5 (Sep. 22):
- **Reading:** Myth, Time, and History (of Religions): Mircea Eliade
  1) Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*;
- **OPTIONAL:** Olson, “History of Religions” (Bb).

**Historicism I: Sociology of Religion**
Week 6 (Sep. 29): Marx and Weber on Religion and Society

Structuralism: Language and Society
Week 7 (Oct. 6): Structural Anthropology: Claude Lévi-Strauss
Last day to consult with instructor about your paper topic
OPTIONAL: Olson, “Anthropology of Religion” (Bb).
Further Reading: Durkheim, The Elementary forms of Religious Life; C.S. Pierce, The Collected Writings of C.S. Pierce; J.L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words.

Anthropology of Religion
Week 8 (Oct. 13): Structural Analysis from the Field: Clifford Geertz
*Use Turabian, Chs. 18-19 for author-date style citation system.

Week 9 (Oct. 20): Library Workshop with Stephanie Brenenson (Instructor at Conference)

Historicism II: Post-structuralism: Language and Practices
Week 10 (Oct. 27): Post-Structuralism, I: Foucault and the Conditions of Knowledge
Annotated Bibliography Due Friday, Oct. 28 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard
OPTIONAL: 1) Olson, “Poststructural/Postmodern Approaches to Religion,” 10 pp.;
2) Foucault, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx;” “Return to History” (all on Bb).
Further Reading: M. Foucault, The Order of Things and Discipline & Punish.

Week 11 (Nov. 3):
Post-Structuralism, II: Bourdieu and the Social Sciences
Reading:
2) Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed,” 44 pp.;
Further Reading: P. Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice and The Logic of Practice.

Feminism and Subjectivity
Week 12 (Nov. 10):
The Contested Female Religious Subject
Reading:
1) Mernissi, Introduction and Ch. 5 “The Hijab, The Veil” from The Veil and the Male Elite, 28 pp.;
2) Mahmood, Ch. 1 “The Subject of Freedom” and Ch. 2 “Topography of the Piety Movement” from The Politics of Piety, 78 pp. (all on Bb).
Further Reading: J. Butler, Gender Trouble; R. Reuther, Women and Redemption.

Postmodern Ethics
Week 13 (Nov. 17):
Postmodern Theology, Planetary Ethics, and Meaning Making
Title and Abstract Due Friday, Nov. 18 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard
Reading:
1) Bauman, Religion & Ecology;
2) Review of Religion & Ecology (TBA) (Bb).

Week 14 (Nov. 24):
NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

The Politics of Representation
Week 15 (Dec. 1):
“Representing” Religious People and Reflecting on Fieldwork
Reading:
1) Edward Said, Introduction to Orientalism, 28 pp.;
2) Robert A. Orsi, Preface and Ch. 3 “Imagining Women” from Thank You, St. Jude, 33 pp.;
3) Robert A. Orsi, Introduction and Ch. 5 “Reflections on Fieldwork in Chicago” from Between Heaven and Earth, 48pp. (all on Bb).

Presentations
Week 16 (Dec. 8):
Student Research Paper Symposium

Final Research Paper due Friday, December 9 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard