**Instructor:** Steven M. Vose  
**Class Hours:** TR 11:00-12:15  
**Office:** DM 359-A  
**Office Hours:** W 3:00-4:00, R 3:30-5:00, or by appointment  
**Classroom:** GC 288  
**email:** svose@fiu.edu

### Course Description:
This Capstone 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, 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. Students lead class discussions and present their research papers at the end of the course.

### Course Grading and Requirements:
1. **Weekly Response Papers**, 2-3 pages, due Mondays at 11:59 PM. (25%)
2. Class Participation (25%)
3. Discussion Leader and 4-page outline (sign-up 1st class) (20%)
4. Research Paper, 12-15 pages, topic selected with instructor (30%)

   The grade for the paper will be broken down as follows:
   a. Paper Topic: Due Thu., Feb. 6 at 11:59 PM (5%)
   b. Annotated Bibliography: Due Thu., Mar. 6 at 11:59 PM (5%)
   c. Title & Abstract: Due Thu., Apr. 3 at 11:59 PM (5%)
   d. Final Draft: Due Thu., Apr. 24 at 11:59 PM (85%)

- **Weekly Response Papers** take the place of a final exam. They are **due on the Monday of each week at 11:59 PM**, posted to Blackboard. They must first demonstrate your understanding of the main ideas in one or more of the readings (cite passages!), but may also address any aspect of that week’s readings relevant to your interests. This is a place to raise questions that you wish to discuss in class and to organize your thoughts for a more productive class discussion. Students are encouraged to make connections between readings within and across weekly topics. Late 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 must
attend all class meetings; absences will only be excused in case of extenuating circumstances with appropriate documentation.

- Each student will lead discussion of one week’s readings. A sign-up sheet will be circulated during the first class meeting. The weekly discussion leader must submit to Blackboard by the Friday at 11:59 PM of his/her week an outline of no more than four pages to be distributed to the class, summarizing the main reading(s) for that week, highlighting their contributions to the field of scholarship, and explaining the critiques of the theory. The discussion leader should present a 10-minute summary of the main text and generate questions to facilitate class discussion. Additionally, the presenter should give a brief overview of the scholar’s 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.

- The Research Paper will be due on Thursday, April 24 at 11:59 PM, posted to Blackboard. The final week of class will be a symposium in which students will make 10-minute presentations of their research with 5 minutes for questions. There are deadlines to submit a topic, annotated bibliography, and abstract (all submitted to Blackboard) over the course of the semester (see above). Students must discuss their paper topics with the instructor by Thursday, February 27. Late papers will lose a full letter grade for each day they are late, and will in no case be accepted after four days beyond the due date. No extensions will be granted.

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

*Bold terms indicate how readings will be marked in the Schedule of Readings below.*


- All other readings are on Blackboard (Bb) or are e-books available through the library website. Many readings are taken from Carl Olson, Theory and Method in the Study of Religion (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2002). All chapters from this book are posted to Bb.

Schedule of Readings and Class Meetings:

**Constructing “Religion”**

Week 1 (Jan 6-10): What is “Religion”? How (and Why) Do We Study It?

- Tuesday: Introductions, Overview of course, Sign-up for discussion leaders

Week 2 (Jan 13-17): From “Religion” to “Religious Traditions”

Phenomenology and the Scientific Study of Religion

Week 3 (Jan 20-24): Mysterium Tremendum: Phenomenology and Mysticism
Read for Tue: Olson, pp. 100-106, 124-156: Ch. 4, “Phenomenology and the Science of Religion;”
G. van der Leeuw, “From Religion in Essence and Manifestation;”
R. Plantinga, “Counterpoint;”
N. Smart, “From Dimensions of the Sacred;”
D. Wiebe, “Counterpoint” (Bb).
T. Idinopulos, “Counterpoint” (Bb).

Week 4 (Jan 27-31): Psychoanalysis and the “Origins” of Religion
Read for Tue: 1) Olson, pp. 342-353, Ch. 8, “Psychology of Religion” (Bb); 2) Freud, Totem and Taboo, Chs. 1-2.
Read for Thu: 1) Freud, Totem and Taboo, Chs. 3-4.

Week 5 (Feb 3-7): Myth, Time, and History (of Religions)
Paper Topic Due Thursday, Feb. 6 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard
Read for Thu: 1) Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return, Chs. 3-4;

Marxism and the Sociology of Religion
Week 6 (Feb 10-14): Marx (and Engels) on Religion and Society

Week 7 (Feb 17-21): Max Weber and the Sociology of Religion

Anthropology
Week 8 (Feb 24-28): Cultural Analysis from the Field: Clifford Geertz
Read for Tue: 1) Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture,” 27 pp.;
2) Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” 41 pp. (both from The Interpretation of Cultures) (Bb).
Read for Thu: 1) Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” (from The Interpretation of Cultures), 39 pp.;

**Language and Structure**

Week 9 (Mar 3-7): Structural Anthropology: Claude Lévi-Strauss

**Annotated Bibliography Due Thursday, Mar. 6 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard**

Read for Tue: 1) Lévi-Strauss, Introduction: “History and Anthropology” (from Structural Anthropology), 27 pp. (Bb).

Read for Thu: 1) Lévi-Strauss, Ch. 2, “Structural Analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology” from Structural Anthropology, (23 pp.);
2) Olson, pp. 325-341: Lévi-Strauss, “From Structural Anthropology;” I. Strenski, “Counterpoint” (Bb).

Week 10 (Mar 10-14): NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK!!! ENJOY!!!

Week 11 (Mar 17-21): NO CLASS—Instructor at Conference (Work on Research Papers)

Week 12 (Mar 24-28): Post-Structuralism: The Conditions of Knowledge

Read for Tue: 1) Olson, pp. 548-557: Preface to Ch. 11, “Poststructural/Postmodern Approaches to Religion;”
2) Foucault, “Truth and Power” (from Power/Knowledge), 24 pp.;
3) Olson, pp. 579-584: G. Harpham, “Counterpoint” (Bb).

Read for Thu: 1) Foucault, “Governmentality,” 10 pp.;
2) Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique,” 17 pp.;
OPTIONAL: “Interview with Thomas Lemke: Foucault Today,” 6 pp.;

**Feminism and Subjectivity**

Week 13 (Mar 31-Apr 4): Performativity and the Female Religious Subject

**Title and Abstract Due Thursday, Apr. 3 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard**

Read for Tue: Butler, Gender Trouble, Pts. 1-2
Read for Thu: 1) Butler, Gender Trouble, Pt. 3 and Conclusion;
2) W. Brown, Introduction to Is Critique Secular?, 12 pp.;

**The Politics of Representation**

Week 14 (Apr 7-11): ‘Representing’ Religious People and Reflecting on Fieldwork

Read for Tue: Edward Said, Introduction to Orientalism, 28 pp. (Bb).
Read for Thu: 1) Robert A. Orsi, Preface and Ch. 3 “Imagining Women” from Thank You, St. Jude, 33 pp.;
2) Robert A. Orsi, Introduction and Ch. 5 “Reflections on Fieldwork in Chicago” from Between Heaven and Earth, 48 pp. (Bb).

Week 15 (14-18): Summation of Course and Student Research Symposium

**Final Research Paper due Thursday, April 24 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard**