

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Department of Religious Studies
Capstone Seminar: Theory and Methods in the Study of Religion
REL 4030
Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Steven M. Vose
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Class Hours: TR 2:00-3:15
Classroom: CP 107

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 established various 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; successive weekly readings build from and critique those of previous weeks. 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 8:00 PM. (25%)
2. Class Attendance and Participation (25%)
3. Discussion Leader and 4-page outline (sign-up 1st class) (20%)
4. Research Paper, 4-5,000 words, topic selected with instructor (30%)
 - a. Paper Topic: Due Thu., Feb. 19 at 11:59 PM (5%)
 - b. Annotated Bibliography: Due Thu., Mar. 26 at 11:59 PM (5%)
 - c. Title & Abstract: Due Thu., Apr. 9 at 11:59 PM (5%)
 - d. Final Draft: Due Tue., Apr. 28 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 8:00 PM**, posted to Blackboard. They must first demonstrate your understanding of the main ideas in one or more of the readings (cite passages!), but should 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 Attendance and 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 illness, emergency, or school-sanctioned event 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 made available 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. 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* is **due on Tuesday, April 28 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, March 5**. 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.

Policies:

1. Late papers will lose a full letter grade per day and will not be accepted after four days beyond the due date. This does not apply to weekly Response Papers (see above).
2. All student work must conform to University policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment or course, as well as disciplinary measures.

Grading scale:

A 93-100	A- 90-92	B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82	C+ 77-79
C 73-76	C- 70-72	D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62	F 0-59

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.

-Wilfred **Cantwell Smith**, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Fortress Press, 1991 [1965]), ISBN: 978-0-800-62475-0. Call no.: BL51 .S587 1978

-Rudolf **Otto**, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford, 1958 [1923]), ISBN: 0-19-500210-5. Call no.: BL48 .O82 1950

-Sigmund **Freud**, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Norton, 2010), ISBN: 978-0-393-30451-0. Call no.: BF173 .F6813 2010

-Mircea **Eliade**, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, Or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton UP, 2005 [1954]), ISBN: 978-0-691-12350-9. Call no.: BD701 .E3813 1954

-Max **Weber**, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* (Penguin, 2002 [1930]), ISBN: 978-0-140-43921-2. Call no.: BR115 .C3 W413 2002

-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 13-15): What is "Religion"? How (and Why) Do We Study It?

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

Read for Thu: Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," from *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 10 pp. (Bb and e-book).

Week 2 (Jan 20-22): From "Religion" to "Religious Traditions": W.C. Smith

Read for Tue: W.C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Chs. 2, 3, 5 (pp. 15-79, 119-153).

Read for Thu: 1) W.C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Chs. 6, 8 (pp. 154-169, 193-202);

2) T. Asad, "Reading a Modern Classic: W.C. Smith's *The Meaning and End of Religion*," 18 pp. (Bb).

Phenomenology and the "Scientific Study of Religion"

Week 3 (Jan 27-29): Phenomenology and Mysticism: Rudolf Otto

Read for Tue: Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Chs. 1-9 (pp. 1-71);

OPTIONAL: Olson, pp. 100-124, Ch. 4: "Phenomenology and the Science of Religion" (Bb).

Read for Thu: 1) Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Chs. 14-17, 21 (pp. 109-142, 175-178);

2) L. E. Schmidt, "The Making of Modern 'Mysticism,'" 29 pp. (Bb).

Week 4 (Feb 3-5): Psychoanalysis and the "Origins" of Religion: Sigmund Freud

Read for Tue: Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Chs. 1-5 (pp. 23-101);

OPTIONAL: Olson, pp. 342-353, Ch. 8: "Psychology of Religion" (Bb).

Read for Thu: 1) Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Chs. 6-8 (pp. 103-149);

2) Kroeber, "*Totem and Taboo* in Retrospect," 6 pp. (Bb).

Week 5 (Feb 10-12): Myth, Time, and History (of Religions): Mircea Eliade

Read for Tue: Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-92);

OPTIONAL: Olson, pp. 157-160, Ch. 5: "History of Religions," (Bb).

Read for Thu: 1) Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Chs. 3-4 (pp. 93-162);

2) Northrup Frye, "Review: World Enough without Time," 8 pp. (Bb).

Marxism and the Sociology of Religion

Week 6 (Feb 17-19): Religion and Society: Karl Marx (and F. Engels)

Paper Topic Due Thursday, Feb. 19 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard

Read for Tue: 1) Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," 9 pp.;

2) Marx, "Estranged Labor," 10 pp.;

3) Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 31 pp. (all on Bb).

Read for Thu: 1) Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," 3 pp.;

2) Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, Preface, Parts A & B, and selections from Ch. 3: "On Religion," "Individuals and Their Relationships," "The Family," "Consciousness Changing..." and "Communists on Selfishness and Selflessness," 25 pp. (all on Bb).

Week 7 (Feb 24-26): Sociology of Religion: Max Weber

Read for Tue: Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Part I: “The Problem,” pp. 1-66 (notes on pp. 43-66).

Read for Thu: 1) Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Part II: “The Practical Ethics of the Ascetic Branches of Protestantism,” pp. 67-202 (notes on pp. 128-202);
2) Kalberg, “On the Neglect of Weber’s Protestant Ethic as a Theoretical Treatise,” 21 pp. (Bb).

Language and Structure

Week 8 (Mar 3-5): Structural Anthropology: Claude Lévi-Strauss

Deadline to discuss your paper topic with the instructor, Thursday, Mar. 5

Read for Tue: 1) de Saussure, Ch. 3, “The Object of Linguistics,” (from *A Course in General Linguistics*), 10 pp.;
2) Lévi-Strauss, “Introduction: History and Anthropology” (from *Structural Anthropology*), 27 pp. (all on Bb).

Read for Thu: 1) Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth” (from *Structural Anthropology*), 25 pp.;
2) I. Strenski, “Counterpoint” (from Olson), 10 pp. (all on Bb).

Week 9 (Mar 10-12): NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK!!! ENJOY!!!

Week 10 (Mar 17-19): Research Workshop with Stephanie Brenenson

Tuesday: Workshop with Stephanie Brenenson on Library Resources for Research Papers in Religious Studies

Thursday: NO CLASS—Instructor at Conference (Work on Research Paper)

Anthropology

Week 11 (Mar 24-26): Cultural Analysis from the Field: Clifford Geertz

Annotated Bibliography Due Thursday, Mar. 26 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard

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*) (all on Bb).

Read for Thu: 1) Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” (from *The Interpretation of Cultures*), 39 pp.;
2) T. Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category (from *Genealogies of Religion*), 27 pp. (Bb).

Week 12 (Mar 31- Apr 2): 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,” 21 pp.;
2) Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique,” 17 pp.;
OPTIONAL: “Interview with Thomas Lemke: Foucault Today,” 6 pp.;
C. Gordon, “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction” (from *The Foucault Effect*), 48 pp. (Bb).

Feminism and Subjectivity

Week 13 (Apr 7-Apr 9): Agency and the Female Religious Subject

Title and Abstract Due Thursday, Apr. 9 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard

Read for Tue: 1) Mernissi, Preface, Introduction and Ch. 5, "The *Hijab*, The Veil"
(from *The Veil and the Male Elite*) (pp. vi-ix, 1-11, 85-101);

2) Mahmood, Ch. 1, "The Subject of Freedom" (from *The Politics of Piety*), pp. 1-39 (Bb).

Read for Thu: Mahmood, Ch. 2, "Topography of the Piety Movement" (from *The Politics of Piety*), pp. 40-78 (Bb).

The Politics of Representation

Week 14 (Apr 14-16): '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*, 48pp. (all on Bb).

Week 15 (Apr 21-23): Student Research Symposium

Final Research Paper due Tuesday, April 28 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard