Instructor: Dr. Steven M. Vose
Office: DM 359-A
Office Hours: TR 3:30-5:00, or by appointment
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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%)
   The grade for the paper will be broken down as follows:
   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.
-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

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

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);

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);

**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.;
  **Read for Thu:**
  1) Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” 3 pp.;

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


*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**


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**


Week 12 (Mar 31- Apr 2): Post-Structuralism: The Conditions of Knowledge


*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 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


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

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