Instructor: Mr. Daniel Alvarez  
Office Hours: MW, 2:00-3:00 p.m.  

Class Hours: MWW, 11:00-11:50 a.m.  
Class Room: DM 323  

alvarezd@fiu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The course will analyze different theories and methods in the study of religion. This area of study necessarily demands an interdisciplinary approach to the subject, taking into account the different disciplinary approaches. We have identified important perspectives coming from History, Theology, Philosophy, Psychology, Psychoanalysis, Sociology and Anthropology; our course will present a panorama of these approaches, with special emphasis on anthropological, sociological, theological, philosophical, and historical approaches. The course will develop key issues and concepts on the study of religion. It will be taught in a seminar format.

TEXTBOOKS

Required books:

RECOMMEND BOOK:

READINGS ON BLACKBOARD:

History-of-Religions Methodology:
Ernst Troeltsch, “Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology”
________, “The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions”
________, “Half a Century of Theology: A Review”

Anthropological Methodology:
Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System”
________, “Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture”
T. Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category” [on Geertz]
M. Deflem, “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion” [on Victor Turner]

Sociological Methodology:
Peter Berger, selection from The Sacred Canopy
Max Weber, selections from his writings

Phenomenological Methodology:
Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”
Jurgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere”
Selbo, “Religion and Rationality: Review of Habermas' The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere

**Liberation Theology Methodology:**
Clodovis Boff, Épistemology and Method of Liberation Theology”
Peter Phan, “Method in Liberation Theologies”

**Feminist Methodology:**
Rosemary Ruether, “Feminist Theology: Methodology, Sources, and Norms”
Mernissi, “The Hijab and the Veil,” from The Veil and the Male Elite
Mahmoud, “The Subject of Freedom,” from The Politics of Piety

**Post-Structuralist Methodology:**
Michel Foucault, “Truth & and Power”
Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique” [on Foucault]
C. Gordon, “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction” [on Foucault]

**Psychological Methodology:**
Kroeber, “Totem and Taboo in Retrospect” [on Freud]

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES**
1. Research paper (10-12 pages) on a course topic or one agreed in advance with the instructor (40% of grade).
2. Power-point presentation summarizing research project (to be uploaded to Blackboard).
3. One 2-page (double spaced) presentation on the reading for a particular week.

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1**
Introduction: Syllabus, Requirements, Textbooks, Overview of course
- Required Reading: Alvarez, “The Study of Religion in the West: From Schleiermacher to the Present” (in two separate handouts); “Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology” (1898) and “The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions” (1923) (Blackboard).
- Recommended Readings: Jonathan Z... Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious” (from Critical Terms for Religious Studies; (Blackboard); Ernst Troeltsch, “Half a Century of Theology: A Review”;

**Week 2**
Selections from Marx & Engels, On Religion:
- Required Reading: Introduction to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (41-58); Theses on Feuerbach (69-72); Engels, The Peasant War in Germany (97-118).
Recommended Reading: Engels, *Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (213-268); Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Blackboard); *Estranged Labor* (Blackboard).

Selections from Easton & Guddat2, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society.*

Required Readings: *The German Ideology* (403-442).
Recommended Readings: *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (283-337); *The Holy Family* (361-398).

CASE STUDY I: The Bhagavad Gita

Week 3

Selections from Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life:*
*Introduction* (13-33); *Preliminary Questions* (37-63); *Origins of these Beliefs-End* (235-262); *Conclusion* (462-496).

*The Sociology of Charismatic Authority* (245-252); *The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism* (302-322).

CASE STUDY II: Early Catholicism

Week 4

Olson, pp. 342-353, Ch. 8: “Psychology of Religion” (Blackboard); Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (23-101).

Recommended Reading: Freud, *The Future of an Illusion.*

Kroeber, “Totem and Taboo in Retrospect” [on Freud, Blackboard]

Week 5


Olson, pp. 100-124, Ch. 4: “Phenomenology and the Science of Religion” (Blackboard); L. E. Schmidt, “The Making of Modern ‘Mysticism’” (Blackboard).

Week 6


Olson, pp. 157-160, Ch. 5: “History of Religions” (Blackboard); Northrup Frye, “Review: World Enough without Time” (Blackboard).

Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” (Blackboard); Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Square”; Selbo, “Religion and Rationality: Review of Habermas’ *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere.*”

Week 7


T. Asad, “Reading a Modern Classic: W.C. Smith’s *The Meaning and End of Religion*”
Week 8

Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” and “Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture” (Blackboard); T. Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category” [on Geertz, Blackboard]; Selections from Victor Turner, The Ritual Process “Liminality and Communitas” (94-130); “Communitas: Model and Process” (131-165); M. Deflem, “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion” [on Victor Turner, Blackboard].

Week 9

Selection from Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy Chapter 1, “Religions and World Construction”; Chapter 2, “Religion and World Maintenance” (Blackboard).

CASE STUDY III: Kingship Propaganda in Ancient Israel

Week 10

Liberation Theology
Clodovis Boff, Epistemology and Method of Liberation Theology” (Blackboard). Peter Phan, “Method in Liberation Theologies” (Blackboard).

CASE STUDY IV: Prophetic Critique of Kingship in Ancient Israel; Luther’s and Calvin’s Critique of Roman Catholicism in the Reformation

Week 11

Spring Break (no classes)

Week 12

Feminism
Rosemary Ruether, “Feminist Theology: Methodology, Sources, and Norms” (Blackboard); Mernissi, “The Hijab and the Veil,” from The Veil and the Male Elite (Blackboard); Mahmoud, “The Subject of Freedom,” from The Politics of Piety (all on Blackboard).

Post-Structuralism
Olson, pp. 548-557: Preface to Ch. 11, “Poststructural/Postmodern Approaches to Religion” (Blackboard).

Michel Foucault, “Truth & and Power”, “Governmentality” (Blackboard); Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique” [on Foucault, Blackboard]; C. Gordon, “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction” [on Foucault, Blackboard].

Week 14

Concluding Discussion and Presentations

Week 15

Presentations (continued) and RESEARCH PAPERS DUE
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY


Freud, Sigmund: ‘Chapter 3. Animism, magic and the omnipotence of thought’ . *Totem and taboo* [1913]. (online version at the group).


