

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Department of Religious Studies
Seminar: Modern Analysis of Religion
RLG 6013
Fall 2014

Instructor: Steven M. Vose
Office: DM 359-A
Office Hours: M 1:00-3:00, W 1:00-3:00, or by appointment
email: svose@fiu.edu
Class Hours: W 3:00-5:50
Classroom: PG5, Rm 134

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. 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 Tuesdays at 11:59 PM. (25%)
2. Class Participation (25%)
3. Discussion Leader and 4-page outline (sign-up 1st class) (20%)
4. Research Paper, 6,500-8,000 words, topic selected with instructor (30%)
The grade for the paper will be broken down as follows:
 - a. Paper Topic: Due Wed., Sep. 24 at 11:59 PM (5%)
 - b. Annotated Bibliography: Due Wed., Oct. 22 at 11:59 PM (5%)
 - c. Title & Abstract: Due Wed., Nov. 12 at 11:59 PM (5%)
 - d. Final Draft: Due Wed., Dec. 10 at 11:59 PM (85%)

-Weekly Response Papers take the place of a final exam. They are **due on the Tuesday 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 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 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. 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 Wednesday, December 10 at 11:59 PM, posted to Blackboard**. The final week of class will be a symposium in which students will make 15-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 Wednesday, October 8**. 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. Late response papers will not be accepted.
2. All student work must conform to University policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the 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.

-Rudolf **Otto**, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford, 1958), ISBN: 978-0-195-00210-2.

-Sigmund **Freud**, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Norton, 2010), ISBN: 978-0-393-30451-0.

-Mircea **Eliade**, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, Or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton, 2005 [1954]), ISBN: 978-0-691-12350-9.

-Max **Weber**, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* (Routledge, 1992 [1930]), ISBN: 978-0-14-043921-2.

-Victor **Turner**, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Transaction Publishers, 1969), ISBN: 978-0-202-01190-5.

-Whitney **Bauman**, *Religion & Ecology: Developing a Planetary Ethic* (Columbia, 2014), ISBN: 978-0-231-16343-9.

Recommended Texts:

*These books are not assigned reading, but are very helpful references for some of the most

important foundational theorists of religion.

-Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2006), ISBN: 978-0195165708.

-Carl Olson, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2002) (Several readings from this volume are posted on Blackboard.)

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

Schedule of Readings and Class Meetings:

Constructing "Religion"

Week 1 (Aug. 27): What is "Religion"? How (and Why) Do We Study It?
 Class: Introductions, Overview of course, Sign-up for discussion leaders
 Reading: Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," from *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 10 pp. (Bb and e-book).

Week 2 (Sep. 3): From "Religion" to "Religious Traditions": W.C. Smith
 Reading: 1) W.C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*;
 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 (Sep. 10): *Mysterium Tremendum*: Rudolf Otto
 Reading: 1) R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*;
 2) L. E. Schmidt, "The Making of Modern 'Mysticism,'" 29 pp. (Bb).

Week 4 (Sep. 17): Psychoanalysis and the "Origins" of Religion: Sigmund Freud
 Reading: 1) Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*;
 2) Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," 19 pp. (Bb).
 OPTIONAL: Amy Hollywood, "Acute Melancholia," 22 pp. (Bb).
[Amy Hollywood, Acute Melancholia - Address at Harvard Divinity School](#) (A webcast of this lecture.)

Week 5 (Sep. 24): Myth, Time, and History (of Religions): Mircea Eliade
Paper Topic Due Wednesday, Sep. 24 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard
 Reading: 1) Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*;
 2) Northrup Frye, "Review: World Enough without Time," 8 pp. (Bb).

Historicism I: Sociology of Religion

Week 6 (Oct. 1): Marx and Weber on Religion and Society
 Reading: 1) Marx, "Estranged Labor," 10 pp. (Bb);
 2) Marx, "Introduction to the Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," 9 pp. (Bb);
 3) Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Structuralism: Language and Society

Week 7 (Oct. 8): Structural Anthropology: Claude Lévi-Strauss

Last day to consult with instructor about your paper topic.

Reading: 1) de Saussure, Ch. 3, "The Object of Linguistics," from *A Course in General Linguistics*, 10 pp.;
 2) Durkheim, excerpt from *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (from Olson, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*), 14 pp.

- 3) Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction: History and Anthropology" and Part III: Magic and Religion (Chs. 9-12) from *Structural Anthropology*, 104 pp.;
- 4) Geertz, "The Cerebral Savage: On the Work of Claude Lévi-Strauss," 15 pp. (all on Bb).

Anthropology of Religion

Week 8 (Oct. 15): Ritual, Structure, and the Question of Meaning

- Reading:
- 1) Turner, *The Ritual Process*;
 - 2) Staal, "The Meaninglessness of Ritual," 21 pp. (Bb).

Week 9 (Oct. 22): Cultural Analysis from the Field: Clifford Geertz

Annotated Bibliography Due Wednesday, Oct. 22 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard

- Reading:
- 1) Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture," from *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 27 pp.;
 - 2) Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," from *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 41 pp.;
 - 3) Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" from *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 39 pp.;
 - 4) T. Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category" from *Genealogies of Religion*, 27 pp. (all on Bb).

Historicism II: Poststructuralism: Language and Practices

Week 10 (Oct. 29): Post-Structuralism: The Conditions of Knowledge

- Reading:
- 1) Bourdieu and P. Lamaison, "From Rules to Strategies: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu," 11 pp.;
 - 2) Foucault, "Truth and Power," 24 pp.;
 - 3) Foucault, "The Order of Things," 7 pp.;
 - 4) Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," 10 pp.;
 - 5) Foucault, "Governmentality," 21 pp.;
 - 6) Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 22 pp.;
 - 7) Foucault, "Return to History," 14 pp. (all on Bb).

Feminism and Subjectivity

Week 11 (Nov. 5): 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).

Postmodern Ethics

Week 12 (Nov. 12): Postmodern Theology, Planetary Ethics, and Meaning Making

Title and Abstract Due Wednesday, Nov. 12 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard

- Reading:
- 1) Bauman, *Religion & Ecology*;
 - 2) Review of *Religion & Ecology* (TBA) (Bb).

The Politics of Representation

Week 13 (Nov. 19): '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).

Week 14 (Nov. 26): NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE (Work on your paper!)

Wrap-up

Week 15 (Dec. 3): Student Research Paper Symposium

Final Research Paper due Wednesday, December 10 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard