

(FOUNDATIONAL) APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION
COMPARATIVE STUDIES 620
WINTER 2008
T & R 3:30PM-5:18PM; HAGERTY HALL #50

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30-11:30am
(or by appointment)

REQUIRED TEXTS: (*Books available at the SBX Bookstore on High St.*)

Mircea Eliade, *The Quest*
Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*
Carl Jung, *Psychology and Religion*
Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*
Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*
W.S.F. Pickering, ed. *Durkheim on Religion*
Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*
Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*
Arvind Sharma, ed. *Methodology in Religious Studies: The Interface with Women's Studies*

Packet of Photocopied Course Readings (*Means of access to this packet will be discussed in class.*)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed as the first half of a two-quarter sequence dealing with various *academic* strategies for studying religion. The roughly chronological sequence explores basic methodological questions about how to study religion, why one might bother to do so, and what the possible ramifications might be.

This quarter we will concentrate on so-termed "classics" in the field, that is, seminal figures and works in several branches of religious studies, roughly from the late nineteenth century through the 1980s: e.g., the **evolutionary approaches** of Lewis Henry Morgan and E. B. Tylor; the **sociological approaches** of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx; the **psychological approaches** of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung; the **phenomenological** (and *Religionswissenschaft*) **approaches** of Rudolf Otto, Joachim Wach, and Mircea Eliade; the **structuralist approach** of Claude Lévi-Strauss; and the **anthropological approaches** of Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz.

(The second course of this two-part sequence—"Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion", which will be offered as Comparative Studies 651, Spring 2008—will focus on more recent scholars and approaches to religious studies. Students are strongly encouraged but not required to take both classes.)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By surveying these foundational approaches, which continue to inform the ways in which the academic study of religion is presently conducted, this course aims:

- (1) to familiarize students with the history and diversity of religious studies as an academic field;
- (2) to hone students' methodological sophistication and self-awareness; and, thus,
- (3) to help students develop the critical skills necessary both:
 - (a) to ascertain the strengths and liabilities of other scholars' interpretations of religion, and
 - (b) to proceed responsibly with their own interpretations of historical religious phenomena.

COURSE STRUCTURE:

In the interest of fulfilling these objectives, for each of the twelve seminal figures under consideration we will, generally speaking, read:

- (1) a brief biographical review of his life and work;
- (2) a selected portion of his own writing on religion; and
- (3) a critical review of his continuing importance (or lack thereof) for contemporary religious studies.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There are three types of requirements for this course.

- (1) **Class Participation:** This is a seminar rather than a lecture course. Attendance is mandatory, and the assigned reading must be completed prior to class. Twice during the quarter, each student (in cooperation with two or three other students) will be responsible for guiding the class discussion with respect to a particular seminal scholar. Also, students will be expected to participate actively in all the other sessions. The success of this course depends upon the students' thorough preparation and active involvement!
- (2) **Worksheets:** Each student will complete a set of five worksheets relevant to each of the twelve seminal scholars under consideration (that is, 60 worksheets total). Preliminary drafts of these worksheets will be turned in throughout the quarter. (Specific due dates are noted below.) Once we have discussed these preliminary worksheets in class and the instructor has returned them with comments, students will have an opportunity to refine the worksheets and hand all of them in again at the end of the quarter. Late worksheets will be penalized by 50%. In order to pass the course you must complete every worksheet. (The hope here is that you will leave this class with a collection of worksheets that will serve as a retrievable resource for your future religious studies.)
- (3) **Final Paper:** Each student will write a paper (at least 6 strong pages) that compares the ways in which three important scholars would approach one particular problem in religious studies. This is not a research paper per se. Instead, you are required to imagine a roundtable discussion between three of the seminal scholars that we have considered as each of them reflects upon a religious (or quasi-religious) phenomenon that he did not address in his writing. For instance, were Marx, Freud, and Otto able to come together and discuss '9-11', the incident at Waco, the men's movement, or Buckeye football, what would each of them have to say? Specific paper topics must be approved in advance by the instructor.

The breakdown for grades will be as follows:

- Class Participation:.....25%
- Worksheets:
 - Preliminary drafts.....25%
 - Final drafts.....30%
- Final Paper:.....20%
100%

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week One:

Thur. 1/3 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE: "JUST DO IT?"

Week Two:

Tue. 1/8 EVOLUTIONARY APPROACHES: E. B. TYLOR

read: Walker and Edwardsen, "Evolutionism" (packet pp. 1-5);
Sharpe, "E. B. Tylor" (packet pp. 6-7);
Excerpt from Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (packet pp. 8-20).

**due:* E. B. Tylor worksheets.

Thur. 1/10 SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES: KARL MARX

read: Dupre, "Karl Marx" (packet pp. 21-23);
Niebuhr, Introduction to Marx and Engels, *On Religion* (packet pp. 25-29);
Marx, excerpts from *On Religion* (packet pp. 29-40);
Pals, "Religion as Alienation, Karl Marx" (packet pp. 41-50.8).

**due:* Karl Marx worksheets.

Week Three:

Tue. 1/15 SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES: EMILE DURKHEIM

read: Lukes, "Emile Durkheim" (packet pp. 51-52);
Introduction to *Durkheim on Religion*, ed. Pickering, pp. 1-10;
Excerpts from Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* in *Durkheim on Religion*,
ed. Pickering, pp. 102-166.

optional reading: Any other articles on or about Durkheim in *Durkheim on Religion*, ed. Pickering.

**due:* Emile Durkheim worksheets.

Thur. 1/17 SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES: MAX WEBER

read: Birnbaum, "Max Weber" (packet pp. 53-56);
Translator's Preface & Parsons, Introduction to Weber's *Sociology of Religion*, pp. xix-lxxvii;
Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, pp. 1-31; 46-59; 151-206;
Weber, "'Objectivity' in the Social Sciences..." (packet pp. 56.01-56.11).

**due:* Max Weber worksheets.

Week Four:

Tue. 1/22 SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES ASSESSED

read: West, "Religion and the Left" (packet pp. 56.20-56.23);
Pruess, "Sociogenic Theory: Emile Durkheim" (packet pp. 57-68);
Eisenstadt, "The Implications of Weber's Sociology of Religion..." (packet pp. 69-81);
Jones, "Feminist Research in the Sociology of Religion" in ed. Sharma, *Methodologies in Religious Studies*, pp. 67-96.

optional reading: Parsons, "Durkheim on Religion Revisited: Another Look at *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*" (in *Beyond the Classics?*, ed. Glock and Hammond, pp. 156-180);
Stanner, "Reflections on Durkheim and Aboriginal Religion" (in *Durkheim on Religion*, ed. Pickering, pp. 277-303).

Thur. 1/24 PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES: SIGMUND FREUD

read: Homans, "Sigmund Freud" (packet pp. 82-85);
Freud, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices (packet 85.1-85.5);"
Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (entire book).

**due:* Sigmund Freud worksheets.

Week Five:

Tue. 1/29 PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES: CARL JUNG

read: Homans, "C.G. Jung" (packet pp. 86-89);
Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (entire book).

**due:* Carl Jung worksheets.

Thur. 1/31 PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES ASSESSED

read: Preus, "Psychogenic Theory: Sigmund Freud" (packet pp. 90-104);
Clift, "Jung's Contribution to the Psychology of Religion" (packet pp. 105-127);
Segal, "Campbell as a Jungian" (packet pp. 128-134);
Jonte-Pace, "The Impact of Women's Studies on the Psychology of Religion: Feminist Critique, Gender Analysis, and the Inclusion of Women" in ed. Sharma, *Methodologies in Religious Studies*, pp. 97-146.

optional reading: Pruyser, "Sigmund Freud and his Legacy: Psychoanalytic Psychology of Religion" (in *Beyond the Classics?*, ed. Glock and Hammond, pp. 243-290).

Week Six:

Tue. 2/5 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES: RUDOLF OTTO

read: Ludwig, "Rudolf Otto" (packet pp. 135-137);
Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 1-71.

**due:* Rudolph Otto worksheets.

Thur. 2/7 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES ASSESSED

- read:* Allen, "Phenomenology of Religion" (packet pp. 138-149);
Streetman, "Some Later Thoughts of Otto on the Holy" (packet pp. 150-160);
Young, "From the Phenomenology of Religion to Feminism and Women's Studies" in ed. Sharma, *Methodologies in Religious Studies*, pp. 17-40.

Week Seven:

Tue. 2/12 RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT APPROACHES: JOACHIM WACH

- read:* Kitagawa, "Joachim Wach" (packet pp. 161-163);
Wach, "The Meaning and Task of the History of Religions" (packet pp. 164-178);
Wach, "Universals in Religion" (packet pp. 179-188).

**due:* Joachim Wach worksheets.

Thur. 2/14 RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT APPROACHES: MIRCEA ELIADE

- read:* Kitagawa, "Mircea Eliade" (packet pp. 189-194);
Eliade, *The Quest*, pp. i-87;
Dudley, "Eliade's Interpretive Vision" (packet pp. 202-215.08).

**due:* Mircea Eliade worksheets.

Week Eight:

Tue. 2/19 RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT APPROACHES ASSESSED

- read:* Kitagawa, "The Making of a Historian of Religions" (packet pp.195-201);
Leach, "Sermons by a Man on a Ladder" (packet pp. 216-217);
Strenski, "Eliade's Theory of Myth & the 'History of Religions'" (packet pp. 217.01-217.17);
Alles, "Wach, Eliade, and the Critique from Totality" (packet pp. 218-230.2);
Kinsley, "Women's Studies and the History of Religions" in ed. Sharma, *Methodologies in Religious Studies*, pp. 1-16.

Thur. 2/21 STRUCTURALIST APPROACHES: CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS

- read:* Bohannon and Glazer, "Claude Lévi-Strauss" (packet pp. 231-232);
Leach, "Structuralism" (packet pp. 233-242);
Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (entire book);
Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth" (packet pp. 243-257);
Littleton, "Some Fundamental Differences between Dumézil & Lévi-Strauss" (packet pp. 258-62);
Geertz, "The Cerebral Savage" (packet pp. 263-270).

**due:* Claude Lévi-Strauss worksheets.

Week Nine:

Tue. 2/26 ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES: VICTOR TURNER

read: Ray, "Victor Turner" (packet pp. 282-283.1);
Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp. 1-43 & 94-203.

**due:* Victor Turner worksheets.

Thur. 2/29 ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES: CLIFFORD GEERTZ

read: Bohannan and Glazer, "Clifford Geertz" (packet pp. 284);
Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (packet pp. 285-303);
Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" (packet pp. 304-332);
Micheelsen, "'I Don't Do Systems': An Interview With Clifford Geertz" (packet pp. 332.01-332.10);
Munson, "Geertz on Religion: The Theory and the Practice" (packet pp. 333-340).

**due:* Clifford Geertz worksheets.

Week Ten:

Tue. 3/4 ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES ASSESSED

read: Segal, "Victor Turner's Theory of Ritual" (packet pp. 341-346);
Bynum, "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality"
(packet pp. 346.01-346.16);
Edith Turner, "The Reality of Spirits: A Tabooed or Permitted Field of Study?" (packet pp.
360.0-360.3);
Shankman, "The Thick and the Thin: On the Interpretive Theoretical Program of Clifford
Geertz" (packet pp. 361-379);
Gross, "Feminist Issues and Methods in the Anthropology of Religion" in ed. Sharma,
Methodologies in Religious Studies, pp. 41-66.

Thur. 3/6 SOME CURRENT PROBLEMS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

read: Jonathan Z. Smith, Introduction to *Imagining Religion* (packet pp. 380-383).

**due:* All revised worksheets.

Finals Week:

Mon. 3/10 **due:* Final paper. (*The final paper is due in L. Jones' mailbox in the Comparative Studies office, Hagerty Hall 451, by 4:00pm.*)