Junior Seminar Syllabus  
REL3931, Sec 0207  
Fall 2011  
Class Location: Matherly Hall Rm 0005  
Class Time: Wednesdays, Period 8-10 (3:00pm-6:00pm)  
Department of Religion (352-392-1625)  
University of Florida

Instructor: Amy L. Brown, PhD Student, Department of Religion  
Email: amylnbrown@ufl.edu  
Office Location: 105 Anderson Hall  
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:00 pm-3:00pm or by appointment

Course Description:  
This required course for all junior religion majors introduces students to some of the key theories and methodologies in the study of religion via the “classics.” We will begin with a discussion of the term “religion,” reconstructing its origin and historical development as well as assessing its viability as a descriptive and analytical category. The course then explores classical approaches to religion in the humanities and social sciences, particularly in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and history. We conclude the course by exploring the prospects for the comparative study of religion and we will discuss the viability of expanding the definition of religion in a way that can include science and environmentalism.

Course Objectives:  
1. To make students conversant with the theories and methods developed by the seminal figures in the discipline of religion (e.g., Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Freud, Jung, Eliade, and Geertz).

2. To develop students’ capacity to identify and evaluate critically the underlying assumptions of theories of religion. More specifically, the course seeks to help students develop a rigorous and reflexive stance when studying religion.

3. To use the small seminar setting to sharpen students’ expository writing skills as well as their ability to articulate and defend their own analytical perspectives.

Course Requirements:  

1. Attendance, Participation and Quizzes (15% of final grade): This course will be fairly reading intensive, and students are expected to come to class having read the material listed for that day, ready to ask questions and participate in discussion. Failure to show up to class or be actively engaged will result in a lowered grade. Since class only meets one day a week, students are allowed only ONE unexcused absence, though it is best to always inform the professor when
you know you will not be present and explain why. Throughout the semester, students can expect up to 5 pop quizzes that will factor into your grade.

2. **Three Take-Home Exams (25% each for first two, 35% for third)** Each of these exams will ask students to define key terms and answer two essay questions addressing issues raised in the readings, class discussions, and lectures. Since students will have at least a week to complete these assignments, I expect all essays to be well-developed, with good grammar, spelling, and syntax. I place a premium on analytical thinking. Students will need to demonstrate that they have engaged the various theories and can articulate concepts, arguments, and methodologies in their own words. Exam I and II will each be worth 25% of your final grade. The third and final take-home exam is cumulative and is worth 35% of the final grade.

**Grading Scale**

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60</td>
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Note: The degree-granting college may require a minimum grade of C in particular courses.

**Policies, Rules, and Resources:**

1. **Handing in Assignments:** All papers should be e-mailed to the instructor (amylbrown@ufl.edu) by the due date. Assignments should be attached in a Word document. Please double-check that attachment works when sending.

2. **Late or Make-Up Assignments:** You may receive an extension on an essay assignment only in extraordinary circumstances and with prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down ½ grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

3. **Completion of All Assignments:** You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing any assignment or requirement.

4. **Attendance and Participation:** Class attendance is required. Do not register for this class if you cannot arrive on time. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day’s readings. Tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. After the first late arrival, the instructor reserves the right to mark you absent. The instructor will not provide notes or discuss material that has already been covered for
students who arrive late, barring extraordinary circumstances (which do not include failing to find a parking place or sleeping in).

5. **Common Courtesy**: Use of laptops in this course is considered a privilege, not a right. Students using laptops must sit in the front row and use is restricted to note-taking, classroom-related activities. If you are caught browsing the web, using Facebook, e-mailing, playing games, etc., your privilege will be revoked for the rest of the course. The instructor may ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls during class will be asked to leave. A student who is asked to leave will be marked absent for the day. Please also plan accordingly and do not leave the room during class time unless it is an emergency. Those students who leave class for more than 10 minutes will be marked absent.

6. **Honor Code**: On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see [http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html](http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html). Any student(s) demonstrated to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in any assignment for this course will fail the course. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

7. **Accommodation for Disabilities**: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please tell the instructor and teaching assistant at the beginning of the semester if you have a disability that requires accommodation (e.g., longer time for exams, note-takers, etc.).

8. **Counseling Resources**: Resources available on-campus for students include the following:
   a. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling;
   b. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling;
   c. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling;
   d. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

9. **Software Use**: All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such
violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

10. Respect and Courtesy in Classroom: Given that religion is often a very personal and potentially contentious topic, I expect students to treat each other with civility and respect. I hope that our debates will be lively and that people will feel free to express their opinions and disagree with each other. However, these opinions and disagreements have to be presented in a manner that is appropriate to an academic setting.

Required Texts:


Other Additional Readings (available through e-learning)


Course Schedule:

**Part I: Introduction**

**Week 1:** Course Introduction: What is Religion?
**Wed, Aug 24:** No Assigned Readings

**Week 2:** The Founding Fathers: E. B. Tylor and James Frazer
**Wed, Aug 31:** Pals, pp. 1-70

**Part II: Sociologies of Religion**

**Week 3:** Durkheim I: Religion as Social Cement-Guest Lecture, Jacob Jones
**Wed, Sept 7:** Pals, pp. 99-120
Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” in the additional readings

**Week 4:** Durkheim II: Anomie and Secularization
**Wed, Sept 14:** Readings: Pals, pp. 120-142
O’Dea and Poblete, “Anomie and the Quest for Community,” in additional readings

**Week 5:** Marx and Marxism: Religion and Class Conflict
**Wed, Sept 21:** Pals, pp. 143-170
E. P. Thompson, “The Transforming Power of the Cross,” in the additional readings
John Bellamy Foster, “Marx’s ecology in historical perspective”
http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj96/foster.htm
Week 6: Weber I: Christianity, Rationalization, and Capitalism
Wed, Sept 28: Pals, pp. 237-255
Berger, “Max Weber is Alive and Well,” in the additional readings

Week 7: Weber II: Comparative Sociology of Religion
Wed, Oct 5: Pals, pp. 255-270
Eisenstadt, “This Worldly Transcendentalism,” in additional readings
Rosin, “Did Christianity Cause the Crash?” (in the additional readings)

*** FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE ON 10/08 AT 4 PM ***

Part III. Psychologies of Religion

Week 8: Freud: Religion and Neurosis
Wed, Oct 12: Pals, pp. 71-97

Week 9: Beyond Freud? Jung, James, and Otto
Wed, Oct 19: Pals, pp. 171-235
Jung, “Sigmund Freud,” pp. 146-169, in additional readings

Part IV: History of Religions

Week 10: Eliade I: Hierophanies and Archetypes
Wed, Oct 26: Pals, pp. 271-308

Week 11: Eliade II: Applications and Critiques
Wed, Nov 2: Carrasco, “Mesoamerica as a New World,” in additional readings
Eck, “The City as a Sacred Center,” in additional readings
Smith, “In Search of Place,” in additional readings

*** SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE ON 11/05 AT 4 PM ***

Part V: Anthropologies of Religion

Week 12: Geertz and his Critics
Wed, Nov 9: Pals, pp. 341-372
Asad, “The Construction of Religion,” in additional readings

Part VI: Some Current Debates

Week 13: Religion in the Postmodern Age I: Is the Comparative Study of Religion Possible?

Week 14: Thanksgiving Break
Wed, Nov 23: Students meet with professor during office hours
Week 15: Gender and Feminist Approaches to Religion
**Wed, Nov 30:** Orsi, “He Keeps me Going,” in additional readings
Lee, “Gender-Critical Studies in Religious Studies,” in additional readings

Week 16: Materialism and Science as Religion
**Wed, Dec 7:** Manuel Vasquez, “Introduction” in *More Than Belief*, pp 1-18
Mary Midgely, Chapters 1-3 of *Evolution as a Religion*, pp 1-29

*** THIRD TAKE-HOME EXAM (CUMULATIVE) DUE ON 12/14 AT 4 PM ***