

Comparative Seminar (REL 4933)  
**World Religions: Idea, Display, Institution**  
**Spring 2014**

Wednesdays period 7-9 (1:55 – 4:55pm), AND 21

**Instructor:** Travis L. Smith ([tlsmith@ufl.edu](mailto:tlsmith@ufl.edu))

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 11:30am – 1:30pm, and by appointment (008 Anderson Hall)

***Course Description***

This major seminar will explore the origins, deployments and legacies of the concept of “World Religions.”

The story of World Religions effectively begins with the Orientalist scholarship emerging from European encounters with Asian peoples and cultures during the eras of missionary, and then colonial, expansion. In this “Oriental Renaissance” of the late-18th and 19th centuries, ancient monuments were exhumed, exotic languages were deciphered, and sacred texts were “discovered” and translated, and these adventurous scholarly enterprises heralded a new era of knowledge and discovery. New academic vistas were opened in the physical and now human sciences, linking the far-flung cultures of the world in a way that had never been done before. But these intercultural connections were also conditioned by colonialist fantasies and phobias, which were projected onto “othered” colonized subjects.

In America, the World Parliament of Religions, a prominent feature of Chicago’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, symbolized upstart America’s becoming a major player in the international economic scene, even as her rapidly expanding cities were becoming choked and overrun with slums. Both the Exposition and the Parliament were great theater, and the universalistic discourse and rosy projections for future salvific religious knowledge dazzled even the soberest of scholars of the day. The Parliament may also be thought of as marking the moment when the academic project of the comparative religions entered the popular realm.

We will explore the shifting paradigms of this era and attempt to understand the crucial role that religion has played in academic discourse and popular consciousness since the very inception of world religions paradigm. This course will also encourage discussion and

reflection on how the Orientalist history of the study of religion affects our academic endeavors today.

### ***Required Texts***

*We will read the following four texts in their entirety, or nearly so. They are available for purchase at local booksellers.*

John P. Burris, *Exhibiting Religion: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions, 1851-1893*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001.

Barbara Stoler Miller, *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*. Bantam, 1986.

*The following text is **recommended** and should be available at local booksellers. We will be reading several chapters from these works:*

Eric J. Ziolkowski, ed., *A Museum of Faiths: Histories and Legacies of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993 (subsequently, Oxford University Press).

### ***Supplementary Readings***

*In addition to these titles, we will read selections from other books that will be cited in the schedule of readings, below. All of these additional readings will be available on the Sakai course website under the Lessons tab.*

### ***Course Requirements and Evaluation***

1. **Attendance/Participation (15%)** Regular attendance and active presence in class. The foundation of this course is discussion, and thus regular attendance is crucial. Responses to the discussion leader's post on Sakai for the week (see 2., below) is also considered in assessing participation.
2. **Discussion Leading (15%)** Each week's discussion will be led by one member of the course, with the schedule to be determined during the first week of class. The discussion leader will first present an overview of materials (10-15 mins), and should have prepared a series of discussion questions and prompts that will stimulate class discussion. Discussion written responses to the course material. The discussion leader for the week must also prepare a brief (3 page/ ~800 words), *carefully edited* response to the week's readings and post it to the discussion board of the Sakai website for the course. This response is due on MONDAY midnight: this deadline is important, as it allows for the other members to respond to the post before class.

3. **In-class Quizzes (20%)** Periodically, brief quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class to assess students' assimilating of the required readings. These will not be announced beforehand. Expect from 5-8 such quizzes during the course of the semester. In-class quizzes can only be made up if the absence was due to a documented medical emergency or the absence was otherwise arranged with the instructor. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.
4. **Critical Essay (20%)** An essay of approximately 2000 words (around 7 double-spaced pages) on a topic to be announced. This essay will primarily be based on the primary and supplementary course materials (no outside sources). Due **Sunday, February 23**.
5. **Research Paper (30%)** A final paper of approximately 10-12 double-spaced pages (approximately 3000 words) exploring the profile or deployment of "world religions" in one of several current arenas: textbooks, encyclopedias, museums, conferences, cooperative projects, the Web, and departments of Religious Studies. The final paper will be due on **Sunday, April 27**.

*Summary:*

Attendance and Participation	15%
Discussion Leading	15%
Critical Essay	20%
Quizzes	20%
Research Paper	30%

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
100-93	92-90	89-86	85-82	81-79	78-76	75-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	< 60

In addition, please familiarize yourself with the official UF policies on how grade points are assigned:

[Grades and Grading Policies](#)

### Academic Honesty

Students must conform to UF's academic honesty policy regarding plagiarism and other forms of cheating. This means that 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.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php> and <http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html>.

All students found to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in *any assignment* for this course will be prosecuted to the full extent of the university honor policy, including judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code. For serious violations, you will fail this course.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Please do not hesitate to ask for accommodation for a documented disability. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please ask the instructor if you would like any assistance in this process.

### ***Schedule of Readings***

#### **Week 1 – January 8** *Orientalism*

A.L. Macfie, *Orientalism: A Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), “Introduction” (pp. 1-10)

#### **Week 2 – January 15** *The Oriental Renaissance*

Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (New York: SUNY Press, 1988) ch. 3-4 (pp. 36-68).

Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (Columbia University Press, New York: 1984 [1950]), ch. 1-3 (pp. 11-80), N.B. timeline of translations on pp. 51-52.

#### **Week 3 – January 22** *William Jones and the Asiatic Society*

Franklin Edgerton, “William Jones (1746-1794).” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 66.3 (July – Sep. 1946): 230-239.

William Jones, *Discourses Delivered before the Asiatic Society and Miscellaneous Papers on the Religion, Poetry, Literature, etc. of the Nations of India*. 2 vols. London: Charles S. Arnold, 1824. Read vol. 1 pp. v-xii, 1-37, vol. 2 pp. 1-16.

Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (UC Press, 1997), chapter 2 (“The Mosaic Ethnology of Asiatic Jones”) pp. 28-61. Available as an e-book via UF Library.

Michael J. Franklin, 'Jones, Sir William (1746–1794)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edition, May 2006  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15105>, accessed 15 July 2010] (17 pp.)

**Week 4 – January 29** *The Vedas and the Upaniṣads*

Laurie L. Patton, "Veda and Upaniṣad" in Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, ed. *The Hindu World* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 37-51.

Wilhelm Halbfass, "The Idea of the Veda and the Identity of Hinduism" in *Tradition and Reflection: Explorations in Indian Thought* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991), pp. 1-22.

Patrick Olivelle, trans. "Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad," in Olivelle, ed. and trans. *Upaniṣads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 266-277.

**Week 5 – February 5\*** *The Bhagavad Gita*

Angelika Malinar, "Bhagavad-Gita" in K. Jacobsen et al., eds., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, vol. 2 (Brill, 2010), pp. 95-110.

Barbara S. Miller, trans. *Bhagavad-Gita*, chapters 1-6, 9-11, 18.

**Week 6 – February 12** *The Discovery/Invention of Hinduism*

Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), chapter 3, pp. 85-130.

Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East'* (New York: Routledge, 2007), chs. 4-6, pp. 82-142.

**Week 7 – February 19** *The Discovery/Invention of Hinduism II*

John Stratton Hawley, "Naming Hinduism," *The Wilson Quarterly* 15:3 (summer 1991), pp. 20-34.

Wendy Doniger, "Hinduism by Any Other Name," *The Wilson Quarterly* 15:3 (summer 1991), pp. 35-41.

David Lorenzen, "Who Invented Hinduism?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41:4 (1999), pp. 630-659.

**Critical Essay due Sunday, February 23**

**Week 8 – February 26** *The "Science" of Religious Studies and Comparative Theology*

F. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. 1: Essays on the Science of Religion (New York: Charles Scribner, 1869; reprint, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), preface, pp. vii-xxxiii.

F. Max Müller, ed., *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 1, "Preface to the Sacred Books of the East" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), pp. ix-xxvii.

Cornelius Petrus Tiele, "Religions," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edition, vol. 20 (1886), pp. 370-384.

M. Winternitz, *A General Index to the Names and Subject-Matter of the Sacred Books of the East* [constituting volume 50 of the SBE], introductory materials (including a preface by A. A. Macdonell, an introduction by Winternitz, and a list of the 49 volumes of the SBE), pp. vi-xvi.

James Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions: An Essay in Comparative Theology* (Boston: James R. Osborn and Co., 1875), title page, contents, and chapter 1 ("Introduction – Ethnic and Catholic Religions"), pp. 1-31.

#### **Week 9 – March 5 SPRING BREAK**

**No class, no readings: enjoy the break!**

#### **Week 10 – March 12 Colonial Exhibition-ism**

Burris, intro, ch. 1-3 (xiii-xxi, 1-85).

Bennett, T., *Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), ch. 1 "The Formation of the Museum" (pp. 17-58).

#### **Week 11 – March 19 American Protestantism and the World Parliament of Religions, 1893**

Burris, ch. 4-end (86-178).

John Henry Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893* (Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Co., 1893), front matter including table of contents, pp. i-xxiv.

#### **Week 12 – March 26 Buddhism on Display**

Tessa Bartholomeusz, "Dharmapāla at Chicago : Mahāyāna Buddhist or Sinhala Chauvinist?" in E. Ziolkowski, ed., *A Museum of Faiths*, pp. 235-250.

James Edward Ketelaar, "The Reconvening of Babel: Eastern Buddhism and the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions," in E. Ziolkowski, ed., *A Museum of Faiths*, pp. 251-304.

**Week 13 – April 2** *Buddhism Deployed*

Charles Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism" in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 31-61.

Robert Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism" in D. Lopez, ed., *Curators of the Buddha*, pp. 107-160.

**Week 14 – April 9** *Vivekananda in America and "the Universal Religion"*

selections from *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 17th ed. 1986), including "Addresses at the Parliament" (vol I., pp. 3-24) and two lectures on "Universal Religion" (vol II., pp. 359-396).

Swami Vivekananda, *Practical Vedanta*

**Abstract and bibliography for final paper due Sunday, April 14**

**Week 15 – April 16** *World Religions, History and Ideology of an Idea*

Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), introduction and chapter 1 ("Religion as an Anthropological Category"), pp. 1-54.

Katherine K. Young, "World Religions: A Category in the Making?" in Michel Despland and Gerard Vallee, eds., *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1992), pp. 111-130.

Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), chs. 1-2 (pp. 3-53).

**Week 16 – April 23**

Research Paper Workshop