

SYLLABUS FOR:

**REL 3931: JUNIOR SEMINAR TUESDAY, PERIOD 6 & THURSDAY, PERIODS 5-6
AND 19
FALL 2014**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 10:00 – 11:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course 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 in the context of postmodernism and globalization.

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.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Three Take-Home Exams. 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. The first, second, and third exams will address specific sections of the course. 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.

2. Attendance, Active Participation, and Quizzes: Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually and to participate actively in class discussion. Absences will be allowed only under very special circumstances, such as a medical emergency. In that case, students must bring a doctor's note. Active and informed participation demands that students read the material carefully before coming to class. The instructor reserves the right to give quizzes at any time during the course. In most circumstances, students will not be allowed to make up missed quizzes. Attendance, participation, and quizzes represent 15% of your final grade.

RULES

1. Plagiarism or cheating: Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. On the issue of plagiarism and cheating, I operate under a zero tolerance policy. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course. In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. See <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm> for more information on UF policies.

2. Incompletes are strongly discouraged and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete before the end of the semester.

3. Make-up quizzes and exams will only be given to students who can present proper, legitimate written documentation (in the form of a medical excuse or a funeral notice, for example) to justify their inability to take a quiz or an exam during the scheduled time.

4. Grading Scale: A: 100-95; A-: 94-90; B+: 89-87; B: 86-84; B-: 83-80; C+: 79-77; C: 76-74; C-: 73-70; D+: 69-67; D: 66-64; D-: 63-60; E: <60.

5. 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.

6. Students engaging in any sort of disruptive behavior, including passing notes, reading a newspaper, playing computer games, checking their e-mail, or chatting while lectures and class discussions are taking place, will be asked to leave the classroom. They will be counted as absent for that particular day. Please turn phones and pagers off during class.

7. Please make sure to arrive to class on time.

8. Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration 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 or special consideration.

REQUIRED READINGS

Two Readers will be utilized; **each Reading will be posted on the Sakai website for the course**; all Readings will be uploaded during the first week of the semester.

Books

1) Pals, Daniel L. ed. 2009. *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*. New York: Oxford University Press.

2) Lambek, Michael, *A Reader in the anthropology of Religion*. 2008 ed. Blackwell

Text No. 1 Title: **INTRODUCING RELIGION: READINGS FROM THE CLASSICS**
Author: DANIEL PALS
ISBN: 0195181492 Publisher: OXFORD U. PRESS Copyright:
2008 This text is required

Table of contents for **Introducing religion : readings from the classic theorists /**
[edited by] Daniel L. Pals.

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CLIFFORD GEERTZ	

Text No. 2 Title: **A Reader in the anthropology of Religion.** EDITED BY
MICHAEL LAMBEK. 2008. Blackwell


SELECTIONS FROM THE CLASSICS TO CONTEMPORARY DEBATES IN THE
ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING AUTHORS:


E.B. Tylor, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Clifford Geertz, B. Malinowski, G.
Obeyesekere, Mary Douglas, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, R. Rappaport, A. Gell, E. Viveiros
de Castro, Robert Bellah, Talal Assad, S. Ortner, E. Wolf, P. Radin, V. Turner, S.
Tambiah, G. Lienhardt.

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Part I: Introductory Matters

Tues. 01/07: General Introduction to the Course: No Readings

 01/07: What is Religion?

 01/09: E. B. Tylor, Animism and Animatism Readings: Pals, Ch. 1, pp. 1-37 ; and "Religion in Primitive Culture", E.B. Tylor, pp. 23-34

01/14: James Frazer, Magic, and Religion Readings: Pals, Ch. 2, 37-71;

Part II: Sociologies of Religion

01/16: Durkheim I: The Sacred and the Profane

Readings: Pals, Ch.4, pp. 99-143 ; and "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life", in Lambek Reader, pp. 34-48;

01/21 : Durkheim II: Totemism and Religion as Social Cement.

Readings: Pals, Ch.4, pp. 99-143 ; and Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in Lambek Reader, p. 509-(in Resources)

01/23:: Marx and Marxism I: Religion as Agent of Oppression

Reading: Pals, Ch. 5, pp. 43-71;

01/25 : Weber: Christianity, Rationalization, and Capitalism

Reading: Max Weber, "Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", in Lambek Reader, pp. 48-57;

01/28: Weber: Toward a Comparative Sociology of World Religions Readings: Pals, pp. 237-71

01/30: **REVIEW OF PART I**

***** FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE ON 02/04 AT 5 PM ***[SEND TO SAKAI WEBSITE]**

Part III. Psychologies of Religion

02/04: Freud I: Religion and the Super-Ego

Readings: "Personality Theories. Sigmund Freud", 20 p. text in Resource section; Freud II: Religion as the Neurosis of the Century Readings: Pals, pp. 71-99

02/06: Beyond Freud? Carl Jung: Religion and Self-Individuation

Readings: "Carl Jung and Shamanism", powerpoint in Resource section (mostly on *The Red Book*, by Jung); B. Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology", in Lambek Reader, pp. 168-

02/11: Beyond Freud? Rudolf Otto and William James

Readings: WILLIAM JAMES, IN Pals, 171-205;

02/13: RUDOLF OTTO, in Pals, pp. 205-37;

Gananath Obeyesekere, "Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and

Religious Experience", in Lambek Reader, pp. 356-

Part IV: History of Religions

02/18: Eliade I: Religion and the sacred

Readings: Pals, pp. 271-309

02/20: Eliade II: Sacred Time and the Myth of Eternal Return

Readings: Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, Introduction and Chapter II;

02/25: Eliade III: Religion and Nature

Readings: Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, Introduction and Chapters III and IV;

02/27: Eliade IV: Critiques and Review of Part III.

----- 03/09 SPRING BREAK. NO CLASSES -----

*** SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE ON 03/11 AT 4 PM ***

Part V: Anthropologies of Religion

Symbols and Their Meanings

03/11 : E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "The Problem of Symbols", in Lambek Reader, pp. 139-51; Sherry Ortner, "On Key Symbols", in Lambek Reader, pp. 151-60; Eric Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol", in Lambek Reader, pp. 160-67;

03/13: Mary Douglas, "Land Animals, Pure and Impure", in Lambek Reader, pp. 183- ; and Paul Radin, "The Winnebago Trickster Figure", in Lambek Reader, pp. 226- ;

Interpretive Approaches

03/18: Geertz I: Religion as a Cultural System

Readings: Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Lambek Reader, pp. 57-

03/20: Geertz II: Critiques

Talal Assad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category", in Lambek Reader, pp. 110-

Ritual as Praxis and Religious Action

03/25: Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas", in Lambek Reader, pp. 326- ;

G. Lienhardt, "The Control of Experience: Symbolic Action", in Lambek Reader, p. 302-311;

03/27: Stanley Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts", in Lambek, pp. 311-326; Roy Rappaport, "Enactments of Meaning", p. 410- ;

Part VI: Some Current Debates

Conceptualizing the Cosmos

04/01: **Readings:** E. Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian
Perspectivism", in Lambek Reader, pp. 280- ;

04/08: Alfred Gell, "Closure and Multiplication: An Essay on Polynesian Cosmology
and Ritual", in Lambek, pp. 267-280.

Religion and Science

04/10: New Animism. **Readings (TBD)**

04/15: Nature Religions. **Readings (TBD)**

04/17: Religion and Health. **Readings (TBD)**

04/22: **FINAL CLASS. DISCUSSION OF UNITS V & VI.**

*******THIRD TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE 04/29 - SEND TO SAKAI SITE**