

Syllabus: JUNIOR SEMINAR (REL 3931) | SPRING 2022

Prof. Erin Prophet (Religion Dept., University of Florida)

Class Time & Location

MWF 10:40 AM – 11:30 AM, MAT 0102

Office Hours

Mon., Wed., 4-5 pm. & by appointment (1/5–4/20); 130 Anderson Hall.

Contact Information

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Course Description

The seminar presents a comprehensive overview of major classical approaches to the study of religion and the development of religious studies as an academic discipline. Essentially, it is a course on **Religious Studies Method and Theory**. The main focus is on seminal theoretical and practical approaches formulated by leading thinkers such as Weber, Durkheim, Freud, Eliade, and Geertz, which reflect the perspectives of diverse academic disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and anthropology.

Prerequisites

Usually enrollment in the course is restricted to majors in the Religion Department. It is required of all majors, to be taken during their junior year.

Requirements

- Class attendance (10%)
- Discussion leading and overall preparedness (10%)
- Three examinations (20% each, 60% total)
- Interview report (20%) due by April 18

Required Texts

Pals, Daniel L. *Nine Theories of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015 or (or *Ten Theories of Religion*, 2022). Abbreviated as *Theories*.

Pals, Daniel L. *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Abbreviated as *Readings*.

Students need to have their own copies of the two books and bring them to class.

Additional readings referenced in the syllabus will be provided in electronic form on Canvas.

Objectives

- Enable students to become acquainted with the major theories and methodologies used in the academic study of religion, especially those formulated by central figures that shaped the development of the discipline of religious studies.
- Facilitate each student's development of an analytical capacity to ascertain, articulate, and evaluate the explicit arguments and underlying assumptions that inform various theories about religion, and to reflect critically on the academic study of religion.
- Help sharpen a range of essential academic skills, including critical thinking, careful reading, clear writing, articulate discussion, and nuanced engagement with multiple perspectives.

Course Schedule and Discussion Topics

Day	Topic	Reading	Assignment/Activity
Week 1 Wed. Jan. 5	Syllabus and Introductions	None	
Week 1 Fri. Jan. 7	Origins of the Historical Study of Religion	Henze, "The Historical Method"	
Week 2 Mon. Jan. 10	Introduction to the Study of Religion	<i>Theories</i> intro, <i>Readings</i> intro	Group discussion
Week 2 Wed. Jan. 12	Animism, Magic and the Origin of Religion: Tylor	<i>Theories</i> 15-27 <i>Readings</i> 1-35	Student-led disc.
Week 2 Fri. Jan. 14	Animism, Magic and the Origin of Religion (cont.) Fraser	<i>Theories</i> 28-44 <i>Readings</i> 37-58	Student-led disc.
Mon. Jan. 17: NO CLASS, Martin Luther King Jr. Day			
Week 3 Wed. Jan. 19	Dying Gods and the Origins of Religion	<i>Readings</i> 58-70	Discussion
Week 3 Fri. Jan. 21	Religion and Personality: Freud	<i>Theories</i> 49-64 <i>Readings</i> 71-83	Student-led disc.
Week 4 Mon. Jan. 24	Freud (cont.)	<i>Theories</i> 64-76 <i>Readings</i> 83-97	Student-led disc.
Week 4 Wed. Jan. 26	Society and Religion: Durkheim	<i>Theories</i> 81-96 <i>Readings</i> 99-116	Student-led disc.
Week 4 Fri. Jan. 28	Society and Religion (cont.) Durkheim	<i>Theories</i> 96-109 <i>Readings</i> 117-142	Student-led disc.
Week 5 Mon. Jan. 31		Exam 1	
Week 5 Wed. Feb. 2	Religion and Alienation: Marx	<i>Theories</i> 113-126 <i>Readings</i> 143-155	Student-led disc.
Week 5 Fri. Feb. 4	Marx (cont.)	<i>Theories</i> 126-138 <i>Readings</i> 155-170	Student-led disc.
Week 6 Mon. Feb. 7	Film		

Day	Topic	Reading	Assignment/Activity
Week 6 Wed. Feb. 9	Religion and Social Action: Weber	<i>Theories</i> 143-158 <i>Readings</i> 237-255	Student-led disc.
Week 6 Fri. Feb. 11	Religion and social action: Weber, cont.	<i>Theories</i> 158-180 <i>Readings</i> 255-270	Student-led disc.
Week 7 Mon. Feb. 14	Religious Experience: James	<i>Theories</i> 185-212	Student-led disc.
Week 7 Wed. Feb. 16	Religious Experience: James cont.	<i>Theories</i> 212-216 <i>Readings</i> 171-203	Student-led disc.
Week 7 Fri. Feb 18	Religious Experience (cont.)	<i>Theories</i> 216-222	Group discussion and video
Week 8 Mon. Feb. 21	Religion and the Numinous: Otto	<i>Readings</i> 205-235	Student-led disc.
Week 8 Wed. Feb. 23	The Sacred: Eliade	<i>Theories</i> 227-240 <i>Readings</i> 271-286	Student-led disc.
Week 8 Fri. Feb. 25	The Sacred: Eliade cont.	<i>Theories</i> 241-253 <i>Readings</i> 287-308	Student-led disc.
Week 9 Mon. Feb. 28	The Sacred: Eliade cont.	<i>Theories</i> 253-259	Group discussion and review
Week 9 Wed. Mar. 2	Exam 2		
Week 9 Fri. Mar. 4	NO CLASS		
SPRING BREAK! NO CLASS 😊			
Week 10 Mon. Mar. 14	Particularity: Evans-Pritchard	<i>Theories</i> 263-273 <i>Readings</i> 309-319	Student-led disc.
Week 10 Wed. Mar. 16	Particularity cont. Evans-Pritchard	<i>Theories</i> 273-290 <i>Readings</i> 319-340	Student-led disc.
Week 10 Fri. Mar, 18	Particularity cont.	Discuss report plan	Group discussion
Week 11 Mon. Mar. 21	Film: Hildegard von Bingen		
Week 11 Wed. Mar. 23	Film (cont.)		End of film and discussion
Week 11 Fri. Mar. 25	Religion and Culture: Geertz	<i>Theories</i> 293-301	Student-led disc. Documentary
Week 12 Mon. Mar. 28	Religion and Culture: Geertz cont.	<i>Theories</i> 302-305 <i>Readings</i> 347-362	Student-led disc.
Week 12 Wed. Mar. 30	Religion and Culture: Geertz, cont.	<i>Theories</i> 305-321 <i>Readings</i> 343-347	Student-led disc.
Week 12 Fri. Apr. 1	Academic Study of Religion	Rennie, "The Historical Method and the Study of Religion"	Group discussion

Day	Topic	Reading	Assignment/Activity
Week 13 Mon. Apr. 4	Religion and Justice	Pinn	Student-led disc.
Week 13 Wed. Apr. 6	Religion and Gender: Daly	<i>Theories</i> 325-340 Deconick, <i>Holy Misogyny</i> pp. 1-14	Student-led disc.
Week 13 Fri. Apr. 8	Religion and Gender cont.	<i>Theories</i> 340-354 Deconick, 53-73	Student-led disc.
Week 14 Mon. Apr. 11	Religion and Gender cont.	<i>Theories</i> 354-373	Group discussion
Week 14 Wed. Apr. 13	Religion and Secularism	Zuckerman, "Beyond Religion"	Student-led disc.
Week 14 Fri. Apr. 15	The Cognitive Turn	Clements, "Mental Religion"	Student-led disc.
Week 15 Mon. Apr. 18	Exam review		Report Due in class (paper) and online
Week 15 Wed. Apr. 20	Exam 3		

Professional Resources

- [American Academy of Religion news and publications](#)
- [Religious Studies News](#)

Podcasts

- The Religious Studies Podcast: <https://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcasts/>

Documentaries and Films

- University of Nottingham, "Why Study the Beginnings of Religious Studies?"
<https://youtu.be/kTAvQ30Qze0>
- Von Trotta, Margarethe (Dir). *Vision: From the Life of Hildegard von Bingen*
- DW Documentary "Putin's Pride: Cossacks and the Church" (2020)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euxt0argoil>
- Long, Charles (2013). Shempp Conference <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clxXvTL39os>

Online e-Learning System & email Communication

- The syllabus and other course materials are posted online via UF's e-Learning system, using Canvas.
- Students should send all written communications to the instructor directly, using the email address given above.

Grading

- The final grade will be based on each student's individual performance and his/her fulfillment of the course requirements, as stipulated in the syllabus.
- The same course rules and expectations apply equally to all students—no student is entitled to special consideration or unique treatment. Other extraneous or irrelevant factors, including student's personal desires or expectations about grades, will not be considered. Students should also not expect retroactive changes or other forms of grade modification.

- Students should take all assignments and other course requirements very seriously. There will be no opportunities to do additional work for extra credit or better grade.
- No incomplete grades will be given, except in exceptional circumstances, in which case the students should contact the instructor no later than a week before the last day of classes.
- Final grades will be computed according to the standard grading scheme in Canvas.

Attendance and Participation

- **Attendance** is expected of all students, starting with the first day of classes. Students who may have difficulties attending class should not enroll in this course. (For more on the university's attendance policies, see the Undergraduate Catalog).
- **Absences** from class will have adverse effect on the final grade. Students who miss nine (9) hours of instruction (unexcused)—comparable to missing three weeks of classes—will automatically receive a failing grade.
- Students are advised to take extensive notes in class, and to use them prudently in their preparation for the exams. The exams are primarily based on the classroom discussions, along with the readings.
- Coming late, leaving early, being inattentive, and other forms of disruptive behavior can be counted as unexcused absences.
- Students with exceptional participation performance may be awarded up to 3 bonus points (3% of the final grade). This bonus is entirely based on the instructor's discretion, and the final assessment will take into account both the quantity and quality of individual student's participation in classroom discussions, as well as other elements of coursework.

Exams

- No make-up exams will be given, except in documented instances of illness or other emergency, in which case the student must contact the instructor directly before the exam, if feasible, or as soon as possible.
- If any student has a valid reason to request rescheduling of an exam—such as observance of a religious holiday—he/she must contact the instructor in person and make suitable arrangements one week before the examination. Failure to act in accord with these instructions will lead to a failing grade.

Interview Report on the Academic Study of Religion

- The **interview report** should be based on two interviews with UF faculty, with focus on the use of various methodologies and theories about religion in their research. Students can choose any faculty (excluding Prof. Prophet), but only one can be from the Religion Dept. The other faculty member should be from another department, although his/her area(s) of specialization should include a substantial focus on religion. Adjunct or visiting faculty, as well as advanced graduate student teaching a course, are also acceptable.
- The report should bring together the course readings and discussions with outside research,

which can include academic publications and professional religion scholars.

- The length of the report should be around **1,000 words** (1,200 words max.), inclusive of notes and citations.
- The report must be submitted in MS Word format, and must follow standard academic format. Use standard font, such as Calibri 12, with 1.5 spacing and 1" margins. Do not forget to include paper title, course name, instructor name and title, date, and page numbers (at the bottom).
- The report must be submitted on Canvas, before the final deadline, as well as on paper in class. The file name should include your surname, course abbreviation, and name of assignment; e.g.: smith-JS-report.
- **No late submissions** will be accepted under any circumstances. Students are encouraged to avoid procrastination and make early submissions, at least a week before the deadline.
- Students are welcome to bring early drafts of their paper to office hours and ask for feedback and advice.

Classroom Conduct

- All students are required to come to class on time, as late arrivals (and early departures) are disruptive.
- Students are expected to be courteous and respectful, and abstain from disruptive behavior in the classroom that adversely affects others and is contrary to the pursuit of knowledge. Examples of such behavior include talking with someone, displaying active disinterest in the class (e.g. sleeping or inappropriate computer use), or denigrating fellow students. Phones should also be turned off during class. Offending students will be asked to leave.
- It is hoped that there will be lively debates and informed discussions. While there is room for individual opinions and disagreements, they should be expressed in ways that are appropriate for an academic setting.

Office Hours and Communication

- Students are encouraged to come to office hours, especially if they have questions or need help with the course materials.
- The instructor will also be glad to discuss all relevant topics that, due to time constraints, are not covered in class in much detail.
- Any questions about the course requirements or any aspect of the coursework should be resolved by consulting the instructor directly and in person, preferably during office hours.

Plagiarism and Cheating

- Plagiarism and cheating will result in a failing grade and other serious penalties.
- For more information, see the "Academic Honesty—Student Guide" brochure (posted online by the Dean of Students Office).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations (including those involving the use of technology) is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All such discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered,

students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. The Disability Resource Center may be contacted here: 352-392-8565; <https://disability.ufl.edu/>

Other Notices

- Choosing to register for this course contains an implied contractual agreement with the instructor, whereas the student is accountable for fulfilling all course requirements and adhering to the course policies.
- Students are responsible for knowing and following all schedules and instructions contained in this syllabus, as well as any other instructions given in class.