

R S 375S: WHAT IS RELIGION? (44376)
Prof. Steve Friesen
 Spring 2011
 Tuesday & Thursday, 11:00-12:30 pm; Burdine 436A
Office hours: M 11-12; T 9-10; Th 12:30-1:30; or by appt.

DESCRIPTION

Religion has been a powerful phenomenon throughout human history, but what kind of phenomenon is it? In this course we examine some of the classic answers to that question from the last 150 years of academic study. We will consider psychological, sociological, economic, phenomenological, anthropological, and other theories of religion. Participants in the course will also analyze examples of religious phenomena studied in other courses and see how well the theories apply to those examples. The course will run as a seminar, and sessions will emphasize discussion and analysis.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*;
 Daniel Pals, *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*;
 Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*;
 Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*;
 PDF readings posted in Blackboard.

GRADING

Component of course	% of grade	Points
Major paper (one)	31%	120
Topic proposal: working title & paragraph description		(10)
Working bibliography (1-2 pages)		(10)
First draft (15 pages)		(20)
Final draft (20 pages)		(80)
Exam over readings (one; there is no final exam)	21%	80
Peer reviews of first drafts (2 @ 20 pts., 300-500 words each)	11%	40
Reading notes (10 @ 4 pts., 100 words each)	11%	40
Quizzes (3 @ 10 pts.)	8%	30
Attendance	7%	27
Participation	11%	43
TOTAL	100%	380

Attendance: You get one point for every class you attend from beginning to end. If you're late or you leave early, no point for you!

Participation: You will be graded on quantity and quality of contributions to discussions. I will use the following numbers for a base participation grade, and then raise or lower it a couple points according to the quality or appropriateness of your contributions.

Points	Description
42	Contributed to every discussion.
40	Contributed to nearly every discussion.
38	Contributed often.
34	Contributed sometimes.
30	Hardly ever talked.
20	Never talked but was awake.
0	Slept through the semester. Should probably check student for pulse.

Grade ranges. I use plus/minus grading. Here's how I define the main grade categories.

- A: Excellent!** Unusual understanding and performance, with exceptional nuance.
- B: Good.** Normal understanding and performance. Solid work.
- C: Some problems.** Okay but needs more accuracy or greater depth.
- D: Major problems,** but some effort and understanding.
- F: Not acceptable** university work

SCHEDULE of topics and readings

Jan. 18	Introduction to the course: What is "What is Religion?"?	
Jan. 20	The Smiths get us started: the word "religion"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 3-15 • Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Religion in the West" pdf (p. 15-50).
Jan. 25	More Smiths: religion? religions? religious? Reading Notes #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious" pdf (269-282)
1. RELIGION AS PRIMITIVE SCIENCE		
Jan. 27	Max Müller (1823-1900): disease of language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 16-31. • Müller "Preface" pdf (69-79)
Feb. 1	James Frazer (1854-1941): Magic, Religion, Science. Reading Notes #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 31-52 • Frazer in <i>Introducing</i> 39-70
Feb. 3	Frazer's contemporary W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963). Quiz #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zuckerman2000DuBoisIntro.pdf (1-16) • DuBois1903NegroChurch.pdf (109-113) • DuBois1903FaithFathers.pdf (134-146)
2. REDUCTIONISM: RELIGION AS A SMOKE SCREEN FOR SOMETHING ELSE		
Feb. 8	Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): religion is an illusion of wish-fulfillment. Reading Notes #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 53-81. • Freud in <i>Introducing</i> 74-83. • <i>Future of an Illusion</i> 1-25.
Feb. 10	Freud as a psychological explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Future of an Illusion</i> 26-71.
Feb. 15	Karl Marx (1818-1883): religion comes from economic exploitation. Reading Notes #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 118-132. • Marx in <i>Introducing</i> 143-153.
Feb. 17	Marx & Friends (Engels, Lenin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 132-148. • Marx in <i>Introducing</i> 155-163, 167-170.
Feb. 22	Émile Durkheim (1858-1917): religion is an expression of social forces. Reading Notes #5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 85-107. • Durkheim in <i>Introducing</i> 102-125.
Feb. 24	Durkheim as a sociological explanation of religion. Quiz #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 107-114. • Durkheim in <i>Introducing</i> 125-142.
3. COUNTERPROPOSALS: RELIGION AS AN INDEPENDENT PHENOMENON		
Mar. 1	Max Weber (1864-1920): ideas/action, types of leaders. Reading Notes #6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 149-172. • Weber in <i>Introducing</i> 240-255.
Mar. 3	More Weber: asceticism, mysticism, and salvation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 172-188. • Weber in <i>Introducing</i> 255-270
Mar. 8	Mircea Eliade (1907-1986): sacred/profane. Reading Notes #7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 193-226. • Eliade in <i>Introducing</i> 274-286.
Mar. 10	Eliade, phenomenology, and history. <i>Topic proposal</i> due by noon tomorrow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliade in <i>Introducing</i> 287-308
<i>SPRING BREAK (whew)</i>		
Mar. 22	Clifford Geertz (1926-2006): worldview/ethos/social action. Reading Notes # 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eight Theories</i> 260-289. • Geertz in <i>Introducing</i> 343-362
Mar. 24	Geertz: thick description. Quiz #3 <i>Working bibliography</i> due noon tomorrow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geertz "Thick Description" pdf (3-30)

4. HOWEVER, WHAT ABOUT...		
Mar. 29	Tired of the male conversation yet? Feminist theory and religion: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Reading Notes #9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESF2009Intersections.pdf (1-18); • ESF2001Analytic.pdf (102-134); • ESF2001Hermeneutic.pdf (165-190)
Mar. 31	No class today. Work on your papers.	
Apr. 5	More on gender and religion. Reading notes #10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bynum1993OnWeber.pdf (53-78) • Warne2001Engendering.pdf (147-156)
Apr. 7	Charles H. Long (1923-): the silence of oppressed peoples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long1986Intro.pdf (1-9) • Long1969Silence.pdf (54-62)
Apr. 12	Bruce Lincoln : Violent religion. Reading Notes #11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Holy Terrors</i> 1-50, 97-102.
Apr. 14	Digesting it all; exam prep.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kendall2004Shamans.pdf (245-251) • <i>Eight Theories</i> 304-320
5. ENDGAMES		
Apr. 19	Exam over readings	
Apr. 21	Discussion of seminar papers	
Apr. 26	Discussion of seminar papers	
Apr. 28	Discussion of seminar papers	
May 3	Discussion of seminar papers	
May 5	Wrap up: what was "What is Religion?"?	
May 11	Paper final draft due at noon , via email in .doc, .docx, or .pages format (not .pdf).	

Reading Notes. Notes should be 100-150 words per assignment (use word count) and will be turned in online before class. The first half should **summarize** the reading; the second half should contain your **reactions** and observations. When you summarize the reading, deal with main ideas and arguments.

Quizzes & Exam. There will be three short quizzes in class. The purpose of the quizzes is to help you review and consolidate your knowledge of the readings. There will also be a written, in-class exam on April 19. Questions on the exam will be require paragraph answers, and one essay.

Paper, first draft. First draft of paper will be about 3750 words (15 pages): normal 12-pt font, normal margins, double-spaced. It must be distributed by email 5 days before the class discussion of your draft. The whole class will read the draft before we meet, and two students will do peer reviews of the draft.

Peer reviews of first drafts. Every student will produce a written peer review for two other students. The review should be 300-500 words (1-2 pages). Email one copy of the review to the writer and another copy to the professor on the day when the draft is discussed (before or after). The reviewers will help us discuss the papers by summarizing their reviews in class.

Paper final draft. The final draft should be 5000 words (20 pages). It should incorporate suggestions from peer reviewers, from class discussion, from the professor, and from further work on the topic. Email the final draft to me by noon on Wed., May 11.

Special needs. The University of Texas provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Dean of Students office at 471-6259 or 471-4641, or consult the website (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd>).

Honesty—the best policy. Scholastic dishonesty on any graded assignment will result in no points for that assignment, and perhaps even a failing grade for the course. Scholastic dishonesty includes any kind of cheating; if you are unsure about the exact definition, you should consult the General Information Catalogue -- <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi06-07/app/appc11.html#Subchapter11-802> then scroll way down to 11-802.

Religious holidays. Let me know ahead of time if there is a schedule conflict in this regard and we will come up with a solution.