REL 120: Introduction to the Study of Religion
Fall 2015
MW 2:15-3:35pm, School of Management 304.
Instructor: Dan Moseson
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Office Hours: 12pm-1pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays, Hall of Languages 503/514.

In this class, we will read classic theories of religion alongside contemporary studies that compliment and complicate them. We will explore further layers of complexity by performing our own research on local religious communities.

Course goals:
1. Students will gain familiarity with classic psychological, sociological, and economic theories of religion, and with the complex ways they influence contemporary studies of religion.
2. By reading ethnographic studies after classic theories, and by conducting their own research in the Syracuse community, students will learn about the different kinds and degrees of complexity at issue in sociological, psychological, economic, and anthropological studies of religion and other social phenomena.
Class Ground Rules:

1. Respect: We all get pretty passionate about religion, whatever we think it is, and whatever we might believe. We’re all going to disagree a lot. It’s important, with this in mind, that we establish a baseline of respect for people with different viewpoints and different experiences.

2. Gender-inclusive language: a lot of our older readings will refer to human beings as “man” or “mankind,” and will often say that “he” (“man”) does or thinks x, y, or z. We will see how woefully inadequate this is as a picture of how human beings and human societies operate, and I’m not assuming you think that only men’s experiences count. However, we don’t have to talk or write this way, so I ask that you don’t. The awkwardness of “she or he” is well worth it. For this class, you can also use “they,” as this pronoun makes fewer presumptions about gender identity (some people identify as neither men nor women, and we shouldn’t try to squeeze them into those boxes, in writing or otherwise).

3. Attendance: everybody gets one unexcused absence, but after one, you will need a note from a doctor or an advisor or have another compelling reason (i.e., a death in the family) for missing class.
Syracuse University Policy on Academic Integrity

“At Syracuse University, academic integrity is expected of every community member in all endeavors. Academic integrity includes a commitment to the values of honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and respect. These values are essential to the overall success of an academic society. In addition, each member of the university community has a right to expect adherence to academic integrity from all other community members.

An individual’s academic dishonesty threatens and undermines the central mission of the university. It is unfair to other community members who do not cheat, because it devalues efforts to learn, to teach, and to conduct research. Academic dishonesty interferes with moral and intellectual development, and poisons the atmosphere of open and trusting intellectual discourse.” (http://supolicies.syr.edu/fac_teach/acad_integrity.htm)

For more information, see http://supolicies.syr.edu/fac_teach/acad_integrity.htm

Additional Citation / Academic Integrity Expectations for this class:

- In your written assignments, it must be clear which ideas are your own, and which are from other sources.
- Anything written by someone else that you include in an assignment must be cited properly. For this class, this means putting the author’s name and a page number in parenthesis, like this:
  - “The clamour of the present work has not excited me” (Feuerbach, 22).
- You must do this whether you have used a direct quote, as above, or a paraphrase. A paraphrase means a close translation of an author’s idea into your own words
  - Feuerbach writes that he is not excited by the present work (Feuerbach, 22).
- If you summarize several of an author’s ideas from several pages into a paragraph, put a range of page numbers at the end of the last sentence, like this:
  - (Feuerbach, 22-35)
Syracuse University Non-Discrimination Policy

Students have the right not to be discriminated against by any agent or organization of Syracuse University for reasons of age, creed, ethnic or national origin, gender, disability, marital status, political or social affiliation, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. In their individual roles as members of student organizations, students have the responsibility not to discriminate against others (http://supolicies.syr.edu/ethics/nonD_stud_disability.htm).
Syracuse University Policy on Religious Observances

Syracuse University recognizes the diverse faith traditions represented among its campus community and supports the rights of faculty, staff, and students to observe according to these traditions.

All University offices are asked to be sensitive to the needs of faculty, staff, and students who are observing a religious holiday when scheduling meetings and events.

Deans, department chairs, and program directors are asked to make every effort to avoid scheduling meetings or events at times that would exclude faculty who are observing a religious holiday from participation.

Supervisors are asked to be supportive of staff members who request vacation or personal time to observe a religious holiday and to make every effort to avoid scheduling meetings or events at times that would exclude such staff members from participation.

Students are asked to consider that it is more difficult to arrange appropriate accommodations in some kinds of courses - for example, those that have certain kinds of laboratories or a significant experiential learning component - so students should consider their need for accommodation for religious observances as they plan their schedule each semester. Students should recall that not every course is offered every academic year and that the catalog indicates how frequently each course is offered.

Faculty are asked to make appropriate accommodation for students' observance needs by providing an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirement that is missed because of an absence due to a religious observance, provided the instructor has been notified no later than the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibly formatted classes. No fees will be charged to the student for the costs incurred by the University for such make-up work. If a faculty member is unwilling or unable to make an appropriate accommodation, the student should consult his or her academic dean.

Syracuse University recognizes that the faith traditions observed by our diverse community include more holidays than can be captured adequately in a list. In addition, some observances vary by tradition and by country and are defined by the lunar calendar. However, to assist in identifying religious observance days, Hendricks Chapel has compiled a list of religious holidays that reflect a large proportion of the University community and that may or may not fall on University work and class days. The chapel also recommends consulting the more comprehensive Interfaith Calendar (http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious_observance.htm)
Statement on Disability Accommodation:
Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. My goal is to create learning environments that are useable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, I invite any student to meet with me to discuss additional strategies beyond accommodations that may be helpful to your success.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), visit the ODS website– http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 or TDD: (315) 443-1371 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible (http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/faculty-staff/syllabus-statement/).
The readings listed on the syllabus are for the whole week. I consider them “due” Wednesday.

Week 1:
Monday:
- Introductions.
Wednesday:
- Smith, Jonathan Z. “Map is Not Territory” in Map is Not Territory (Blackboard)

Week 2:
- Student-led discussion Wednesday.

Week 3:
- Freud, Future of an Illusion, 51-end.
- Student-led discussion Wednesday,

Week 4:
- Introducing community research project.
- Wallwork, Ernest. – Critical Issues in Modern Religion selection on Freud (Blackboard)
- Luhrmann, Tanya. “Preface” and selection from “Is that You, God?” (preface and 39-top of 59) in When God Talks Back (Blackboard)
- Student-led Discussion Wednesday

Week 5:
- Selections from “Let’s Pretend,” and Developing Your Heart” (72-83, 101-113, 119-131) in Luhrmann, When God Talks Back (Blackboard).
- Rizzuto, Birth of the Living God, 41-43, 149-mid152, 161-mid163, bottom 168-end173 (Blackboard)
- Student-led discussion Wednesday.

Week 6:
- Community Research Project location due
- Durkheim, Elementary Forms of Religious Life
- Listen to “Hopes and Dreams in a World of Fear,” On Being (American Public Media, podcast, available on Itunes)
- Student-led discussion Wednesday.

Week 7:
- Midterm Papers Due.
- Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
- Wallwork, “Durkheim’s Early Sociology of Religion.” (Blackboard)
- Student-led discussion Wednesday.

**Week 8:**
- *Theoretical Frame for Research Project*
- “Walking in the City,” in De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life.* (Blackboard)
- Selection from De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life 2* (Blackboard)
- Watch “Iran,” *Parts Unknown with Anthony Bourdain.* Available on Netflix.
- Student-led discussion Wednesday.

**Week 9:**
**Monday:**
- *Begin scheduling community research site visits.*
- “Introduction: Gender Representation and the Problem of Language and Resistance in India,” in Gold and Raheja, *Listen to the Heron’s Words.* (Blackboard)
- “Sexuality, Fertility, and Erotic Imagination in Rajasthani Women’s Songs,” in Gold and Raheja, *Listen to the Heron’s Words.* (Blackboard).
- Student-led Discussion Wednesday.

**Week 10:**
**Monday:**
- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
- Student-led Discussion Wednesday.

**Week 11**
**Monday:**
- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
- Student-led discussion Wednesday.

**Week 12:**
**Monday:**
- Selection from Waghorne, *Diaspora of the Gods.* (Blackboard)
- Student Presentations

**Week 13**
**Monday:**
- “Shamans in the Meetinghouse” in Bender, *The New Metaphysicals* (Blackboard)
- Ira Helderman’s ethnographic study of constructions of “religion” in the discourse of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (Blackboard)
- Student presentations
Week 14:
Monday:
  • Student Presentations, reading TBA.
Wednesday
  • Student Presentations
The assignments and grading for this class are as follows:

Class participation: 30%
• attendance - 10%
• insightful, consistent participation in discussions - 10%
• student-led discussion - 10%

Weekly critiques: 20%
Midterm Paper: 20%
Final Project: 30%

1. Weekly critique on the readings (1-2 pages), due Tuesdays by 12 noon.
   • A weekly critique is 1-2 pages of your thoughts on one feature the week’s readings, a sentence, paragraph, image, idea, anything that stands out to you, really gets your brain going. It needs to begin with a thesis-statement - one or two sentences summarizing what you think about a particular feature of the readings. Not what the reading says, but what you think about what it says. The rest of it needs to use examples from the reading to back up your ideas.
   • Use parenthetical citations of page numbers for quotes and paraphrases.
   • These assignments are not graded – you get full credit as long as you turn them in on time, but I cannot accept them late.

2. Student presentations (at least once per person during the semester)
   • Each week, three students will lead the Wednesday class discussion by providing commentary and questions on the week’s readings. You do not have to write a weekly response the week you present.
   • The readings listed on the syllabus are for the week, I consider them “due” Wednesday.

3. Midterm paper (4-6 pages).
   • This is a longer writing project, but the format is largely the same as the weekly response pages – the detailed defense of what you think about a particular feature of the readings. I will provide possible questions for you to write on, but you may also come up with your own, if you clear them with me two weeks before the due date.

   • class presentation, 5 page summary of your experiences and how you understand them through Michel De Certeau’s theory of “the practice of everyday life”.