Introduction to the Study of Religion

Religions manifest themselves in a diversity of human expressions. This course will explore religious phenomenon as they coalesce around philosophy, text, literature, music, space and place. We will explore religions as a means of sharing, living and expressing the sacred throughout a variety of artistic mediums, geographical locals and cultural contexts. Methodologies from anthropology, the history of religions, psychology, sociology, textual studies and ethno-musicology will guide our investigation into a variety of religious communities. No tradition, theorist or discipline will be covered comprehensively; instead we will investigate the sacred places, myths, songs and literatures of several of the world’s major and minor traditions.
Texts:

Basso, Keith. *Wisdom Sits In Places*.
Deloria, Vine Jr. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*.
Ginsberg, Allen. *Howl and Other Poems*.

Requirements:

1. Journal entries: to be collected twice, on October 20th and on December 10th. Worth 15% of the final grade. Journal entries are an exercise in creativity and reflection and will be graded for completion.
2. Tests: three tests each worth 20% of your final grade. Test #1 will be administered on September 29th, #2 will be administered on October 29th and #3 on December 10th. The format of the test will be short answer and essay.
3. Active participation in class. This class will be discussion heavy. Keep in mind that in addition to entering into discussions during class, e-mail, blackboard and office hours offer unique formats for active participation.
4. The ability to listen. I want, as much as possible, for us to watch films and listen to music during class; however, our ability to play music and watch films will be directly linked to our collective skills of listening.
5. NO cell phones, computers, tablets or other electronic devices will be permitted during class at any time. In this class text is not a verb.

Grading: Journal (15%), Test (60%), Attendance & Participation (25%)

A 99-89; B 88-79; C 78-70; D 69-60; F 59 and below

Goals:

The Department of Religion has articulated four goals that shape its teaching and expectations of what students in its courses and programs may expect to gain from this study:

1. To better understand the nature and diversity of religious expressions in the contemporary world and in history, and their power in peoples’ personal and collective lives.
2. To recognize and appreciate the difficulties and possibilities in a disciplined study of religion; and to become aware of a diversity of approaches and methods within that study.

3. To improve your analytic abilities to read actively, to think critically, and to write successfully.

4. To develop a more informed understanding of and appreciation for the humanities and their modes of critical inquiry.

Introduction

(9/1) Syllabus. Standard Rules for Students.

Religion

Nye – “Religion”

(9/8) Religion and Psychology
Freud – “The Future of an Illusion”
Deloria – “Human Personality”

(9/10) Religion and Consumerism
Marx – “On the Jewish Question”

(9/15) Religion and Contact
Long – “Conquest and Cultural Contact in the New World”

(9/17) Religion and Gender
Irigaray – “Spiritual Tasks for Our Age”
Nye – “Gender”

(9/22) Knowledge and Power in the Garden of Adam and Eve
Selections of Hebrew Bible
Nye – “Text”

(9/24) Cosmic Dismemberment and Social Order
Selections of RgVeda (blackboard)
Deloria – “Origin of Religion”
(9/29) Down From the Sky
Selections of *Iroquois Creation Story*
*Deloria – “The Problem of Creation”*

(10/1) Up From the Ground
“The Navajo Story of the Emergence”

(10/6) **Test #1**

**Aesthetics**

(10/8) Allegory and Jewish Mysticism
Selections of *Ba’al Shem Tov*
*Nye – “Power”*

(10/13) Allegory and Jewish Mysticism
Selections of *Nahman of Braslav*
*Dauber, Jeremy – “Looking Again: Representation in 19th Century Yiddish Literature”*

(10/15) Ginsberg’s Growl: Poetry and Religion
*Howl (all)*

(10/20) Ginsberg’s Growl: Poetry and Religion
*Howl (all)*

(10/22) Jazz
*Neil - “Church” and “Prophets”*
*Nye – “Culture”*

(10/27) Jazz
*Long – “Interpretations of Black Religion in America”*
*Neil – “Prophets”*
**Journal #1**

(10/29) Reggae
*Jaffe – “I was Wailers”*
*Manley – “Reggae and Revolutionary Faith”*

(11/3) Hip-Hop
“But Do the Lord Care: God, Suffering, Compassion and Death in the Ghetto”
“How Long Will They Mourn Me? Posthumous Presences of a Ghetto Saint”
(11/5) **Test #2**

**Space and Place**

(11/10) Contested Spaces: Western Wall and the Dome of the Rock  
*Nye* – “Belief” and “Ritual”

(11/12) Contested Places: Western Wall and the Dome of the Rock  
*Deloria* – “Thinking In Time and Space”

(11/17) Blood Quantum, Peyote and the Native American Church  
*Deloria* – “Tribal Religions and Contemporary American Culture”

(11/19) Pilgrimage and Conversion  
*Malcolm X* (325-348)

(12/1) Hierophany in Upstate: Onondaga Lake and Hill Cumorah  
*Deloria* – “Sacred Places and Moral Responsibility”  
*Nye* – “Contemporary Religions”

(12/3) Sacred Geography, Ethnography and Anthropology of Religion  
*Basso* - *Wisdom Sits in Places*

(12/8) Religion and Land  
*Basso* - *Wisdom Sits in Places*

(12/10) Radical Self Sustainability – Black Rock and Burning Man  
*Wyman* – “Finding Jesus at Burning Man”, “Sabbath at Burning Man”  
*Deloria* – “Religion Today”

(12/18) **Test #3 5:15-7:15 pm**  
*Journal #2*
Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services, see http://disabilityservices.syr.edu

Academic Integrity Statement

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/ Related Links:

Statement on Religious Observance Policy

Students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes if they will be absent during the semester in order to observe a religious holiday. For more information about SU's religious observances policy, see http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm.
Under the policy, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class. Students are then provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided that they have notified their instructors before the end of the second week of classes.