

RELIGION 391: ADVANCED RELIGION SEMINAR

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SPRING, 2015
Tues/Thurs. 2:00-3:20
Office hours by appointment

Religion 391 is required of all Religion majors and minors. The course seeks to introduce students to the diversity of theories and approaches used historically and currently in understanding religious and spiritual phenomena and to provide a forum for discussing some of the most critical existential and scholarly issues in religion today. The course will investigate what counts as “religion” and “spirituality.” It will also explore some of the most trenchant critiques of religion today and how some influential religious scholars respond to these critiques. The department hopes that this required course will introduce students of religion to one another and foster a greater sense of community among you.

Course Requirements: Attendance/Participation. Critical discussion is essential to this course. I expect attendance at every class meeting. Absences will be excused only with advanced notice and written, official documentation of illness or emergency. Unexcused absences will lower your final grade. Students are expected to contribute to all seminar discussions. It is important that you read the assignments carefully before class and that you come prepared to discuss the readings.

Weekly Reflection Papers/Participation Grade (30%). Students are expected to post weekly reflection papers on the reading assignment on Blackboard for that week by 6pm on the preceding Monday. These responses will constitute a significant portion of your participation grade since you will be expected to share them with the class or working group. Late response papers will not be accepted. Pop quizzes may be given if the discussion indicates that the reading assignment has not been read with sufficient care. These pop quizzes will be factored into your final participation grade. Your response papers should state in a couple of sentences or a short paragraph the primary issue/argument of the reading. The body of the paper should discuss critically the treatment of the issue/argument and your agreement/disagreement with how the author(s) handle it. The response papers should be 1-2 pages long, double-spaced, with regular margins and font. It is your responsibility to give a hard copy of your response papers to the instructor before you leave the classroom. Late papers will not be accepted.

Mid-term Exam (25%). There will be mid-term exam on **Tuesday, March 3** on the readings through February 26.

Final Project (45%). The final project should study, interpret and apply one or more of the critiques/explanations of religion studied in the course. It may take the form of a video project, architectural design, performance art, graphic arts project, photography exhibit or standard academic research paper. Choose a topic and form of presentation that is interesting and useful to you. Regardless of the topic and form, a 20 page paper attachment is required in which you (1) state what you intend to accomplish with your

project and how you interpret and apply your chosen theory through your analysis; and (2) demonstrate your knowledge of the other theories treated in the course by briefly discussing how these other approaches would change your analysis and why your chosen approach was the best of the alternatives to use.

Texts. St Augustine's Confessions, Johnson and Wallwork, Critical Issues in Modern Religion, William James's Varieties of Religious Experience, Thrower, Religion: The Classical Theories and Wuthnow, America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity are all available at the SU bookstore.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

- 1/13 Syllabus Distribution Introduction
1/15 No class. Professor Wallwork lecturing out of town. Start next week's reading assignment

PART I: THEORIES OF RELIGION

REVELATION

- 1/20 Thrower, Religion: The Classical Theories, chs 1 and 2 (1-44)
1/22 St. Augustine, Confessions, trans. Henry Chadwick, Books 1-4, 8.14-9 (1-71, 142-178).

RELIGION AS EXPERIENCE

- 1/27-1/29 Thrower, Religion: The classical Theories, ch. 3 (pp. 49-72)
William James, Varieties of Religious Experience, Lectures 1-8 & Conclusion.

PART II: NATURALISTIC THEORIES OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS RESPONSES

RELIGION AS HUMAN CONSTRUCT

- 2/3-2/5 Thrower, Religion: The Classical Theories, ch. 5 (93-97);
Johnson and Wallwork, Critical Issues in Modern Religion, chs 1-2

RELIGION AS SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

- 2/10-2/12 Johnson and Wallwork, Critical Issues in Modern Religion, chs 8, 9 (pp. 213-265).

Additional Reading for extra credit: Johnson and Wallwork, Critical Issues in Modern Religion, either Chapter 10 (pp.271-302) or Chapter 11 (pp.309-341). Those who opt for Chapter 10 will present that chapter to the rest of the class. Those who opt for Chapter 11 will present that chapter to the class.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION: DURKHEIM AND WEBER

2/17-2/19 Thrower, Religion: The Classical Theories, Ch. 8, sections on “Emile Durkheim” and Max Weber (pp.183-198)
Durkheim, Emile. The Elementary Forms, Book 1, Ch.1; Ch. 7.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION CONTINUED

2/24-2/26 Durkheim, Emile. The Elementary Forms, Conclusion, I and II.
Bellah, Robert. “Civil Religion in America,” in Russell E. Richey and Donald G.Jones, American Civil Religion, ch. 2.

3/3 MIDTERM

3/5 Work on your final papers

3/10-3/12 **SPRING VACATION**

RELIGION AS PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT

3/17 Thrower, Religion: The Classical Theories, ch. 7 (pp. 126-157)

3/19 Johnson and Wallwork, Critical Issues in Modern Religion, ch.5, Sigmund Freud, pp.118-145.

POST-FREUDIAN RECONSTRUCTIONS

3/24 Johnson and Wallwork, Critical Issues in Modern Religion, ch. 6, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Religionless Christianity: Maturity, Transcendence, and Freedom” (146-175).

3/26 Johnson and Wallwork, Critical Issues in Modern Religion, ch. 7, “Erik H. Erikson: Psychosocial Resources for Faith” (pp. 178-207).

PART III RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

RELIGION IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

3/31-4/2 Johnson and Wallwork, Critical Issues in Modern Religion, chs 12, 13, 14 (346-417)

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM

4/7-4/9 Wuthnow, America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity, ch.3 (pp. 75-78), 4,5, 6, and 10.

PART IV STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

4/14-4/16 Student Presentations

4/21-23 Revising final papers

4/28 **FINAL PAPERS DUE**

Official Policies

Academic Integrity: 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/> .

Religious Observances: This is a reminder that students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes when they will be observing their religious holiday(s). In fall and spring semesters, students fill out their notification forms online.

Disability Statement: Students who may need academic accommodations due to a disability are encouraged to discuss their needs with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. In order to obtain authorized accommodations, students should be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309 (315)

443-4498 and have an updated accommodation letter for the instructor. Accommodation and related support services such as exam administration are not provided retroactively and must be requested in advance. For more information about services and policy, visit the Office of Disability Services website at <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/> or contact the office at the addresses below:

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