

Rel 600.1 (Waghorne): *Cities: Sacred-Secular-Cyber*[©]

Mondays 3:45-6:30 in HL 504 (Religion seminar room)

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Office hours: Wednesdays 10:30 to 12:30 or by appointment (contact me via email—I am quick to reply)



Why the city? This seminar is a sequel to my Spring 2013 seminar “Making Space for Religion” but with a different focus on the urban life. There are no prerequisites except a willingness to engage with place and space theory. The rapid urbanization of the world, especially in Asia where most of world’s most populous cities and the fastest growing megacities are located, has become an urgent concern. Equally concerning is the declining industrial cities in the North American and Northern European orbit, once great generators of global wealth. With the emergence of a new phase of urbanism—beyond the modern and modernization—that theorists struggle to name, many eyes are on the cities where majority of the world’s population will soon live. Urban life not the

rural is the future of the world. Finding and understanding the religious or the sacred in this new landscape has the potential to change the way we view religion apart from the long-held connections between the natural world and the divine.

During the American phase of urbanization in the 1840s, the Transcendentalists set true religiosity apart from the rising cities. Spirituality lived in nature. Later, scholarship on the ancient world showed the city to be a model of the cosmos, yet this urban world was nonetheless fabricated—the work of human hands. The rise of the modern city connected with manufacturing, with trade in commercial goods remained embedded in the artificial world. Now with the rise of a post-modern city—some call it the Supermodern—technology and a regime based on a digital mode of being will soon dominate—so we are told. If Ancient holy cities modeled the cosmos (did they?), the modern city modeled secularity (did it?), now in the

[©] All photos are from Singapore September-October 2013

postmodern metropolis, networked and consumerist, where is sacrality, what is religiosity, what is divine, what is human?



Key issues for the seminar

On the dashboard of a taxi in Singapore

***The spatial turn—so what?** The key approach of this seminar remains within space/place theory, which spans several disciplines but is just entering the field of Religious Studies. The reasons for the more recent consideration of the religious in the city

have several antecedents. The modern city was supposed to be the abode of the secular, where religious roots withered. The field of religious studies also adopted the near axiom that the sacred primarily adhered to natural elements, especially in once dominant theories of Mircea Eliade. The artificial has always been a problem because—I contend--- the idea that the world was created by God places the act of creation in divine hands; humans as makers always evoke some suspicion—as with the long debates over idolatry. Moreover, with the city as the center of consumerism, again hidden theological suppositions connect money with Mammon and with sin, which even creep into seeming secular disciplines. Added to this are the long debates on use-value and commodity fetishism in Marxist circles, along with the suspicion on the value of religion—the opiate etc. The strongest voices in early urban studies within religious studies emanated either from Weber or from Marx. So how and why does a turn to spatial theory help?

***Initially the issues of definition and terminology will be crucial.** Are we discussing the role of religion in the city? Would sacred function better, as Kim Knott and the editors of *The Sacred in the City* suggest or spirituality—as Peter Van der Veers recently claims. All three terms are used now and each for important reasons. Terminology here exposes deep differences with the way theorists, ethnographers, and historians approach their material.

*** Do latest models for the periodization of cities make sense: Ancient, Modern, and (postmodern but perhaps better) Supermodern?** These issues will involve problems with an historical perspective. Keep in mind that the close association of the rise of modern cities with the emergence of “the secular” was embedded in once gospel

notion of the eventual decline of religion in the modern world. The so-called *secular city*, which Weber claims arose at a certain period with the rise of the middle-class, has defined our world for a long time. What are/were the characteristics of the space of the secular? So much of the work on the ancient city was coterminous with these same sensibilities and tended to enforce a division between the sacred and the secular (not to be confused, although it remains confusing, between the sacred and the profane). Until recently all major work on religion in the city worked in the context of the modern world. Now this era supposedly is at the beginning of its end in a post-secular world. How might that change the way we read the past?



*Closely related to this discussion are what we could call “theological” issues but in a very broad sense. Many scholars claim that **new uneasy lines between animate and inanimate**, icon and flesh, human and machine are emerging at the current time. But interestingly, this allows a return to the ancient period and new approaches to some older issues. In the ancient world, and indeed in the contemporary, the city was/is often “personified” as a goddess, is/was a living entity as a whole. The networked city, the cyber city, is also alive—but in what way? The inhabitants: what was/is their status when part of the ancient city, and now the cyber city. Are netizens emerging with a new kind of immortality, new kinds of bodies, or a new sense of being alive, or is their humanity deadened by this brave new world? And in all of this, the ever-present issue of biopolitics—who controls such developments? Some like Thrift are exuberant about these changes while others sound warnings.

*Closely related to this is the changing meaning of the “nature” and the “natural.” When cities rise on landfill—--as did Boston in the nineteenth century and Singapore in the twenty-first—where are the lines between the natural and artificial? Does the making of this new land come with new imagery and even “mythology”? The new Gardens-by-the-Bay in Singapore challenges many of these lines with a gigantic “forest” of Super trees and a SkyPark 67 stories high.



**The migration*

Europe, continue role of study of much of studies, urban migration



dynamic pluralism within the city—a complex of multiple religious identities, and the creation of new sacred spaces, sometime shared and sometimes made exclusive.

ongoing issues with and the changing religious demographics of the contemporary cities in North American and Asia, to be crucial, as does the ethnographic work in the the city. While previously this came under diaspora now the very nature of the world may reconfigure into larger issues of the

Puja done in Singapore via Live Webcast with Brunei, Australia, and India

**Central to the discussion is the emergence of the network city/ the cyber city. What does this entire connectivity mean for urban life? Where is sacrality, religiosity, amid these networks? And most importantly do the cyber world and the cyber experience reconfigure the world and thus the very contours of religiosity in the centuries to come? How are key aspects long associated with religious behavior reconfigured by technology, rituals, mythologies, and memories?*

**Yet another aspect of the seminar will be architecture in the city—what does it mean to construct a sacred building or a spiritual place? What affect do these building continue to possess?*

The list of interconnected aspects of the city and the sacred could and will continue.....

BASIC READING:

We will begin with some classics and then move to very recent work. Our task is to read for religious modalities here and to rethink the fading boundaries between human and machine, social life and inner life, buildings and persons, the meaning of self and personhood in the older contexts of religion and this emerging landscape.

The list below will likely be revised: do not purchase all of these immediately—some of this is available online and I will send PDF of material that we will use in part. There will be more articles etc.—much of this material is in current periodicals.

Akkach, Samer. 2005. *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Amin, Ash and Nigel Thrift. 2002. *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Augé, Marc. [1992] 2008. *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. 2nd Ed. London: Verso.

Braidotti, Rosi. 2013. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge MA: Polity Press.

Britton, Karla Cavarra. 2010. *Constructing the Ineffable: Contemporary Sacred Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Cox, Harvey [1965] 2013. *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*. New Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hee, Limin. Davisi Boontharm and Erwin Viray, Eds. 2012. *Future Asian Space: Projecting the Urban Space of New East Asia*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.

Singer, Milton. 1972. *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization*. New York: Praeger Publishers

Thrift, Nigel. 2012. "The Insubstantial Pageant: Producing an Untoward Land." *Cultural Geographies*, published online February 29.

Urry, John. 2007. *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Van der Veer, Peter. 2013. *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Van Herck, Walter and Liliana Gómez, Eds. 2012. *The Sacred in the City*. London: Bloomsbury Academic Press.

Vidler, Anthony. 2001. *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. Cambridge MA: M.IT Press.

Waghorne, Joanne Punzo, ed. 2014. *Place/No Place: Aspects of Urban Religiosity*. (with 10 chapters including work by Ann Gold and Gareth Fisher and our alumnus Yohan Yoo and Anthropology ABD, Manuscript

Weber, Max [1921] 1958. *The City* (Die Stadt in Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, Vol. 47. P. 621 f., 1921.) Translated and edited by Don Martindale and Gertrude Neuwirth. New York: The Free Press

REQUIREMENTS:

Weekly response---these are especially important to keep the conversation going throughout the week-

1. For the responses: Due each week when assigned on **Sundays at 10 am**—I need the Sunday to prepare my own comments on your work and to create the weekly compendium, which will set our discussion.

These are your reflections on the reading. I particularly want you to identify aspects of the reading that you find important for your own work, for understanding space/place in the context of religion, and for understanding “religion.”

- Please be specific, but do not center your responses on only one reading.
- Try to find themes/threads that move through the readings.
- This does not mean that you need to read every word or to mention everything but give us a sense of comparative reading.

Note I am *not* asking you to primarily critique the reading—but to look for usefulness. Again this does not mean that you ignore problems; do mention areas where you worry or disagree but do not make your response a rant—to be blunt.

These responses should be between 500 and 1000 words.

Final research paper: I have thought a lot about this—some of our seminars have other options but I want to stress publication possibilities—and would like you to aim for a short article length essay—about 20–25 pages that integrates the reading from the seminar into your prior research interests or new interests you found as we read and discussed.

The paper will have several aspects—

- A basic outline and bibliography—i.e. an idea is due **March 16**—**THIS IS THE VERY END OF SPRING BREAK** as part of your weekly response
- An oral report for all of us during the last week of the seminar.
- A final written paper due on **Wednesday MAY 7, midnight**—I will need time to read and get comments back on these so this is the latest date that I can give you.

Standard inclusions:

Academic Integrity

At the graduate level I should not have to mention this but all work must be your own. Please consult the Syracuse University academic integrity policy

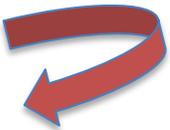
(<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>).

Accommodations for disability

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services(ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 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.

Religious Observances Policy

SU religious observances policy, found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to are religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/StudentServices/Enrollment/MyReligiousObservances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.



SCHEDULE (DRAFT)

Rolling Schedule subject to creative change

Week 1 - January 15: Lay of the land in urban studies and religion--

- *Territory of the disciplines, sociology, anthropology, comparative religions (or history of religions)—a retrospective on the urban, the classical and the popular*
- *Current state of space/place theory in the context of the city*
- *Singapore, for example . . .*

Reading but no response is due:

Introduction to Place/No Place: Spatial Aspect of Urban Asia—manuscript pdf:

Martin Luther King Day Jan 21—holiday (We will make up for this at the end with a dinner at my home)

Week 2 - January 27: Understanding terminology and the problems of religion, sacred, spiritual when speaking in multiple disciplinary tongues—or getting on the same page. I recognize that this is a lot of reading but you have two weeks.

Readings:

- Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, chapter 2, 20-65
- Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, chapter 2, 29-53
- Peter Van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia*, chapter 2, 35-48 (you may continue with this chapter for concrete examples)
- Kim Knott, "Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion" *Religion Compass* 2/6 (2008): 1102-1116 in PDF
- Gómez and Van Herck, *Sacred in the City. Part One*--chapters 1 and 2, 15-51.

Week 3 - February 3: Two classic works that provide an insight into the BEFORE...at a time of American dominance and the Cold War and the Third World.

Here we are reading pre-postmodern work—once an anathema but now that postmodern has been officially declared dead—we can indulge. This is the original text with a new introduction by the author. Keep in mind Cox (1929--) is a theologian but this was a best seller in its day—a very popular (apparently sold a million copies) but also academic book much like Mircea Eliade's very (and still) popular, *The Sacred and The Profane* from a few years earlier in 1959. Eliade was an émigré from Romania and Orthodox Christian, Cox an "old American" and an ordained as a Baptist minister. Milton Singer (1912-1994) his obituary give his background, "Singer, who was born in a small village in Poland, came to the United States with his family as a child and grew up in Detroit, where he attended public schools." His PhD was in philosophy and he "picked up" anthropology.

Reading

- Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* 2013 (1965) read the whole thing as much as you can take..
- Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilizations* (1972 from work done between 1954-1964) 1-52—I will provide the PDF
- Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane* (1959) —reprise and compare

Week 4 - February 10: What is a city? The emerging space between rural and urban in India. Discussion with Prof. Ann Gold

Reading:

- Ann Gold, 2014. "Sweetness and Light: The Bright Side of Pluralism in a North Indian Town." In *Religious Pluralism, State and Society in Asia*, edited by Chiara Formichi. London: Routledge 113-137.
- _____. Forthcoming. "Gendered constellations: Women's place-making in Santosh Nagar." In *Routledge Handbook of Gender in South Asia*, edited by Leela Fernandes (London: Routledge)
- _____. Manuscript. "Carving Place: Foundational Narratives from a North Indian Market Town." In *Place/No Place: Aspects of Urban Asian Religiosity* edited by Joanne Punzo Waghorne.

*Now the question of order—do we begin with the current post-secular and Supermodern period and go back or begin with early work and go forward?
Some suggested titles, which can be two sessions*

Topics:

- Marc Augé and non-places, the shadow side to Supermodernity (with Paul Virilio)
- Rethinking the typology of the city in a contemporary mode with Nigel Thrift and Ash Amin
- The structure of classic categories of religious behavior remade and remodeled—ritual and myth
- Nigel Thrift and an exuberant 'qualculation' world
- Rethinking the cosmological city with Samer Akkach and earlier discussions
- Contemporary architecture, openly sacred and secretly spiritual (?)
- The changing Self and the Posthuman with Rosi Braidotti
- Migration and the new city landscape
- The rising dominance of the city in Asia—a change of balance and end of the Third World
- Those left behind—and under the system

Week 5 - February 17:

Week 6 - February 24

Week 7 - March 3

March 10 (SPRING BREAK)

Week 8 - March 17

Week 9 - March 24

Week 10 - March 31

Week 11 - April 7

Week 12 - April 14

Week 13 - April 21

Week 14 - April 28

April 30 -- dinner at 255 Cambridge Street.