REL 603: “Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion II”

Syracuse University
Spring 2017
Tuesday 12:30-3:15, 504 Hall of Languages

Instructor:
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Office hours by appointment

Course Description:
This required seminar is designed to introduce graduate students in the Department of Religion to five major 20th century theorists of religion, deepening and extending their understanding of the history, development, and current state of the field of the academic study of religion.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and participation: Attend all classes, read all assigned texts carefully and thoughtfully, and come to class prepared to contribute actively to discussion of those texts. For each class, you should have followed up on at least one footnote or reference from the readings and be ready to share your findings. 20% of semester grade.

Abstracts: For each class, write a 300-word abstract for one of the chapters or essays assigned (excluding reference articles such as those in the Companion to the Study of Religion); post your abstract on Blackboard by Sunday evening, to give your classmates time to read it before class; revise your abstract as necessary following class discussion. The abstract should include: the main point of the argument; several essential subordinate points or examples; a brief analysis of how the argument of the reading relates to the topic of the course and to other select readings assigned for the day or for prior weeks. 30% (or 2% each) of semester grade.

Short papers: Write one concise 1500-word paper on Jung and Eliade (due March 14), another on Geertz, Smith, and Asad (due May 9), in which you analyze a theme, issue, or problem of your choice, comparing, contrasting, and assessing how each thinker engages it. Make full use of the readings assigned for the course and include at least three readings (primary or secondary) not assigned for the course. 40% (or 20% each) of semester grade.

Final reflection: Write one concise 1000-word paper discussing the possible implications of our study of each of the five thinkers for your own research. Post by Sunday evening before the last class and come to that class prepared not only to present your own reflections but also to respond to those of your classmates. 10% of semester grade.
**Texts:**


*other readings will be available through the library or posted on Blackboard

**Schedule of readings and discussions:**

1/17  **History, Comparison, Mystique, Critique: Religious Studies in the 20th Century**


1/24  **Religion and/as Therapy: Carl Jung**

- Storr, *The Essential Jung*, Parts 3, 4, 7

1/31  **Carl Jung, continued**

- Storr, *The Essential Jung*, Parts 8, 9, 10

2/7  **Eranos and the History of Religions: from Jung to Eliade (guest: David L. Miller)**

1/14  **Mircea Eliade**  
- Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, Intro, Ch. 1 & 2

2/21  **Mircea Eliade, continued**  
- Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, Ch. 3 & 4 and HR Chronology

2/28  **The Anthropological Turn: from Eliade to Geertz**  
- Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, Part I

3/7  **Clifford Geertz**  
- Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, Part III

**SPRING BREAK**

3/21  **Geertz and his Critics**  
- Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, Part V  
- Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, Ch. 1

3/28  **A New Style of History of Religions: Jonathan Z. Smith**  
- Smith, *Imagining Religion*, Intro – Ch. 4

4/4  **Jonathan Z. Smith, continued**  
- Smith, *Imagining Religion*, Ch. 5-7

4/11  **The Postcolonial Critique of Religion: Talal Asad**  
- Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, Intro, Ch. 2, Ch. 6

4/18  **Talal Asad, continued**  
- Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, Ch. 3-4

4/25  **After religion?**  
- Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2003), selections  

5/2  **Student presentations**