

Course Description

Religion 391 is required of all Religion majors and minors. The course's primary **learning objective** is to 1) introduce the diversity of theories and approaches used historically and currently in the study of religion, including an investigation into what counts as 'religion'. This course cannot be comprehensive but serves as 2) a forum for discussing some differences between some methods of studying religion. The class also is set up to assist students interested in graduate work in religion in 3) developing bibliographies for further study. The department hopes that this required course will introduce young scholars of religion to one another and foster a greater sense of community among you.

****Required texts are available at the SU Bookstore. I also reserved books at Bird, and will upload articles to our class Blackboard site. Bring texts with you to class.****

Course assignments and requirements

Attendance: Considered, critical discussion is essential to course participation. This class really only comes alive in a class if everyone is committed to the class process, so that trust and ease can develop among us. To reach that goal, I need your attendance at every class meeting, ask you to notify me of any anticipated absence, and require you to hand in your work ahead of time if you must miss class. More than 2 absences will adversely affect your final grade regardless of excuses, as will a habit of arriving late to class, or otherwise disrupting class. **(10%)**

Participation/Preparation: Readings and critical analyses are due for 23 class periods (January 15 to April 16), but I will only grade 20 of the 23 analyses. You may either not write for 3 class periods, or have the benefit of my dropping the 3 lowest response grades. If you choose not to write, you may not opt out of two classes of the same week. I accept emailed work, but only if you treat an emailed paper with the same formality as a printed paper, and only if you will accept emailed comments. **Late response papers will receive an "F" (instead of a zero).** I reserve the possibility of offering 'pop' quizzes if I feel you are not reading carefully enough. These quizzes would be factored into either this preparation grade, or function as deciding factors in borderline midterm and final grades. **(40%)**

Critical analyses should do the following: State in 1-2 sentences the primary argument of the reading. Critically interpret in 2-3 paragraphs the author's treatment of that argument and/or your disagreement with it. The analyses should be 250-500 words (double spaced, regular margins and font); you can write more if you are so inclined, but I may take longer to grade it. I will pass out an example of a critical analysis in class.

Midterm paper (20%): In addition to your daily readings, for the first half of the semester you need to read along in Ursula Goodenough's *The Sacred Depths of Nature*. You should complete the text no later than February 24th, preferably sooner. Here is the midterm question, **due Thursday, February 26: Compose a critical response to Goodenough's *The Sacred Depths of Nature* that examines which theory or method of studying religion, if any, would best interpret her presentation of (or presumptions about) religion. The essay needs to combine an analysis of her text with an analysis and application of one of the many approaches to religion we have read so far this semester.**

I will grade this paper as a standard research paper. The criteria for evaluation are as follows:

1. Is there a clear, focused, strong thesis statement/question in the 1st paragraph?
(Do I know clearly what the student is setting out to do?)
2. Does the argument stick close to the text and novel being examined?
(Is she a close reader?)
3. Does the argument always support the stated thesis?
(Does he actually do what she sets out to do?)
4. Is the argument coherent, focused, and persuasive?
(Is it linear and supported with evidence?)
5. Does the argument subordinate plot narration (of the novel) to critical engagement?
(Is she spending half the page requirement spinning her wheels or is she really critically engaged?)
6. Are the sources and footnotes documented properly when used?
(Page numbers listed; format consistent)
7. Are the sources introduced and interpreted well?
(Are quotations dropped like ornaments or actually part of the fabric of the argument?)
8. Are the spelling and grammatical errors minimal (3-5 in the entire paper is acceptable)?
9. Does the paper engage BOTH religious theory and the text critically?
10. Does the paper engage BOTH religious theory and the text creatively?

Final Project (30%): The readings of the second half of the semester all criticize religion in some manner and toward some specific goal (human understanding, psychological maturity, etc.). Formulate a project that will study, interpret, and apply one of these critiques/explanations in more depth than class responses and discussions allow. Please choose a project that makes connections to your other major(s), or your life plans, or something that interests you. In the past I have had video projects, architecture projects, performance art projects, graphic arts projects and research paper projects. You may, of course, opt to compose a synthetic research paper; it should be about 10 pages long. If you opt for a physical or creative project, I still require a paper attachment (about 5 pages) that summarizes what you intend to accomplish with your project and clearly states how you have interpreted and applied your chosen theory through your project. The best statements also include a brief discussion of how some of the other approaches would have changed your analysis and why your chosen form was the best or most interesting (to you). **You must complete a final project to pass this course.**

Syllabus Statement Regarding Disability-Related Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 304 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](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu) <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>

Syllabus 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>. My policy for this course is that any one instance of deceit, dishonesty, or plagiarism with respect to attendance, participation and completed work will result in an “F” for that segment of the course, or for the course as a whole, depending on the severity and extent of the infraction.

SYLLABUS: * indicates a reading that I will post to Blackboard.

WEEK 1: Introductions

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| Tu, January 13 | Introduction to course requirements and expectations. |
| Th, January 15 | Carrette and King, “Spirituality and the Rebranding of Religion”* |

WEEK 2: Enlightenment

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| Tu, January 20 | In honor of the Presidential inauguration: Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion”* |
| Th, January 22 | Hume, <i>The Natural History of Religion</i> , Intro & Chapters 1-7.
This book is also available online through the SYR library. Look up Hume by author. Click the title, “ Complete works and correspondence of David Hume [electronic resource] ”. Click “linked resources: Electronic resource”. At the Past Masters site, click “select a title to browse”, then Hume, then “Natural History” |

WEEK 3: 19th Century Reactions

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| Tu, January 27 | Hume, <i>NHR</i> , Chapters 8-15. |
| Th, January 29 | Emerson, “Divinity School Address”*
(http://www.emersoncentral.com/divaddr.htm) |

Religion 391

Tu/Th 12:30 – 1:50 111 HL

Prof. M. Gail Hamner
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WEEK 4: Religion, Science, History

- Tu, February 3 Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”*
(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm>), and selections from “Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*”, and “The German Ideology”*
- Th, February 5 Nietzsche, Preface to the Second Edition and Book I of *The Gay Science*

WEEK 5: Sociology

- Tu, February 10 GS, Book III
- Th, February 12 Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Ch. 2, 5*

WEEK 6: Looking at the Other

- Tu, February 17 Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, selections*
- Th, February 19 Durkheim, *EFRL*, selections*

WEEK 7: Midterm

- Tu, February 24 Discuss *Sacred Depths of Nature*
- Th, February 26 **Midterm paper due.**

WEEK 8: Psychology of Religion, and History of Religion

- Tu, March 3 Wm. James, *Variety of Religious Experience*, Lectures 2, 20 (4-6)*
- Th, March 5 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, Intro and Chapter 3 (4)*

SPRING BREAK, March 9-13

WEEK 9: Psychoanalysis

- Tu, March 17 Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Chapters 1-4
- Th, March 19 Freud, *CD*, Chapters 5-8

WEEK 10: Anthropology

- Tu, March 24 Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, Chapters 1, 4*
- Th, March 26 Geertz, *IC*, Chapters 5, 15

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WEEK 11: Post-structuralism

- Tu, March 31 M. Foucault, “Pastoral Power and Political Reason” and/or “About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self”*
- Th, April 2 Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, Chapter 1 (and 2)*

WEEK 12: Two Modes of Ethical Reflection

- Tu, April 7 Varela, *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom and Cognition**
- Th, April 9 Teresa Brennan, *Exhausting Modernity*, Intro and 1*

WEEK 13: Critiquing the Field

- Tu, April 14 Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, Intro.*
- Th, April 16 selections from Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety* or R. Marie Griffith, *God’s Daughter’s: Evangelical Religion and the Power of Submission**

WEEK 14: Wrap-up

- Tu, April 21 **Mayfest**
- Th, April 23 presentation of student projects
- Tu April 28 presentation of student projects, and course evaluations