

Approaches to the Study of Religion (REL 200)

Fall 2009
MW 1:10–2:30

PROFESSOR: Andy Rotman
OFFICE: Pierce Hall 203
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REQUIREMENTS

1. You are expected to attend class regularly, finish the assigned readings on time, and participate in class discussions actively (and, one hopes, enthusiastically).
2. To facilitate class discussion, you will be expected to make regular postings on Moodle, responding to the readings directly as well as to the postings of other students. I expect you to post 400+ words each week. Your postings should demonstrate a *thoughtful* engagement with the material. To that end, I don't care if your posts are informal. Being chatty is fine as long as you're insightful. Ideally, you will post multiple times each week such that conversations develop. Postings made during a particular week should be posted in the folder for that week, and all postings for a particular week should be submitted by Saturday at midnight of that week. At the end of the semester, you will be expected to print out all of your posts and submit them to me. Please clip them together with your final paper and put them in the box outside my office by December 18th.
3. Class participation will constitute a substantial portion of your grade. Hence, read the material, post your reactions and insights, and come to class prepared to engage in a high level discussion of the material. Keep in mind Wittgenstein's aphorism, "Even to have expressed a false thought boldly and clearly is already to have gained a great deal."
4. A pair of students will be assigned to introduce each reading. They will offer an overview of the reading, highlight the key points, and facilitate the ensuing conversation.
5. You will also be required to write a 10–12 page research paper in which you examine a religious text, ritual, image, or phenomenon making use of two or three of the theorists that we discuss in class. (1) Topics must be presented to me for approval, either by email or in person, by November 11th. (2) You will post a two-page draft of your paper along with a preliminary, annotated bibliography by November 25th. (3) You will present your research as a work in progress during the last two weeks of the semester. (4) You will submit final versions of your papers by December 18th.

In summary, your grade will be determined by the quality of your participation in class, your reaction papers, and your research paper.

REQUIRED READING

Das, Veena. 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (ISBN: 0520247450)

Freud, Sigmund. 1989. *The Future of An Illusion*. Translated by James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton. (ISBN: 0393008312)

Seligman, Adam G., Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon. 2008. *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. New York: Oxford University Press. (ISBN: 0195336011)

Source Book. (=SB)

- texts are available at Grécourt Bookshop in the Campus Center
- the source book is available at Paradise Copies, 21 Conz Street, (413) 585-0414

WEEK 1 (9/9)

ii. INTRODUCTIONS

WEEK 2 (9/14/, 9/16)

i. DEFINING TERMS, DEFINING DISCIPLINES

- Lopez, Donald. 1998. In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
“Belief,” 21–35
- Lincoln, Bruce. 2000. In *Guide to the Study of Religion*, edited by Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon. New York: Cassell.
“Culture,” 409–422
- Pierpoint, Claudia Roth. 2004. *The New Yorker* 80 (3).
“The Measure of America,” 1–24
- For more on the images of Franz Boas that are on the cover of your source book, see Aaron Glass, “On the Circulation of Ethnographic Knowledge” (http://blogs.nyu.edu/projects/materialworld/2006/10/on_the_circulation_of_ethnogra.html)

ii. RELIGION AS IDEOLOGY

- Raines, John, editor. 2002. *Marx on Religion*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
“The German Ideology—Ideology in General” (1844–46), 93–100
The Criticism of Religion (editor’s remarks), 167–170
“Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” (1844), 170–182
“Concerning Feuerbach” (1845), 182–184
Bad Work/Good Word (editor’s remarks), 113–115
Preface, “Early Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts” (1844), 115–117
“Estranged Labor” (1844), 117–128

WEEK 3 (9/21, 9/23)

i. RELIGION AND THE RISE OF CAPITALISM

- Weber, Max. 2002 (1905). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. 3rd edition. Introduction and translation by Stephen Kalberg. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company.
Part 1: The Problem
Chapter 1, 3–12
Chapter 2, 13–38
Chapter 3, 39–52

ii. RELIGION AND THE RISE OF CAPITALISM

- Weber, Max. 2002 (1905). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. 3rd edition. Introduction and translation by Stephen Kalberg. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company.
Part 2: The Vocational Ethic of Acetic Protestantism
Chapter 4, 53–102
Chapter 5, 103–126

WEEK 4 (9/28, 9/30)

i. SOCIETY REVEALS ITSELF...

•Durkheim, Emile. 1995 (1912). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Introduction and translation by Karen E. Fields. New York: Free Press.

Book 1, Chapter 1, 21–44

Book 2, Chapter 1, 99–126

ii. ... TO ITSELF

•Durkheim, Emile. 1995 (1912). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Introduction and translation by Karen E. Fields. New York: Free Press.

Book 2, Chapter 7, 207–241

Conclusion, 418–448

WEEK 5 (10/5, 10/7)

i. RELIGION AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED

•Freud, Sigmund 1989 (1927). *The Future of An Illusion*. Translated by James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton.

ii. RELIGION, MORPHOLOGY, AND HISTORY

•Eliade, Mircea. 1958 (1949). *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Translated by Rosemary Sheed. New York: Sheed & Ward.

Table of Contents, v–viii

•Smith, Jonathan Z. 2004. *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

“Acknowledgments: Morphology and History in Mircea Eliade’s *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1949–1999), Part 1: The Work and Its Contexts,” 61–79

“Acknowledgments: Morphology and History in Mircea Eliade’s *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1949–1999), Part 2: The Texture of the Work,” 80–100

WEEK 6 (10/12, 10/14)

i. AUTUMN RECESS—NO CLASS

ii. RELIGION, POWER, AND SUBJECTIVITY

•Althusser, Louis. 1971. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated from the French by Ben Brewster. New York and London: Monthly Review Press.

“Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 127–186

WEEK 7 (10/19, 10/21)

i. RELIGION AS MEANING 1

•Geertz, Clifford. 1973. In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

“Religion as a Cultural System,” 87–125 [First published in 1966]

ii. RELIGION AS MEANING 2

•Asad, Talal. 1993. In *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

“The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” 27–54

WEEK 8 (10/26, 10/28)

i. RELIGION AND SYMBOLIC POWER 1

•Wacquant, Loic. 1998. In *Key Sociological Thinkers*, edited by Rob Stones. New York: New York University Press.

“Pierre Bourdieu,” 215–229

•Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991 (1972). “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field.” *Comparative Social Research* 13: 1–44

ii. RELIGION AND SYMBOLIC POWER 2

•Bourdieu, Pierre. 1999 (1972). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

“Structure, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power,” 159–197

WEEK 9 (11/2, 11/4)

i. RITUAL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES 1

•Seligman, Adam G., Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon. 2008. *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Selections

ii. RITUAL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES 2

•Seligman, Adam G., Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon. 2008. *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Selections

WEEK 10 (11/9, 11/11)

i. RITUAL AND ALTERITY

- Csordas, Thomas J. 2004. "Asymptote of the Ineffable: Embodiment, Alterity, and the Theory of Religion." *Current Anthropology* 45 (2): 163–185.

IN-CLASS SCREENING: *Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism*. Director and anthropologist, Jerry W. Leach; filmmaker, Gary Kildea; produced by Office of Information, Government of Papua New Guinea. 54 minutes.

ii. RELIGION, IMAGE, AND AURA

- Benjamin, Walter. 1969. *Illuminations*. Edited and Introduction by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books.

"The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 217–251

[First published in 1935]

- Taussig, Michael. 1993. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York and London: Routledge.

"Physiognomic Aspects of Visual Worlds," 19–32

WEEK 11 (11/16, 11/18)

i. THE POWER OF IMAGES

- Gell, Alfred. 1992. In *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, edited by J. Coote and A. Shelton. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

"The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," 40–66

- Rotman, Andy. forthcoming. In *Commemoration Volume in Honour of Shrikant Bahulkar*, edited by Shripad G. Bhat and Shilpa P. Sumant.

"Marketing Morality: The Economy of Faith in Early Indian Buddhism," 1–28

ii. INTERSUBJECTIVITY

- Jackson, Michael. 1998. *Minima Ethnographica: Intersubjectivity and the Anthropological Project*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Selections, 1–61

WEEK 12 (11/23, ~~11/25~~)

i. RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND SECULARISM

- Lincoln, Bruce.

(<http://martycenter.uchicago.edu/webforum/122002/commentary.shtml>)

"Mr. Atta's Meditations, Sept. 10, 2001: A Close Reading of the Text," 1–7

- Mark Juergensmeyer.

(http://martycenter.uchicago.edu/webforum/122002/response_juergensmeyer.shtml)

"What's Religion Got to Do with it? Comments on Bruce Lincoln's Essay on the Meditations of Mohammed Atta," 1–3

- King, Richard. In *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice*, edited by John R. Hinnells and Richard King. London and New York: Routledge.

"The Association of 'Religion' with Violence: Reflections on a Modern Trope," 226–257

ii. THANKSGIVING RECESS—NO CLASS

WEEK 13 (11/30, 12/2)

i. RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND TRAUMA

•Das, Veena. 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Selections

ii. RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND TRAUMA

•Das, Veena. 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Selections

WEEK 14 (12/7, 12/9)

i. PRESENTATIONS

ii. PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 15 (12/14)

i. PRESENTATIONS