Approaches to the Study of Religion (REL 200)

Fall 2009
MW 1:10–2:30

PROFESSOR: Andy Rotman
OFFICE: Pierce Hall 203
OFFICE HOURS: MW 4–5 or by appointment
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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. 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


*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
  “Belief,” 21–35
  “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)

WEEK 3 (9/21, 9/23)
ii. RELIGION AS IDEOLOGY
  “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
  Part 1: The Problem
  Chapter 1, 3–12
  Chapter 2, 13–38
  Chapter 3, 39–52

ii. RELIGION AND THE RISE OF CAPITALISM
  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…
  Book 1, Chapter 1, 21–44
  Book 2, Chapter 1, 99–126

ii. … TO ITSELF
  Book 2, Chapter 7, 207–241
  Conclusion, 418–448

WEEK 5 (10/5, 10/7)
i. RELIGION AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED

ii. RELIGION, MORPHOLOGY, AND HISTORY
  Table of Contents, v–viii

WEEK 6 (10/12, 10/14)
i. AUTUMN RECESS—NO CLASS

ii. RELIGION, POWER, AND SUBJECTIVITY
  “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 127–186
WEEK 7 (10/19, 10/21)
i. RELIGION AS MEANING 1
   “Religion as a Cultural System,” 87–125 [First published in 1966]

ii. RELIGION AS MEANING 2
   “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” 27–54

WEEK 8 (10/26, 10/28)
i. RELIGION AND SYMBOLIC POWER 1
   “Pierre Bourdieu,” 215–229

ii. RELIGION AND SYMBOLIC POWER 2
   “Structure, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power,” 159–197

WEEK 9 (11/2, 11/4)
i. RITUAL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES 1
   Selections

ii. RITUAL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES 2
   Selections
WEEK 10 (11/9, 11/11)
i. RITUAL AND ALTERITY


ii. RELIGION, IMAGE, AND AURA
  [First published in 1935]
  “Physiognomic Aspects of Visual Worlds,” 19–32

WEEK 11 (11/16, 11/18)
i. THE POWER OF IMAGES
  “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology,” 40–66
  “Marketing Morality: The Economy of Faith in Early Indian Buddhism,” 1–28

ii. INTERSUBJECTIVITY
  Selections, 1–61

WEEK 12 (11/23, 11/25)
i. RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND SECULARISM
•Lincoln, Bruce.
  (http://martycenter.uchicago.edu/webforum/122002/commentary.shtml)
•Mark Juergensmeyer.
  (http://martycenter.uchicago.edu/webforum/122002/response_juergensmeyer.shtml)

ii. THANKSGIVING RECESS—NO CLASS
WEEK 13 (11/30, 12/2)
i. RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND TRAUMA  
  Selections

ii. RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND TRAUMA  
  Selections

WEEK 14 (12/7, 12/9)
i. PRESENTATIONS

ii. PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 15 (12/14)
i. PRESENTATIONS