Approaches to the Study of Religion (REL 200)

Fall 2015
MW 2:40–4 pm

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

1. Attend class regularly. If you are unable to attend a class, please tell me in advance, in person or via email. Attendance is a crucial part of your class participation grade, and more than two unexcused absences will significantly hurt your grade.

2. Listen actively and speak thoughtfully. Be prepared to discuss the assignments in depth. Keep in mind Wittgenstein's aphorism, "Even to have expressed a false thought boldly and clearly is already to have gained a great deal." To this end, students will be asked to introduce the readings for each class.

3. Make regular postings on Moodle, responding to the assignments as well as to the postings of other students. I expect you to post 300+ words each week, in one post or more, though you can skip two weeks during the semester. Your postings should demonstrate a thoughtful and rigorous engagement with the material. Creativity is encouraged, rambling is not. Although you are welcome to focus on a particular article or passage within a week's assignment, you should try to contextualize that material within the rest of the week's readings. Postings for each week should be submitted by Saturday at midnight of that week. In short, postings made during a particular week should be posted in the folder for that week. At the end of the semester, you will be expected to print out all of your posts and submit them to me along with your final paper.

4. Introduce the readings. A pair of students will be assigned to offer an overview of each reading, highlighting the key points and facilitating the ensuing conversation.

5. 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) Submit your topic to me for approval, either via email or in person, by November 18th. (2) Post an abstract of your paper along with a preliminary, annotated bibliography by November 25th. (3) Present your research as a work in progress during the last two weeks of the semester. (4) And submit the final version of your paper by December 20th.

6. If you have any questions about an assignment or need help or an extension, please let me know. Just send me an email or stop by during my office hours. I will do my best to be accessible, and I'm happy to make special arrangements to meet.

In summary, your grade will be determined by the quality of your participation in class (35%), your postings on Moodle (30%), and your research paper (35%).

REQUIRED READING

Mauss, Marcel. 1990. *The Gift*. Translated by W. D. Halls. Foreword by Mary Douglas. W. W. Norton & Company.

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.

The remaining readings will available in the source book.

To ease the stress of the beginning of the semester, readings for the first three weeks of class will be provided to you as handouts.

•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
•McCutcheon, Russell T. "What is the Academic Study of Religion?"
http://rel.as.ua.edu/pdf/rel100introhandout.pdf

WEEK 2 (9/14/, 9/16)
i. DEFINING TERMS, DEFINING DISCIPLINES
•Smith, Jonathan Z. 1998. *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
"Religion, Religions, Religious," 269–284
•Lopez, Donald. 1998. *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
"Belief," 21–35
•Lincoln, Bruce. 2000. *Guide to the Study of Religion*, edited by Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon. New York: Cassell.
"Culture," 409–422
•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), 170–172
"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
•Kolbert, Elizabeth. 2004. "Why Work? A Hundred Years of the "Protestant Ethic"?" *The New Yorker*, November 29: 1–10.
•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, OBJECTS, AND EXCHANGE
•Mauss, Marcel. 1990 (1954). *The Gift*. Translated by W. D. Halls. Foreword by Mary Douglas. W. W. Norton & Company.
Foreword (by Mary Douglas, vii–xviii)
Introduction, 1–7
1. The Exchange of Gifts and Obligation to Reciprocate (Polynesia), 8–18
2. The Extension of this System: Liberality, Honour, Money, 19–46
3. Survivals of These Principles in Ancient Systems of Law and Ancient Economies, 47–64
4. Conclusion, 65–83

NOTE: Check out the documentary series *Belief*, October 18–24, 8 pm, Oprah Winfrey Network

WEEK 7 (10/19, 10/21)
i. RELIGION, POWER, AND SUBJECTIVITY
•Althusser, Louis. 1971. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated by Ben Brewster. New York and London: Monthly Review Press.
"Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 127–186

ii. RELIGION, POWER, AND KNOWLEDGE
•William E. Deal and Timothy K. Beal. 2004. *Theory for Religious Studies*. New York: Routledge.
"Michel Foucault," 91–97
•Foucault, Michel. 1998. *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*. Essential works of Foucault, 1954–1984, vol. 2. Edited by James D. Faubion; translated by Robert Hurley and others. New York: New Press.
"Maurice Florence," 459–463
•Foucault, Michel. 1977 (1975). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books.
Excerpt from "The Body of the Condemned," 22–31
"The Carceral," 293–308
OPTIONAL
•Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and Other Writings: 1972–1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. Translated by Colin Gordon et al. New York: Pantheon Books.
"Truth and Power," 51–75

WEEK 8 (10/26, 10/28)
i. RELIGION AS MEANING 1
•Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
"Religion as a Cultural System (1966)," 87–125

ii. RELIGION AS MEANING 2
•Asad, Talal. 1993. *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 9 (11/2, 11/4)
i. RELIGION AND SYMBOLIC POWER
•Wacquant, Loic. 1998. In *Key Sociological Thinkers*, edited by Rob Stones. New York: New York University Press.
"Pierre Bourdieu," 215–229
•Bourdieu, Pierre. 1999 (1972). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Structures, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power, 159–197

ii. RELIGION AND COMMODITIES
•Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge University Press.
"The Cultural Biography of Things: Commodification as Process," 64–91
•Loy, David. 1997. "The Religion of the Market." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65 (2): 275–290.

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.

ii. INTERSUBJECTIVITY
•Jackson, Michael. 1989. *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
1. Introduction, 1–18
2. Two Lives, 19–35
3. Ajala's Heads: Thrownness and Free Will in African Thought, 36–50

WEEK 11 (11/16, 11/18)
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.
Introduction, 3–16
1. Ritual and the Subjunctive, 17–42
2. Ambiguity, Ambivalence, and Boundaries, 43–68

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.
3. Ritual, Play, and Boundaries, 69–102
4. Ritual and Sincerity, 103–130
OPTIONAL
5. Movements of Ritual and Sincerity, 131–178
Afterword, 179–182

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. 2007. 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. THE POWER OF AFFECT
•Massumi, Brian. 2002. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham & London: Duke University of Press.
"The Autonomy of Affect," 23–45
•Berlant, Lauren. "Cruel Optimism." *differences* 17.3 (2006): 20–36.

ii. THE POWER OF…?
•McAlister, Elizabeth. *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, edited by Donald J. Cosentino. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1995.
"A Sorcerer's Bottle: The Visual Art of Magic in Haiti," 304–321.

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

ii. PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 15 (12/14)
i. PRESENTATIONS