

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA RIVERSIDE**

SYLLABUS

RLST 201 Thinking about Religion: Classic Theories in the Study of Religion

WINTER 2020

Thursday, 08:10 am – 11:00 a.m.

INTN 2009

Dr. Muhamad Ali

Course Description

4 Units, Seminar, 3 hours; research, 3 hours. Prerequisite(s): graduate standing or consent of instructor. A critical study of classic theories and theorists in the study of religion within their historical contexts. This graduate seminar seeks to examine classic ideas on religion put forward by such influential theorists as James Frazer, Sigmund Freud, Emile Durkheim, William James, Max Weber, Karl Marx, Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade, Ninian Smart, and Clifford Geertz. It may be taken Satisfactory (S) or No Credit (NC) with consent of instructor and graduate advisor.

Objectives

- Developing academic skills: thinking, reading, speaking, and writing academically about religion
- Explaining theories of religion:
 - Why do theorists ask their questions?
 - What questions do they ask? How do they define their subjects?
 - What type of theory do they offer? What evidence do they use?
 - What answers do they give?
 - Why do they think that they are right?
 - What relationship is there, if any, between the theorist's own beliefs or disbeliefs and the answers that they give?
- Examining subject matters:
 - What is religion? What are the origins of religion?
 - How do we explain it?
 - Why do human beings become religious?
 - How do religions affect human personality and society?

Requirements and Grading

Class Participation in Discussion: 20 %

Since this is a graduate seminar, students are required to demonstrate their engaged and engaging participation in which the instructor primarily serves as group leader. This means attendance in every class session is mandatory and participation is crucial. Students should be prepared to discuss the materials, ask questions and offer comments actively, and speak critically on the issues at hand.

Weekly Essays or Weekly Essays plus Final Essay: 80 %

Students are offered two options:

A. writing 8 weekly essays responding to the weekly readings, between 4-5 pages, double-spaced. (8 weeks x 10 % of the total grade)

B. writing 5 weekly essays, 4-5 pages, and 1 final essay, 12-15 pages, double-spaced. (5 x 10% + 30 %).

The student should provide the weekly essays to be shared with the class and the instructor electronically by the day of the seminar.

Textbooks:

- Week 1: Introduction, the study of religion, theories of religion (*introductory readings to be shared by the instructor*)
- Week 2: James G. Frazer (1854-1941), *The Golden Bough* or Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917) *Primitive Culture* (comparative religion and anthropology)
- Week 3: William James (1842-1910), *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (psychology)
- Week 4: Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), *The Future of an Illusion* (psychoanalysis).
- Week 5: Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (sociology)
- Week 6: Max Weber (1864-1920), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. See also *the Sociology of Religion* (sociology) or Karl Marx (and Frederick Engels), selections from the *Collected/Selected Works; Marx and Engels on Religion*
- Week 7: Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), *The Idea of the Holy*. (philosophical theology, comparative religion).
- Week 8: Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion; or Patterns in Comparative Religion*; or *The Myth of the Eternal Return*
- Week 9: Clifford Geertz (1926-2006): *Religion of Java* (anthropology) or Ninian Smart (1927-2001): *Dimensions of the Sacred* (comparative religion), or *The Phenomenon of Religion*
- Week 10: Critical overview of the readings and conclusion

Suggested Books:

1. Daniel L. Pals, *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theories* (Oxford, 2009)
2. Daniel L. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion* (Oxford, 2006) or *Nine Theories of Religion*, (2015)
3. Jacques Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods, and Theories of Research: Introduction and Anthology* (De Gruyter, 1999)
4. Carl Olson, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: A Selection of Critical Readings* (Cengage Learning, 2002)
5. Mona Kanwal Sheikh and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Entering Religious Minds: The Social Study of Worldviews* (Routledge, 2019)

Other Works on the Theory and Method in the Study of Religion:

1. Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*
2. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*
3. Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed*
4. James L. Cox, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion*
5. Sumner Twiss, *Experience of the Sacred: Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion*
6. Gavin Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion*
7. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al, eds, *Hermeneutics at the Crossroads*
8. Richard Kearney, *A Hermeneutics of Religion*
9. Ann Loades and Michael McLain, eds, *Hermeneutics, the Bible and Literary Criticism*
10. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*
11. *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*, multiple vols
12. Delos B. McKown, *The Classical Marxist Critiques of Religion: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kautsky*
13. Warren Goldstein, ed., *Marx, Critical Theory and Religion*
14. John Raines, ed., *Marx on Religion*
15. *Marx Engels on Religion*
16. *The Marx-Engels Reader*
17. Sondra L. Hausner, ed., *Durkheim in Dialogue: A Centenary Celebration of the Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
18. Anne Warfield Rawls, *Epistemology and Practice: Durkheim's The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
19. W.S.F. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories*
20. N.J. Allen et al, eds., *On Durkheim's Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
21. Slavica Jakelic and Lori Pearson, eds., *The Future of the Study of Religion: Proceedings of Congress 2000*
22. Arvind Sharma, *To the Things Themselves: Essays on the Discourse and Practice of the Phenomenology of Religion*
23. Peter Antes et al, eds., *New Approaches to the Study of Religion*, 2 vols.
24. Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*
25. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*
26. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*
27. Heinrich Meng and Ernst Freud, eds., *Psychoanalysis and Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud & Oskar Pfister*
28. Rudolf Otto, *Naturalism and Religion*
29. Philip Almond, *Rudolf Otto: An Introduction to His Philosophical Theology*
30. Todd A. Gooch, *The Numinous and Modernity: An Interpretation of Rudolf Otto's Philosophy of Religion*
31. Max Weber, *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*
32. Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Daoism*
33. Max Weber, *the Sociology of Religion*
34. Frans Wijsen and Kocku von Stuckrad, eds, *Making Religion: Theory and Practice in the Discursive Study of Religion*
35. Aaron W. Hughes, ed., *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: Twenty Five Years on*
36. Robert Ackerman, *The Myth and Ritual School: J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists*

37. Max Muller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*
38. Arie L. Molendijk, *Friedrich Max Muller & The Sacred Books of the East*
39. Jon R. Stone, ed., *The Essential Max Muller: On Language, Mythology, and Religion*
40. Christopher Adair-Toteff, *Fundamental Concepts in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion*
41. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*
42. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*
43. William James, *The Will to Believe*
44. Louis Henry Jordan, *Comparative Religion: Its Genesis and Growth*
45. Louis Henry Jordan, *Comparative Religion: A Survey of Its Recent Literature*
46. Ivan Strenski, *Understanding Theories of Religion: An Introduction*
47. James Thrower, *Religion The Classical Theories*
48. Richard King, ed., *Religion, Theory, Critique: Classic and Contemporary Approaches and Methodologies*
49. Michael Stausberg, *Contemporary Theories of Religion: A Critical Companion*
50. Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*
51. Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*
52. Snouck Hurgronje, *Muhammedanism: Lectures on Its Origin, Its Religious and Political Growth, and Its Present State*
53. Richard Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*
54. Carl W. Ernst and Richard C. Martin, *Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism*