

University of Calgary
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Religious Studies
Winter 2005

05/01/06

Methodology in the Study of Religion RELS 447 L01

Instructor: Dr. Ayse Tuzlak
Class Meets: MW 15:00 – 16:15
Office/Hours: SS 1330/Mondays and Tuesdays, 10:00 – 12:00
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What is religion? Most of us “know it when we see it,” but drawing a boundary between religions and non-religions, or religious phenomena and non-religious phenomena, proves to be surprisingly difficult. Are all human beings religious? Are some religions better than others? Are we permitted to make ethical judgements about religions that seem strange or frightening? What is the relationship between religion and philosophy, or history, or psychology, or culture as a whole? How do we interpret phenomena that are not traditionally considered religious (sports, politics, art) but which share many of religion’s properties?

This course aims to familiarize students with the ways in which scholars of the past two hundred years have addressed these questions. Together we will read, discuss, and evaluate some of the most important and influential theories about religion: what it is, how it works, and what its effects on the world are.

Required Texts:

James Thrower, *Religion: The Classical Theories*
Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*
Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain*

Photocopied Course Packet (*PCP*), available at Bound & Copied in Mac Hall

Core Competencies:

Students in this class will:

- acquire a broad understanding of important trends in anthropology, philosophy, psychology and religious studies over the past two hundred years;
- hone their skills at articulating their thoughts orally through class presentations and question-and-answer sessions;
- learn to evaluate and compare complex phenomena rigorously and sensitively;
- think in an inter- and multi-disciplinary way about human society;
- improve their ability to express themselves in writing.

Please remember that the attainment of any learning endeavour requires that students commit time and energy to that endeavour. **Attend lectures, read assigned materials, and complete all course work.**

Course Requirements:

Written Assignment (5-7 pages, due January 31):	20%
Six sets of questions (see below):	30%
Oral Presentation:	30%
Final Assignment (5-7 pages, due April 15):	10%
Attendance and participation:	10%

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. At the end of the course, an overall letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme.

A+	100 – 96	A	95 – 90	A-	89 – 85
B+	84 – 80	B	79 – 75	B-	74 – 70
C+	69 – 65	C	64 – 60	C-	59 – 55
D+	54 – 53	D	52 – 50	F	50 or less

Please note that no extra credit work will be offered.

Attendance is crucial. You will be expected to contribute intelligently to the discussions in class, and you will not be able to do so unless you have done all the readings, attended all the lectures, engaged with your fellow classmates, and kept up with your course assignments.

The Presentations and the Questions:

We will be doing nine units between February 7 and March 28: **Philosophy, Human Construct, Psychological Construct I, Psychological Construct II, Social Construct I, Social Construct II, Feminism, and Poststructuralism.**

Each student in the class will choose one of these topics on which to do a **10-15 minute presentation**. There can be a maximum of two students presenting per week. All presentations will take place on a Monday.

In addition to this, each student will be expected to write up two questions on the readings and **ask their questions of that week's presenter**. At the end of class, I will collect all the question sheets. I will read them and give them a mark out of 5 for thoughtfulness, engagement with the reading, relevance, and creativity. The best six question-sets (out of eight weeks, since you won't do a question-set in the week you present) will count toward your final grade.

I know that presentations are scary. I've been teaching for years and I still get butterflies myself. But public speaking is an important skill, and you have much to gain by learning to express yourself orally as well as in writing. Your presentations will take place among interested, intelligent, and supportive people, which is quite frankly the best place to practice!

Schedule:

January 10 – 12:

Readings:

Religion as Revelation I

Selections from the Tanakh (*PCP*)

Selections from the Talmud (*PCP*)

Selections from the New Testament (*PCP*)

January 17 – 19:

Readings:

Religion as Revelation II

Selections from the Qur'an and Muslim traditions (*PCP*)

Thrower, chapter 2

January 24 – 26:

Readings:

Religion as Experience I

Thrower, chapter 3

Selections from William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (*PCP*)

Mircea Eliade, "The Structure and Morphology of the Sacred" (*PCP*)

January 31

Essay on Covington and Brown due

Jan. 31 – Feb. 2:

Readings:

Religion as Experience II

Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain*

Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola*

WEEKLY PRESENTATIONS BEGIN

February 7 – 9:

Readings:

Religion as Philosophy

Immanuel Kant, "Of Religion and Priestcraft" (*PCP*)

Hegel, "Determinate Religion" (*PCP*)

February 14 – 16:

Readings:

Religion as Human Construct and Primitive Error

Thrower, chapters 5 and 6

F. Max Müller, "Plea for a Science of Religion" (*PCP*)

E.B. Tylor, "Animism" (*PCP*)

February 21 – 23:

No classes. Enjoy your reading week!

Feb. 28 – March 2:

Readings:

Religion as Psychological Construct I

Thrower, chapter 7

Friedrich Nietzsche, "What is Religious" (*PCP*)

Friedrich Nietzsche, selections from *The Anti-Christ* (*PCP*)

March 7 – 9:

Readings:

Religion as Psychological Construct II

Sigmund Freud, selections from *The Future of an Illusion* (*PCP*)

Carl Jung, "The Structure of the Psyche" (*PCP*)

March 14 – 16:

Readings:

Religion as Social Construct I

Thrower, chapter 8

Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy..." (*PCP*)

Max Weber, "The Prophet" and "Bureaucracy" (*PCP*)

March 21 – 23:

Readings:

Religion as Social Construct II

Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description” (*PCP*)

Selections from Durkheim, *Elementary Forms* (*PCP*)

March 28 – April 1:

Readings:

Religion as Patriarchal Construct

Joseph Campbell, “The Serpent’s Bride” (*PCP*)

Mary Daly, selections from *Gyn/Ecology* (*PCP*)

April 4 – April 8:

Readings:

Poststructuralism

Jean-Francois Lyotard, “The Post-Modern Condition” (*PCP*)

Mark C. Taylor, “nO nOt nO” (*PCP*)

April 11 – 15:

Readings:

So What Is Religion, Anyway?

Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious” (*PCP*)

Final paper (5-7 pages) due April 15