

Tabu and Sacred in Time and Space

List of Classes

- Week 1 **Words for the Sacred and Problems with 'Sacred'**
(Codrington, 1891, 116-23; Kolakowski, 1990, 63-74)
- Week 2 **Captain Cook and the Discovery of Tabu in Hawai'i**
(Lloyd, 1949, 294-6, 349-77) (Jay, 1992, ch. 6)
Slides: The Death of Captain Cook (Kealekekua Bay and the Hikiau heiau). Mo'okini, Hikiau heiau (Hawi, Hawai'i)
- Week 3 **'They' Have Tabus, We Have 'Religion'**
(Coan, 1882, 43-66, 88-90, 128-32, 176-90; Miller, 1988, 169-80, 307-31) (Reinach, 1930, 1-27)
(Smith, 1923, 140-64, 446-54);
Slides: Kapu sites, Congregational churches (New England, Hawai'i and Oahu)
- Week 4 **Defining and Explaining the 'Sacred': Absolute Transcendence**
(Eliade, 1958, 1-33; Otto, 1923, 1-40)
- Week 5 **Defining and Explaining the 'Sacred': Near Transcendence**
(Durkheim, 1995) 45-84, 330-43, 388-91, 412-7 = Book I, chs 1-3; Book III, ch 2: #i-iii, ch 5: intro, #iv
(Durkheim, 1995, 118-26, 190-206 = Book II, ch 1, #iii and ch 6, 303-29 = Book III, ch1)
- Week 6 **The Sacred in Everyday Life and in the Cosmos**
(Leiris, 1988) (Lem, 1961) Poetry/Music: James Agee/Samuel Barber, "Knoxville, Summer 1915"
- Week 7 **The Individual as Sacred**
(Durkheim, 1898) Slides: Dreyfus Affair
- Week 8 **Transgression and The (Strong) Left Hand of the Sacred**
(Caillois, 1950, 97-127)
Pure/Impure: Is the Sacred *Always* Pure? Is the Impure *Never* Sacred?
(Marriott, 1966) Slides: The Loves of Krishna
- Week 9 **The (Sly) Left Hand of the Sacred**
(Caillois, 1961) **Film:** Kieslowski's "Dekalog 3" in class
- Week 10 **Sacred Politics**
Leni Riefenstahl's "*Triumph of the Will*" (in class) (Caillois, 1950, "War and the Sacred," 163-80)
(Durkheim, 1995), 99-140, 207-41 = Book II, chs 1, 2, 7; (Winter, 1995)

Course Requirements

Books are available at UCR bookstore or from following online bookstores in new or used condition: www.amazon.com ; www.bookfinder.com ; www.addall.com ; www.powells.com ; www.ebay.com ; www.alibris.com ; www.abe.com ; www.bookavenue.com ; www.tomfolio.com ; www.half.com

Required: Course Reader

Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*

Lem, *Solaris*

Course requirements:

1. 3 assigned essays – 2-3 pages each. See list attached. = (30%)
 2. Report on a Visit to a Sacred Place (5-8 pages) = (15%) Use (Eliade, 1958, 367-409) (Durkheim, 1995, 8-18 = Intro, #ii) (Winter, 1995)
3. Mid-term test (15%)
4. Final examination (30%)
5. Class participation (10%)
6. All readings are **required** except those otherwise designated, e.g. such as “recommended”

General Guidelines for Writing Good Essays

(AKA “What Strenski is looking for....”)

- < Go for the problem – don’t ‘beat around the bush’ or lay on a ‘snow job.’
- < Be specific
- < *Refer* to facts – don’t labor them (no “snow” in So Cal, right?)
- < Use quotations to supply the “smoking gun” for your arguments. While you should cite your sources, quotes should not be used to make your arguments
- < Spell out your arguments; don’t skim over this hard part of writing. This means going into *detail* about showing why you think you are right.
- < Trust yourself – have an opinion, a ‘take,’ a point of view. Do not just describe, survey or sum up material.
- < But always, always say “*why*” – defend your opinion with an argument, some reasons
- < And, finally always, always argue *against* yourself – at least *one* counter-argument should be presented to any thesis or idea that you advance. Then, you can attack the counter-argument in your conclusion.

Essay Assignments (Do four of 2-3 pages each)

- Week 1 i. What things, persons, events, places do you consider “sacred,” and why? What does it mean for you that these things are sacred? How do they make you feel? How would their absence or destruction make you feel? What significance might your feelings have?
- OR
- ii. Describe a world in which nothing is sacred. Why would we be justified in calling it such?
- Week 2 i. What is the place of ritual in the deification of Captain Cook?
- OR
- ii. According to Nancy Jay, how did traditional Hawaiian religion die?
- Week 3 i. “The British only saw Hawaiian religion as a scheme of tabus. They missed the real positive heart of the religion of the Hawaiians.” Comment critically with relation to the reading.
- OR
- ii. Regarding their views of the nature of the sacred, what do the views of Robertson Smith have to do with those of Salomon Reinach?
- OR
- iii. Hiram Bingham and/or Titus Coan: promoters of the sacred as tabu or as something positive? If positive, what is there to their sacred that is not just tabu?
- Week 4 How does Otto’s idea of the nature of the ‘holy’ differ and resemble Eliade’s? Does either require or assume the truth of religious faith to be acceptable to the reader? And, if so, what kind of religious commitment?
- Week 5 i. How would Durkheim interpret the religious behavior of the Catholic priest, Laforgue, and the Native Americans as depicted in the film “Black Robe,” in light of what he wrote in *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pages 303-29?
- OR
- ii. Apply Durkheim, Eliade and/or Otto to illuminate the meanings to be found in Tarkovsky’s film, “Stalker.” Is there an overall idea that emerges for you? What is it?
- Week 6 i. Compare the ideals of the sacred in Lem’s *Solaris* and Jodie Foster’s “Contact.” Which did you find most compelling and why?
- OR
- ii. *Solaris*: violator of the sacredness of privacy or sacred messenger? Or, both?
- OR
- iii. What is it about *Solaris* that makes him/her/it sacred?
- Week 7 Compare American Halloween to Mexican “Dia de los Muertos,” Day of the Dead as vehicles in terms of what they convey of their conception of the meaning of the sacred. Do they convey different or similar ideas of the sacred? What are they? Would you say that one or the other was more or less *genuine* as a vehicle for conveying the sacred? For information about the Day of the Dead see Octavio Paz, ch 3. “The Day of the Dead”, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*
- Week 8 i. What would Caillois say in a critique of Durkheim’s “Individuals and the Intellectuals”?
- OR
- ii. Satyajit Ray’s film “Dev ” and the “Feast of Love” Same or different viewpoint concerning the character and nature of the sacred?
- Week 9 i. Which *specific* basic ideas of mainline Christianity does Caillois’ *Pontius Pilate* offend or transgress? What consequences might these offenses have for considering Christianity, its beliefs, its main figures, its history and such ‘sacred’?
- OR
- ii. Pontius Pilate: hero, coward or what? Why do you think he came to the decision that he did? Explain your reasons, and support with specific page references.

OR

iii. Compare and contrast the characters of Judas and Mardouk. Account for the similarities and/or differences in the advice they give Pilate regarding Jesus. How, in particular, do their attitudes to sacredness differ?

OR

iv. "The personality and character of Pontius Pilate represents that of modern secular humanity, lacking all sense of the sacred." Comment critically.

vi. How would Caillois consider the main ideas about the sacred in Scorsese's "Last Temptation of Christ"? OR How would Scorsese consider the main ideas about the sacred in Caillois' *Pontius Pilate*?

OR

vii. Scorsese's "Last Temptation of Christ": Is this film just a piece of sacrilege? Or, does it proffer its own sense of what is sacred? And, if so, what is that sense?

OR

viii. Scorsese's "Last Temptation of Christ" – an expression of a right or left-handed sacred – a sacred of holiness and purity or one of transgression, even blasphemy? Refer to readings.

Week 10i. How does Leni Riefenstahl's "*Triumph of the Will*" reflect or contradict the main ideas of Caillois's "War and the Sacred"?

ii. Review the ideas in the film "Fairy Tale – A True Story" (director, Charles Sturridge) in light of the ideas from our course and especially as advanced in chapter 3 of (Winter, 1995)

A List of Sacred Places

Churches, Temples

California Missions – any

Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple (Hacienda Heights)

Check: URL: www.hsilai.org (Durkheim, 1995, 21-44 = Book I, ch 1)

Malibu Hindu Temple (Las Virgenes Rd, just south off the 101) – fine example of South Indian Hindu temple

Mosque of Riverside (1038 Linden)

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles Cathedral – under construction (Grand Avenue)

Sanatan Dharma Mandir Temple (Hindu), Norwalk.

Temple Beth-El (Jewish), 684-4511

Westwood Temple (Church of the Latter Day Saints) – Santa Monica Blvd. and Overland Ave, West LA

Cemeteries in LA and Riverside Counties

Recommended reading: (Gillis, 1994) (Laderman, 1996) (Winter, 1995) **General list of LA County cemeteries:** <http://www.cagenweb.com/langecem.htm>

Evergreen Cemetery 14th and Pine Streets (Riverside) – Late nineteenth century historic burial place. Note in particular, the Egyptian mausoleum (open until 5pm daily).

Riverside National Cemetery (22, 495 van Buren Blvd., Woodcrest, CA) – major regional national and military site. **Check:** URL <http://www.cmohmemorial.org>

Rosedale Cemetery (Est. 1884) – one of the oldest cemeteries in Southern California, featuring many monumental historic grave sites.

1831 W. Washington Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007-1151 (323) 734-3155 FAX (323) 734-3159 Records housed on-site. Appointment required

Westwood Memorial Park (Glendon Ave, below Wilshire Blvd, Westwood)
Mausoleum of Marilyn Monroe

World War II Nazi Death Camps – Museums, Sacred Places, or What?

Films: “Night and Fog”, “The Wahnsee Conference”, “Shoah” “Europa, Europa”, “Schindler’s List”

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