

## ***REL 691 Approaches to the Study of Religion***

WEDNESDAYS 12:00 - 2:00 pm HL 504

With three special sessions on Mondays 12:45-3:15

*Instructors:* the Faculty of the Department

*Coordinator:* Joanne Punzo Waghorne, Director of Graduate Studies

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The academic study of religion draws from a wide variety of sources for its theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. Much of that diversity of outlook and training is represented on the faculty of the Department of Religion at Syracuse University. This seminar introduces graduate students to some of the classical texts, methods and approaches in use in the field and especially in this department. The seminar's dual function: to introduce new graduate students to the field and at the same time to the varied interests and expertise of the faculty.

### **Course Requirements**

***Readings & Discussion:*** Seminar members must be prepared to discuss all the required readings during each seminar. Most of these readings will be posted on Blackboard but a few books are required. To facilitate these discussions, every member must write a short (1-2 pages) response paper to the assigned readings. Instructors may provide more specific instructions for given seminars. Because both the faculty member offering the session and the coordinator need time to read the posts, response papers are due each week **by Monday 9 am** before the Wednesday class, and should be submitted by to the Discussion Board on **Blackboard**. Before the seminar, take time to read your colleague's responses. These posts will be considered as part of the final grade for the seminar.

***Research Papers:*** The major requirement for seminar members will be a substantive and original research paper that brings one or more of the approaches discussed in the course *to a specific aspect of religious experience or thought*. This process of the engagement of theory with specific materials and issues is a key skill for future work in the field. The faculty member who taught the seminar on that approach and the seminar coordinator will grade the paper. The finished research papers are due on or before **Friday, December 16th by midnight** and must be submitted to the seminar coordinator, Joanne Waghorne. Respect the deadline: faculty members need time to grade these and offer comments. Late papers and reports will **not** be eligible for "A or A-" grades and incompletes are given only in exceptional circumstances.

**Note that each member must submit a topic and brief abstract to Prof. Waghorne on or before Nov 19<sup>th</sup> right before Thanksgiving break.** Unfortunately, this date is before the end of all of the presentations but members need to plan and receive early feedback on their proposed projects. Those considering work with faculty whose presentation falls after that date need to consult with that faculty person. ***Seminar members are strongly encouraged to begin to consider their projects as early as possible.***

**Academic Integrity:** Complete academic integrity is expected of all students. Any incidence of academic dishonesty, as defined by the SU Academic Integrity Policy (see the [Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures](#)) will result in both course sanctions and formal notification to the College of Arts & Sciences. Written assignments must represent the work of the individual student and scrupulously note the source of both wording and ideas that cannot reasonably be considered common knowledge in the field of the academic study of religion.

**Disability Policy:** Any students that need accommodation because of disability should discuss it with the professor during office hours or by appointment and be prepared to provide documentation to the Office of Disability Services (ext. 4498 or 1371)

**Textbooks** (Required):

- Capps, Walter H. *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000 Kindle Edition \$14.26
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Norton & Co., 1961. ISBN-10: 0393096238
- Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. Penguin Books, 1986.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage, 1979. ISBN-10: 039474067X

**Other readings are available on electronic reserve through Blackboard.**

For full bibliographic references for all assigned readings, consult the **Bibliography** below.

SPECIAL SESSIONS: ON MULTIPLE GENEALOGIES FOR AN INTERDISCIPLINARY *FIELD*—*historical and contextual perspectives*  
 These sessions are scheduled on three MONDAYS slot. . Because seminar member will already have reading for these weeks, these sessions will be a lecture format with some basic common reading.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Professor</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Text(s): see full bibliographic references at the end. KEEP AN EYE ON BLACKBOARD these reading will likely be modified.</i>
<b>PART ONE</b>			
<b>THE LONG 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AND THE FOUNDING OF A FIELD (SOMETIME EX POST FACTO)</b>			
29 Aug	Joanne Waghorne	Rise, Fall, and Rise Again of the Comparative Method	NO responses are required but as a preparation read Capps, Chapter 6 The Comparison of Religions for the flavor not the details.
5 Sept	Ahmed Meguid/ Marcia Robinson	Kant/Hegel/Kierkegaard: the foundations of a long argument on religion	
12 Sept	Zachery Braiterman	Psychology of Religion	Freud, <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i>
19 Sept	Gareth Fisher	Max Weber, Marx, revolution and modernization—in context	
24 Sept <i>SPECIAL SESSION</i>	MONDAY 12:45— 3:30	The Long 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Watts and Waghorne	

## PART II: CHANGINGS COURSES

26 Sept	Ahmed Meguid	Heidegger and the foundations for mid 20 <sup>th</sup> century shifts	
3 Oct	William Robert	Postmodernisms, Across Differing Domains	Lyotard, Jean-François. <i>The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.</i> Lyotard, Jean-François. "Notes on the Meaning of 'Post.'" Lyotard, Jean-François. "A Postmodern Fable." <i>Postmodern Fables</i> Jameson, Fredric. "Culture: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." 1-54.
10 Oct	Gustav Niebuhr	Thinking about Religion in America: Beginnings of the debates over "pluralism"	Emerson, "Divinity School Address"; Thoreau, <i>Walden</i> , 80-139
15 October SPECIAL SESSION	MONDAY 12:45— 3:30	Thinking through Colonialism: complexities and complications Waghorne, Arnold, Kassam	
17 Oct	Ann Gold	On Beyond Geertz	Clifford Geertz, (1973) "Religion as a Cultural System"; Talal Asad,(1993). "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category"; John and Jean Comaroff, (1992) "The Colonization of Consciousness"; Aihwa Ong (1997) "Spirits of Resistance"; Sherry Ortner (1999) "Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering"; Wendy James (2003) "Ritual, Memory, and Religion" <i>Recommended background reading</i> especially for those otherwise unfamiliar with anthropological approaches to religion
24 Oct	Philip Arnold	Discovery, Conquest & Cultural Contact	Charles H. Long, <i>Significations</i> ; David Chidester, "Frontiers of Comparison," in <i>Savage Systems</i> , pp. 1-29; Vine Deloria, Jr. "An Open Letter to the Heads of Christian Churches in America," in <i>For This Land</i> , pp. 77-83
31 Oct	Tazim Kassam	Orientali sm and Feminis m	Edward Said, <i>Orientalism</i> (Vintage: 1979) Introduction, pp. 1-28; Ch. 2, III, "Oriental Residence and Scholarship," pp. 149-167. Saba Mahmud, <i>Politics of Piety</i> (Princeton: 2005), Ch. 1, "The Subject of Freedom," pp. 1-39; Ch. 4, "Positive Ethics and Ritual Conventions," pp. 118-167.
7 Nov	Marcia Robinson	Kierkegaard, Cornell West, and Black Religion	Robison, Marcia. "Søren Kierkegaard." "Cornell West: Kierkegaard and the Construction of a "Blues Philosophy."
14 Nov	James Watts	Biblical Studies, Religious Studies, and Theory	Moore, Stephen D. and Yvonne Sherwood, "Biblical Studies 'After' Theory," <i>Biblical Interpretation</i> 18 (2010), 1- 27, 87-113, 191-225.

19-25 Nov	<b>No Classes</b>	Thanksgiving Break	
Nov 19	<b>DUE</b>	<b>Proposals for Seminar project with abstract and basic bibliography due to Waghorne</b>	
28 Nov	Edward Mooney	Theory and Method of Reading Texts	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling redux</i> Mooney, "Love: this lenient interpreter," "Fear and Trembling as Ur-text," "Preservative Care: Saving Intimate Voice in the Humanities" Plus Instructions on Blackboard
3Dec <i>SPECIAL SESSION</i>	MONDAY 12:45— 3:30	<b>THE FUTURE/S OF THE FIELD—</b>	FACULTY AND STUDENTS
5 Dec		Presentation of papers	
14 Dec	<b>Term papers due!</b>		

Course Bibliography: *Will be updated*

- Asad, Talal. "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," from *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 27-79. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Capps, Walter H. *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000  
Kindle Edition \$14.26
- Chidester, David. *Savage Systems; Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1996.
- Comaroff, John and Jean Comaroff. "The Colonization of Consciousness," from *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, 235-263. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.
- Deloria, Jr., Vine. *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Norton & Co., 1961.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Religion as a Cultural System," from *The Interpretation of Culture*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- James, Wendy. "Ritual, Memory, and Religion," from *The Ceremonial Animal: A New Portrait of Anthropology*, 100-136. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- James, Wendy. 2003. "Ritual, Memory, and Religion," from *The Ceremonial Animal: A New Portrait of Anthropology*, 100-136. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Culture: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991. 1-54.
- Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*
- Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. Penguin Books, 1986.
- Long, Charles H. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Aurora, CO: The Davies Group, Publishers, 1999 (first published 1986).
- Lyotard, Jean-François. "A Postmodern Fable." *Postmodern Fables*. Trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 83-101.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. "Notes on the Meaning of 'Post.'" *The Postmodern Explained*. Ed. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas. Trans. Don Barry et al. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. 75-80.

- Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984
- Mahmud, Saba, *Politics of Piety*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005
- Marx, Karl. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844." *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1972. 2nd edition, 1978. 66-105.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago: U. of Chicago, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Picture Theory*. Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1994
- Mooney, Edward F. "Love: this lenient interpreter" in *Táhe Wisdom in Love*, ed. Benson and Wirzba. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008 [also in my *On Soren Kierkegaard: Dialogue, Polemics, Lost Intimacy and Time*, Ashgate, 2007, Ch. 5].
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Preservative Care: Saving Intimate Voice in the Humanities" in *Soundings, An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Fall/Winter, 2008 [also in my *Lost Intimacy in American Thought: Recovering Personal Philosophy from Thoreau to Cavell*, Continuum Books, 2009, Ch. 10].
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mother-Midwife: de silentio delivers Derrida and Kristeva" ed The Future of Continental Philosophy of Religion, edited by John . Caputo, et al, Indiana (forthcoming).
- Ong, Aihwa. 1997. "Spirits of Resistance," in *Situated Lives: Gender and Culture in Everyday Life*, edited by Louise Lamphere, Helena Ragone and Patricia Zavella, 355-370. New York: Routledge.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. Ong, Aihwa. "The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia." *American Ethnologist* 15/1 (1998), 28-42.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1999. "Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering," in *The Fate of Culture: Geertz and Beyond*, edited by Sherry B. Ortner, 136-163. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering," in *The Fate of Culture: Geertz and Beyond*, edited by Sherry B. Ortner, 136-163. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Robison, Marcia. "Søren Kierkegaard." In *Beyond the Pale: Reading Theology from the Margins*. Eds. Miguel A, De La Tore and Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Cornell West: Kierkegaard and the Construction of a "Blues Philosophy." In *Kierkegaard's Influence of Social-Political Thought*. Ed. John Steward. London: Ashgate, 2011.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage, 1979.
- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. 1930. Tr. Talcott Parsons. New York: Routledge, 1992. 2005 print.