

# 840:222 ISSUES IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

**Dr. James W. Jones**

Spring 2007

Office Hours M:1:30- 3:00 and by appointment, Loree 132

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The following books are available at New Jersey Books.

Paul Tillich, The Dynamics of Faith

Martin Buber, I and Thou

James W. Jones, Waking From Newton's Sleep

Diana Eck, Encountering God

All other readings are on electronic reserve through the Douglass Library

Examinations: There will be three in class multiple-choice exams as marked on the syllabus. No make-up exams will be given unless either: (1) You can document that You (not a friend or relative) are confined to the hospital when the exam is given. Making an appointment at the Health Service will NOT suffice. Or (2) a close relative has died and the exam is being given on the day of the funeral. A copy of the obituary or death notice is required for documentation. All make-up exams must be taken within one week of the date of the exam.

Note: All cell phones, pagers, etc. must be turned off in class. Anyone whose device goes off during class will be asked to leave for the remainder of that period. Anyone whose device goes off during an exam must leave the exam and will receive an "F" for that exam.

## COURSE OUTLINE

1. Introduction to the Course and Religion and Modernity. As an introduction we will explore some of the characteristics of the modern world and their impact on religion, the nature of secularization, and the function of religion in a modern, secular society.

2. Existentialism and the Religion of Individual Subjectivity. This section will discuss the rise of modern existentialism and will introduce you to the ideas of S. Kierkegaard on religion, faith, and God. Students should understand Kierkegaard's 'stages on life's way,' his relation to modernity and to existentialism, and his understanding of religious faith.

Reading: " Soren Kierkegaard," [E-Reserve].

3. The Ultimate Source. This section will introduce you to the basic ideas of P. Tillich on religion, faith and God. Students understand the basic thrust of Tillich 's theology and what he means by 'ultimate concern,' 'ground of being,' 'sign and symbol,' and 'particular and universal.'

Reading: P. Tillich, The Dynamics of Faith

## EXAM 1

4. The Ultimate Person. This section will introduce you to the basic ideas of M. Buber on religion, human life and God. Students should understand what Buber means by 'I- You' and 'I-It' relationships, by the phrase 'all life is meeting' and how his idea of God compares and contrasts with that of Tillich.

Reading: M. Buber, I and Thou, parts one & three

5. The Ultimate Reality. This section will introduce you to the ideas about ultimate reality found in Hinduism as described by a westerner who has lived both in India and with Hindu communities in the USA. Students should consider how the Hindu idea of ultimate reality compares and contrasts with the idea of God found in Tillich and Buber. Students should consider why Eck focuses so much on the tension between “the One and the many” and why she emphasizes “practice” so much.

Reading: Diana Eck, Encountering God, chapters 3, 5, 6

## EXAM 2

6. Religious Truth. This section is designed to help you understand the nature of human knowledge and the place of religious knowledge within it. Emphasis will be on comparing and contrasting religious knowledge with that found in natural science. During this section, you should understand the following: the major similarities and differences between religion and science; whether or not science explains everything and, if not, what science leaves unaccounted; and various definitions of such crucial terms such as "objectivity," "proof" and "knowledge." We will also discuss various definitions of faith and the nature of our most basic convictions in religion and other disciplines and how we arrive at and defend our most basic convictions. We will also develop an analogy between perception and faith. Students should understand these topics (the nature of basic convictions, the analogy to perception) as well as what T. Kuhn means by "paradigms."

Reading: James W. Jones, Waking From Newton's Sleep.

James W. Jones, Texture of Knowledge, chapters 1,2,3,4,6. [E-Reserve]

7. The Problems of Pluralism. This section will discuss the problems raised for religion by the existence of many other religious traditions, such as how one religion can claim our allegiance when other religions also exist and how we might respond to the variety of religious options available today. Students should understand those issues and, as well, be able to define the terms 'relativism,' 'absolutism,' 'critical relativism,' 'pluralism,' and describe what P. Berger means by 'relativizing the relativizers.' ,

Reading: James W. Jones, Texture of Knowledge, chapter 5

Diana Eck, Encountering God, chapters 2, 4, 7.

FINAL EXAM: Morning of Thursday, May 3rd . Final Exam must be taken at this time. No exceptions.