The Problem of Religion

Required Texts:
Course Reader (Available at UCR Printing and Reprographics/Services) All readings are in Reader, unless otherwise specified.
Preus, Explaining Religion
Sharpe, Comparative Religion: A History


Course Requirements:
1. Five assigned papers of 2-3 pages each. At least two papers must be taken from each “Part” = 50%
2. Final exam = 50%

Part I: Cultural Problems for Religion

2 Apr
Introductory Remarks
Definitions of Religion; Is Humanism a Religion?; Koresh and the Branch Davidians, “Cult” or “Religion”Humanism, A “Religion”?

4 Apr
Natural Religion, Science of Religion and Deism
Sharpe, ch 1, Samuel Preus, Explaining Religion, ch 1-2; "America’s Unchristian Beginnings"; “Christian Influences”.

9, 11 Apr
History and the Bible

16, 18 Ap
The Shock of the Old: Max Müller and the Aryans
Sharpe, ch 2; Friedrich Max Müller, Natural Religion, 212-20; "Lecture on the Vedas", 128-37, 416-33; Strenski, "Max-Müller, Myth and Religion-as-Such", 57-63

23, 25 Apr
The Shock of the “Primitive”: Tylor, Evolution and Animism
Preus, ch 7, “E. B. Tylor”; Tylor, "The Spirit-World"

30 Apr
The Shock of the “Primitive”: Frazer, Robertson Smith

Part II: Religious Experience: as Solution and Problem

2 May
Religion in and for Itself: Phenomenology and the Anatomy of Religion
Anatomy; Gerardus van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, ix-xii, 650-4, 666-78; Sharpe, 220-6, 229-35. Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, 3-17 “Empathy”

7 May
Religion in and for Itself: Numinous Experience

9 May
Religious Experience Has Built the World of Capitalism
Robert Bellah, Tokugawa Religion, 1-9, 59-84, 107-31

14, 16 May
Religion Is Religious Experience, but Also Is Denial: Pragmatism

21, 23 May
Religion Is Religious Experience, but Also Wish-Fulfillment: Psychoanalysis
Michael Carroll, The Cult of the Virgin Mary, 22-100; Sharpe, 175f, 197-211

28, 30 May
Religious Experience Is Group Experience: Durkheim
Preus, ch 8, “Durkheim”; Sharpe, pp. 82-87; Emile Durkheim, from Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, 112-61; "Religious Sentiments at the Present Time”, 181-9; “Promise Keepers”

4, 6 June
Religious Experience Is Everywhere
Sharpe, 213-7; Mirea Eliade, Myth and Reality, 162-93; "Crisis and Renewal” and"Cosmogonic Myth and 'Sacred History’, 54-87; Strenski, "Eliade’s Theory of Myth and the ‘History of Religions’", 104-22.