

RL381 – TOPICS IN THEORY AND METHOD

Dr. Chad Bauman

e-mail: cbauman@butler.edu

office: 317-940-8705

cell (for emergencies and pressing questions): 609-933-3200

Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:00-12:00; 1:00-2:30

DESCRIPTION

An intensive, roughly chronological overview of various approaches to the study of religion, as well as an introduction to some of the field's most prominent scholars

PURPOSE

If all goes well, upon completing this course you should be better equipped than before to:

- accurately recognize and distinguish a variety of methodologies employed by scholars of religion;
- thoughtfully identify the presuppositions, biases, strengths and pitfalls of each approach; and
- intelligently apply methodological tools introduced by the course to the study of religion.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Karen Fields, trans. (New York: The Free Press, 1995)
- Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harvest, 1987)
- Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989)
- Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford University Press, 1958): ISBN 0195002105
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2004)
- William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Penguin, 1982)—**Also available online (see below)**

***RECOMMENDED TEXTS (WE WILL READ TWO CHAPTERS OUT OF EACH)**

- Mark C. Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)
- Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973)

*All texts not assigned as required texts are available on Blackboard.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE

The following four components will comprise the grade for this course:

- **Participation (25%):** Students will be expected to attend the class regularly, to ask informed questions, and to respect each other and the professor. This class will be based primarily on discussion. If these discussions are to be successful, students will need to have carefully read the assigned texts before the date under which they are assigned. A large portion of the student's participation grade will be determined by the extent to which the student's participation in these discussions demonstrates his or her engagement with and understanding of the course materials. Participation grades will be updated periodically on Blackboard. As a rough guide, a student who attends every class but does not speak will receive a 16/20 (80%). Higher grades in participation therefore require not only regular attendance, but regular participation in class discussions.
- **Argument Maps (25%):** Students will bring a sheet (hard-copy please) to each class which 1) outlines the main argument/s the assigned reading is making, 2) provides supporting quotations for the various elements of that/those argument/s, and 3) raises one *analytical* (not informational) question for discussion in class. Students may be called upon in class at any point to discuss their sheets. These sheets will periodically be returned, and will be graded based on whether they show evidence of close and careful reading. Argument map grades will be updated periodically on Blackboard.
- **Religious Event Analysis Paper, Rough Draft (25%):** Students will write a five-page (double-spaced) paper on any religious event or activity analyzing and interpreting it from the perspective of at least one of the course authors. I intend "event or activity" to be interpreted in the widest possible manner. Creative choices are encouraged, and you need only to be able to argue persuasively that the event you choose has a "religious" function, acts like a religious event or activity, or perpetuates religious ideals of some sort. You may choose an event you've read about, seen, or know of in some other way, though you are encouraged to choose an event you can attend and observe (physically or in film, print, or via the internet). Students *should discuss the event they intend to analyze with the professor at least one week before turning in the paper*. It is not necessary, but you may wish to consult secondary literature on the event you choose. You may also wish to consult secondary literature on the theories or theorists covered in the course. The paper should be well-structured, with a thesis, properly formatted footnotes or in-text citation, and the presentation of supporting evidence/argumentation. The paper will be due two full days before the class in which it will be discussed (by e-mail), and will be e-mailed to other students, who will read it, write argument maps on it, and come prepared to critique it in class. Students will sign up for a presentation date in the first days of class (see options in schedule below).
- **Religious Event Analysis Paper, Final Version (25%):** Students will develop the aforementioned five-page paper into a twelve to fourteen-page (double-spaced) paper analyzing the same event from multiple theoretical or methodological perspectives. While students should not attempt to integrate the perspectives of *every* course author into the paper, the papers should demonstrate a thorough comprehension of the issues and materials covered in the course (and the more theorists integrated in some way, the merrier). Students should also make an argument as to which theorist or theory covered during the semester *best* helps explain/interpret the event. **The paper is due by midnight on the last day of class (4/24).**

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Paper Submission:

All papers should be submitted as a Microsoft Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) document attached to an e-mail to the instructor. Please do not turn in hard copies, except for the weekly one-page responses containing an overview of the reading and discussion questions.

Lateness Policy

Ordinarily, I am soft on lateness. In this class, however, and for a variety of reasons, no extensions will be granted on any paper, and argument maps will NOT BE ACCEPTED after the class in which the material is discussed (except in the case of traumatic personal or familial events). Papers turned in late will be assessed a penalty of three points per day.

E-mail Policy

All students are expected to check their Butler e-mail account daily (when school is in session) for class updates and reminders.

Paper Style

The Change and Tradition program offers a very useful guide on writing papers at http://www.butler.edu/cnt/writing_guide.pdf

Rough Drafts:

The professor will read and comment on complete rough drafts of student papers, provided they are submitted at least one week in advance of their due date. Students wishing the professor to comment on their final papers must submit them on April 17th.

Student Disability Accommodation

It is the policy and practice of Butler University to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Written notification from Student Disability Services is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with me and allow one week advance notice. Otherwise, it is not guaranteed that the accommodation can be received on a timely basis. If you have questions about Student Disability Services, you may wish to contact Michele Atterson, JH 136, ext. 9308

Academic Integrity:

Students will be expected to adhere to the standards of academic integrity as outlined in the Butler University Student Handbook, as well as to the highest standards of honesty, good faith and fair dealing. Students discovered violating those standards will **fail the course**, and may face additional sanctions which could include expulsion from the University. Violations include (but are not limited to) cheating, collaborating on assignments assigned individually, and plagiarizing (turning in another person's work as one's own, copying text from any source, including the internet, books, articles, or magazines, without acknowledgement, etc.). Students should consult Butler's statement on academic integrity, posted on the course's Blackboard site under "Course Documents," for more detailed information on the University's expectations and policies. The library provides a tutorial on plagiarism for those needing more instruction: www.butler.edu/library/instruction/tutorial/index.html.

Statement on Disruptive Classroom Behavior:

The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which students and faculty may learn to reason with clarity and compassion, to share of themselves without losing their identities, and to develop an understanding of the community in which they live. Student conduct which disrupts the learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action (Butler University Rules of Conduct #2) and/or removal from class. Some specific examples include talking with disrupts class discussion, and cellular phone use/rings.

SCHEDULE

T 1/15: Introduction to the Course

- Sign up in class for a presentation time.

R 1/17: The Study of Religion

- Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in Mark C. Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, pgs. 269-284
- Paul Mankowski, "Academic Religion: Playground of the Vandals," *First Things* 23 (May 1992), pgs. 31-37.
- Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "Other Scholars' Myths," in her *Other People's Myths*, pgs. 7-24

T 1/22: Hume's Rationality

- David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, sections I ("That Polytheism was the Primary Religion of Man) to VII (Flux and Reflux of Polytheism and Theism) – <http://www.soci.niu.edu/~phildept/Dye/NaturalHistory.html>
- David Hume, "Of Miracles," parts I and II, from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* – <http://www.bartleby.com/37/3/>

R 1/24: NO CLASS

T 1/29 Müller's Science of Religion

- F. Max Müller, First Lecture from *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, pgs. 1-25

R 1/31: Müller, continued

- F. Max Müller, First Lecture from *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, pgs. 25-51

T 2/5: James's Varieties

- William James, Lecture One from *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pgs. 1-52 or <http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/james/toc.htm>

R 2/7: James, Continued

- William James, Lecture 20 (Conclusion), from *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pgs. 485-519 or <http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/james/toc.htm>

T 2/12: Otto's *Mysterium Tremendum*

- Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, John Harvey, trans., pgs. 1-71

R 2/14: Student Presentations, 1

- Begin reading Freud (for next week)

T 2/19 – Freud's *Illusion*

- Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, pgs. iv-71

R 2/21: Student presentations, 2

T 2/26: Durkheim's Elementary Forms

- Emile Durkheim, "Introduction," "Definition of Religious Phenomena and of Religion," and "Origins of These Beliefs (Conclusion)," in *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Karen Fields, trans., pgs. 1-44, 207-231

R 2/28: Student Presentations, 3

T 3/4: Durkheim, continued

- Emile Durkheim, "Conclusion," in *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Karen Fields, trans., pgs. 417-448

R 3/6: Marx and Weber—NO CLASS

- Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," and "From *The German Ideology*," in Jon Elster, trans., *Karl Marx: A Reader*, pgs. 20-23, 302-305
- Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Giddens's Intro, Part 1, pgs. vii-xxiv; 1-50.

T 3/11 **SPRING BREAK**

R 3/13 **SPRING BREAK**

T 3/18 – Weber (Concluded)

- Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Part 2, pgs. 53-125
- Brooks, "The Catholic Boom," from NYTimes

R 3/20 – Phenomenology

- John B. Carman, "Comparative Religion: How and Why?" *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Feb-March (v. xi), 1981, pgs. 4-7
- Gerardus van der Leeuw, "Epilegomena to the Study of Religion," from *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, J. E. Turner, trans., pgs. 671-695

T 3/25: Eliade's *Sacred and Profane*

- Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane*, Chapter 1 and 2, pgs. 20-113

R 3/27: Student Presentations, 4

T 4/1: Geertz's Cultural Systems

- Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," from *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pgs. 87-125

R 4/3: Geertz's Cockfight

- Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight," from *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pgs. 412-453

T 4/8: Geertz and His Critics

- Vincent Crapanzano, "Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description," in James Clifford and Politics of Ethnography, eds., *Writing Culture*, pgs. 51-76
- Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in *Genealogies of Religion*, pgs. 27-54

R 4/10: Student Presentations, 5

T 4/15: Taussig's Transgressions

- Michael Taussig, "Transgression," in Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, pgs. 349-364

R 4/17: Victor Turner's Rituals

- Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," from *The Ritual Process*, abridged in Lambek, ed., *Anthropology of Religion*, pgs. 358-374

T 4/22: Feminism and Religion

- Ursula King, "Introduction: Gender and the Study of Religion," in her *Religion and Gender*, pgs. 1-39
- Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," pgs. 202-36

R 4/24: Last Day of Class -- Final Papers Due at Midnight (no extensions granted)