

M. Gail Hamner 512 Hall of Languages (3-5716) Office hour Mondays 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

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What is Religion?

This course introduces students to many of the classic texts that explore the phenomenon of religion. The course employs student’s own descriptions of the ‘religious’ and two novels as anchors for discussing the meaning of religion and the various methodological tools for studying it.

Books for this course are on sale at both the Student Union and Marshall Square bookstores. They also are on reserve at Bird Library. Please note: The translation or edition of these texts is not crucial. You may use copies of the texts under a different editor or translator.

Week 1: Introductions

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| Monday, August 30 | Introductions |
| Wed., September 1 | description of something 'religious' due Silko, <i>Ceremony</i> , beginning-page 63 [lecture on Cohn] |
| Friday, September 3 | Silko, p. 64-130 [lecture on Lopez] |

Week 2: Ceremony

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| Mon., September 6 | No class: <u>Labor Day</u> |
| Wed., September 8 | Silko, p. 131-179; discuss religious descriptions in groups |
| Fri., September 10 | Silko, p. 180-262 [lecture on Silko] |

Week 3: Philosophy and Religion

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| Mon., September 13 | response 1 due on Silko. No reading due: further discussion of Silko and your descriptions in class |
| Wed., September | |

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| 15 | David Hume, <i>the Natural History of Religion</i> (1757), beginning – Chapter VIII |
| Fri., September 17 | Hume, Chapter IX - end |

Week 4: Phenomenology and Religion, part two

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| Mon., September 20 | <u>No class: Yom Kippur</u> |
| Wed., September 22 | Continued discussion of Hume |
| Fri., September 24 | Ludwig Feuerbach, <i>The Essence of Christianity</i> (1841), 1-43 |

Week 5: Psychology and Religion

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| Mon., September 27 | Feuerbach, p. 185-203, 213-225, 270-278 |
| Wed., September 29 | William James, <i>Varieties of Religious Experience</i> , Lectures 1,2,4 |
| Fri., October 1 | James, Lectures 5, 6-7 |

Week 6: Psychology and Religion, part two

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| Mon., October 4 | James, Lectures 9, 16-17, 20 |
| Wed., October 6 | Sigmund Freud, <i>The Future of an Illusion</i> (1927), entire text |
| Fri., October 8 | Midterm papers due. No reading due: continued discussion of Freud. |

Week 7: Sociology and Religion

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| Mon., October 11 | Durkheim, <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> , Durkheim's "Introduction" and Book I, chapter 1 |
| Wed., October 13 | Durkheim, Book I, chapter 4; and Book II, chapters 1-4 |
| Fri., October 15 | <u>No class:</u> Fall Break |

Week 8: Sociology and Religion, Continued

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| Mon., October 18 | Durkheim, Book II, Chapters 6-7 |
| Wed., October 20 | Durkheim, Book II, Chapters 8-9 |
| Fri., October 22 | Durkheim, Book III, Chapter 5 and Conclusion |

Week 9: Anthropology and Religion

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| Mon., October 25 | response 2 on Durkheim due; Geertz, <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i> , Chapter 1 |
| Wed., October 27 | Geertz, Chapters 4, 5 |
| Fri., October 29 | Geertz, Chapter 15 |

Week 10: Sociology and Anthropology analyzed through film

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| Mon., November 1 | TBA (possibly screen a film over at my house, or view clips of films in class) |
| Wed., November 3 | TBA |
| Fri., November 5 | response 3 due |

Week 11: Social Critique and Religion, part tw

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| Mon., November 8 | Lecture on Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" (handout) |
| Wed., November 10 | Lecture on Max Weber (handout) |
| Fri., November 12 | continued discussion of Weber and Marx |

Week 12: God of Small Things

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| Mon., November 15 | Lecture on Minority voices in/and a "Christian" Nation |
| Wed., November 17 | response 4 due; Class discussion of our own "minority voices," politics, and religion |
| Fri., November 19 | Introduction to Roy, <i>The God of Small Things</i> |

Week 13: Thanksgiving

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| Mon., November 22 | <u>No class:</u> American Academy of Religion Meeting in Boston |
| Wed., November 24 | <u>No class:</u> Thanksgiving |
| Fri., November 26 | <u>No class:</u> Thanksgiving |

Week 14: God of Small Things, continued

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| Mon., November 29 | Roy, <i>The God of Small Things</i> ; in class we'll discuss current media uses and presumptions of religion |
| Wed., December 1 | Roy; continued discussions |
| Fri., December 3 | Roy; continued discussions |

Week 15: Wrap-up

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| Mon., December 6 | Roy |
| Wed., December 8 | Roy |
| Fri., December 10 | Course wrap-up |