

Religious Literacy
Religious Studies 1301H
Southern Methodist University
Fall 2017

For Spring 2019: Look at cowboy christians

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OBJECTIVES

This course is designed for students with little or no background in the academic study of religion. It has three primary objectives:

First, the course seeks to provide you with an introduction to a wide variety of religious traditions, communities and practices within the context of globalization. Topics we will cover include the rise of religion as an academic subject in the age of modernity, religion as it relates to colonialism and national identities, religious expression in the media and in popular culture, and changing religious practices and expressions in the light of globalization and immigration. By the end of the semester you should be able to accurately describe the practices and beliefs of some of the world's religious traditions. You should also be able to analyze and problematize "religion," "modernity" and "globalization" as popular and academic concepts related to religious practice and beliefs. Demonstrating these skills fulfills the religious studies department's objective that students will exhibit familiarity with key practices and beliefs of particular religious traditions. By the end of the semester you will be able to demonstrate in presentations, class discussion, and exams an understanding of the historical, cultural, social, or political conditions of identity formation and function in human society, including the ways in which these conditions influence individual or group status, treatment, or accomplishments. You should also be able to name the conditions under which speaking about such divergent experiences can happen, especially as they are taught through structured dialog. Doing so fulfills the UC proficiency in Human Diversity (HD).

Second, this course aims to introduce you to several approaches to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course we will explore the ways that people have and do investigate religious histories, practices and people. By the end of the semester you

should also be able to analyze and employ several methods of studying "religion" as a social, psychological, cultural, theological and linguistic phenomenon. While this course is in no way comprehensive (as no course could be), you should come away well versed in the methods and critiques of these various approaches, and be able to begin to describe and utilize your own methodology in academic terms. Exhibiting these skills fulfills the religious studies department's objective that students will demonstrate a thorough understanding of methodologies employed in the field of religious studies. Exhibiting these skills fulfills SMU's UC requirement of the Philosophical and Religious Inquiry and Ethics component that students are able to describe and explain some of the general features and principal theoretical methods of religious studies. Successfully completing the Religion 75218 project fulfills the UC proficiency in Community Engagement (CE), where students will be able to apply academic learning to address specific need(s) in a community through a community engagement activity.

Finally, this course is designed to build your skills in the analysis of complex argumentation, your abilities to discuss matters critically, and your abilities to positively encounter difference. We will work to develop your proficiency in the analysis of texts and elements of material culture, your skills in speaking and writing, and your skills in communicating across differences of various kinds through dialog. Exhibiting these skills fulfills the religious studies department's objective that students will demonstrate strong writing and analytical skills.

PROCEDURE

The course is scheduled to meet Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 - 10:50 am in the Loyd Commons classroom. The course will combine presentations from Dr. DeTemple with student presentations and class discussions.

In addition, Dr. DeTemple will be available for conference and consultations outside of class. Dr. DeTemple will hold office/conversation hours on Wednesdays from 1:30 - 2:30 at the Fondren Starbucks, and is also available by appointment.

In order to be fully present to class materials, to each other, and to yourself, the use of computers and other electronic devices is prohibited during class sessions. Please print all Canvas readings and bring them with you. If you need to be attentive to your phone due to family emergencies, etc., let Dr. DeTemple know.

Please keep in mind that you as a student, and I as your instructor, are bound by the SMU Honor Code. Always cite your sources in papers (even drafts!), and be sure that work on quizzes, exams and presentations is your own, without unauthorized assistance. If I suspect that you have plagiarized or received unauthorized

assistance on a paper, project, or other class work, I must give you the choice of appearing before SMU's Judicial Board, or accepting a Faculty Disposition, usually failure in the class.

PLEASE talk to me if you have any questions about citations or the limits of acceptable assistance. I would much rather talk with you than enter into a judicial process.

GRADING

Class Participation..... 20%

Attendance and participation in class discussion are essential components of this course, and represent a significant portion of your grade. All of the assigned readings are to be completed on schedule, and you should come to class prepared to engage actively in discussions, dialogs, and presentations (half of your final participation grade). In addition, you are required to respond weekly on the Canvas discussion board to readings and class discussions, the second half of your participation grade. More on this at the end of the syllabus.

Unit Quizzes..... 10%

To ensure that you do the reading, and to identify any major problems before the midterm and/or final exam, I will give short quizzes at the end of every unit covering readings and important points from lectures/class discussion.

Mid-Term Exam..... 15%

There will be one mid-term exam that will consist of critical reflection on a question provided one week before the exam is due. The paper (approximately five pages) must draw together various materials from the course.

Presentation (individual)..... 10%

At points marked on the syllabus, individuals will choose one topic about which they will do extra research and bring information to share with other participants in the class. The presentation, to be designed primarily to enhance discussion, should last approximately twenty minutes. An "A" grade will go to those presentations that are well researched, effectively presented and encourage significant discussion. You will find a guide to the presentation at the end of the syllabus.

Religion 75218 Project (group)..... 25%

Every class member will engage in significant research to document the history of the religious institutions in the 75218 area code. Groups will present their findings on a designated date at the end of the semester, and also contribute to a project webpage. As

with the individual presentations, an "A" grade will go to those projects that are well researched and effectively presented. More information about the objectives, criteria and grading for the groups will come.

Final Exam..... 20%

The final will summarize your personal approach to studying religion in the context of modernity and globalization with specific reference to Bron Taylor's *Dark Green Religion*.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There are five required textbooks available for purchase in the SMU Bookstore:

- *Saleemah Abdul-Ghafur, ed. *Living Islam Out Loud: American Muslim Women Speak* (Boston, Beacon Press, 2005).

- *Annie Blazer. *Playing for God: Evangelical Women and the Unintended Consequences of Sports Ministry*. (New York: NYU Press, 2015).

- *AJ Jacobs. *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008).

- *Bron Taylor. *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

- *Jeff Wilson. *Mindful America: the Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Additional Text: John Esposito, Darrell Fasching and Todd Lewis. *World Religions Today*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

This is an optional textbook for those who want additional reading or to have some of the information presented in lectures at their fingertips. New editions are pricey, but older editions are relatively inexpensive and readily available from on-line retailers.

Additional readings will be available on Canvas, <http://smu.instructure.com/courses>. Your user ID is your SMU ID number and your password is your usual SMU password. If you can't get into Canvas, let Dr. DeTemple know immediately.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Introductions: thinking about "religion," "modernity," and "globalization" in academic contexts.

- *How can we study religion as an academic subject?
- *What is modernity and how might it relate to religion?
- *What is "globalization" and how can we study it?
- *Is the study of "religion" a purely "Western" idea? Is studying religious traditions obsolete in the age of globalization? What is religious literacy and how does one acquire it?

Readings

August 22- Introductions (no reading)

August 24- William Paden "Religion as a Subject Matter" from *Religious Worlds*; JZ Smith "Introduction" from *Imagining Religion*; Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels Petersson, "Globalization: Circumnavigating a Term" from *Globalization: A Short History* (Canvas)

August 29- [Unit Quiz in class] Immanuel Wallerstein "The End of What Modernity?"; "Intellectual Humility in Public Discourse" (Canvas).
Dialog in class – Place of Religion on a Modern Campus

Unit 2: The Myth of the "Isms": religion and modernity in colonial and postcolonial worlds. Case Study: Hinduism

- *How did colonialism shape the study of religion, especially in India?
- *How can we view globalization in light of colonialism?
- *How do we use (or abuse) comparison when we study religions?
- *How have people used scripture to understand religion?
- *Can we effectively use culture to "explain" religion or vice versa?
- *What is the relationship between religion and politics in modern India? How can we best study such relationships?

August 31- Julius Lipner. "The Rise of 'Hinduism' Or, How to Invent a World Religion with Only Moderate Success" (Canvas)

September 5- Paula Richman "Introduction: The Diversity of the Ramayana Tradition" from *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of Narrative Tradition in South Asia* (Canvas)

REPORT: International Society for Krishna Consciousness
September 7 - *Gandhi: An Autobiography 31-58* (Canvas)
REPORT: Perceptions of Gandhi in India and Abroad

September 12 -[Unit Quiz in class] "The Bindi and the Job Interview" (Canvas);
Andrea R. Jain. "Who Is to Say Modern Yoga Practitioners Have it All Wrong? On Hindu Origins and Yogaphobia" (Canvas).
REPORT: *Ganesha Bedspread Controversy at Urban Outfitters*
Dialog in class – Religious Expressions at Work and School

Unit 3: Religions in Moving Spaces. Case Study: Islam

- *How is globalization affecting religious communities and those who study them?
- *Is it possible to say that there can be a virtual form of a religion? Can there be a virtual religious community?
- *How do scholars relate religious texts to "lived religion"?
- *How do religions change when they leave their home area/culture?
- *Are blogs, websites, online forums or videos legitimate sources for scholars of religion?

September 14- *Living Islam Out Loud*, 1-50
REPORT: Nation of Islam
Religion 75218 Project Begins

September 19 - *Living Islam Out Loud*, 51-94; "American Muslims are Following Jews when it Comes to Intermarriage" (Canvas)
Dialog in class – Interfaith Marriage
September 21 - *Living Islam Out Loud*, 95-156
REPORT: Hajj and Ramadan

September 26 - [Unit Quiz in class] *Living Islam Out Loud*, 157-202
First Group Progress Report Due

Unit 4: Christianity as a Global/Cultural Religion

- *How does globalization affect religious imagination across borders?
- *Is globalization theory effective for studying religion?
- *How can we study religion outside of institutional spaces?
- *Where are the borders of religious practices?

September 28 - *Playing for God*, 1-53

Midterm Distributed Here

October 3 - *Playing for God*, 54-102

REPORT: Charismatic Catholicism and Christianity in the Global South

October 5 - - Film (in class) African Christianity Rising

[Midterm Due Here]

Fall Break

October 12 - *Playing for God* 103 - 194; "Wilshire Baptist Church Votes to Accept Gay Members" (Canvas)

Dialog in class – Sexuality in Religious Settings

Unit 5: Religion, Ritual and Modernity. Case Study: American Appropriations of Buddhist Meditation

- * How can we use rituals to study religion?
- * How do different religious traditions combine in the events of everyday life, and how does this inform our interpretation of religious traditions?
- * Are all rituals religious?
- * Is there such a thing as "popular religion"? Is this a hallmark of modernity?
- * Can ritual be global?
- * How do views about the body affect religious practice?

October 17- - Bruce Lincoln "Introduction" and "Tiv Scarification" from *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Rituals of Women's Initiation* (Canvas)

October 19 - Jeff Wilson, *Mindful America*, 1 - 74

Second Group Progress Report Due

October 24- *Mindful America*, 75-132; "I Quit Cancer Treatment and Got Better My Own Way" (Canvas)

Dialog in class – Rationality and Belief in Medicine

October 26- *Mindful America*, 133-198

First Applied Reflection Due

Unit 6: Locating Religion, Finding Tradition, Religion as a Part of Larger Culture. Case Study: AJ Jacobs and *the Year of Living Biblically*

- * How can we study what religious people do away from religious institutions?

- * Are "traditional" religious practices in conflict with modernity?
- * How does globalization affect daily or household life and identity? Is globalization a valid way of looking at (extremely) local phenomena?

October 31 - Robert Orsi "Everyday Miracles" (Canvas).

November 2 - AJ Jacobs, *The Year of Living Biblically*, 1-119

November 7 - *The Year of Living Biblically*, 121 - 225; "When a Plane Seat Next to a Woman is Against Orthodox Faith"

REPORT: Messianic Judaism

Dialog in class – Religious Accommodations in Commercial Settings

November 9 - [Unit Quiz in class] *The Year of Living Biblically*, 227 - 332

REPORT: Scientology

Third Group Progress Report due

Unit 7: Religion, Modernity, Globalization and the Environment. Case Study: Dark Green Religions

- *How has globalization affected religious practices and beliefs?
- *How do religious beliefs and practices spread in the modern/globalizing world?
- *What happens when "modern" medicine conflicts with "traditional" views of the environment/ecology?
- *Is modernity a form of global religion?
- *How can we best study religion in a globalizing world?

November 14 - Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 1-70

Second Applied Reflection Due

November 16 - *Dark Green Religion*, 71-154

November 21 - No Class, AAR

November 28 - *Dark Green Religion*, 155-179

REPORT: Christian Science and/as the Global Media

November 30 - *Dark Green Religion*, 180-222

Final Group Progress Report due, rough draft web entries due

FINAL EXAM DUE: Friday December 8, 11:00 am in Loyd Classroom

ON-LINE DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Religious Literacy Fall 2017

As a component of the classroom participation requirement for *Religious Literacy*, all students are required to submit a weekly entry on the Discussion portion of our Canvas site. While I expect you to post weekly (between the end of class Thursday and the beginning of class the following Thursday) I will drop the lowest two grades, and do not expect you to post until the second week of class (beginning after class Thursday, August 24th).

Each entry should be about 300-500 words in length, and should deal directly with issues raised by the course, either in the readings or classroom discussions. Your writing should be well organized, have a clear topic, and use evidence from the reading or discussion to support your opinions about the topic you choose. Rather than simply summarizing the readings or discussions, good entries will engage the materials, asking new questions or making connections between readings and/or ideas (this is the heart of critical reflection as a practice). Your writing will be available for your peers in the class to see, and you are welcome to comment on what they say. Our communication agreement developed for class dialogs is in effect for discussion posts. Please practice constructive dialog skills.

All discussion entries will be graded as superior (4 points), entirely satisfactory (3 points), adequate (1-2 points) or unsatisfactory (no credit). You can see your grade in the online grade book section of the Canvas site.

This is not meant to torture you, but is designed to give you a forum for working out your own thoughts on the materials as you come into contact with them. It is also intended to give you a place to practice thinking and writing about the issues the course raises before coming to class discussions or writing exams.

Guide for Individual Presentations
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Everyone will be responsible for one presentation, to be given on a topic at points marked "Report" on the syllabus. You and your partner(s) are to do extra research about the topic you are assigned, and then prepare a BRIEF (10-20 minute) presentation, to be given on the day assigned. While some of your research may be done on the Internet, at least one of your sources must be from an alternate location: library book or article, interview, site visit, etc.

Aside from the in-class presentation, everyone will need to hand in a page or two with the following:

1. An account of your research. Where did you start? What kinds of sources did you use? How, in other words, did you come to know the material you presented?
2. A bibliography listing all of the sources you ended up using in your report (keep in mind that this may include the internet, a well-informed History professor, or even your kid sister who did a report on the same topic last month in school).

Criteria:

Good reports will be well researched and effectively presented, showing that you are able to pick out important parts from larger bodies of material and synthesize them into a cohesive piece of work. Good reports will also encourage significant discussion, showing that you can relate your work to some of the broader topics of the course.

Religion 75218 Project
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Every Student in Ways of Being Religious is required to engage in a community based learning project that will document the history of the religious institutions in the 75218 area code. To receive course credit for this service, you must participate actively in the project, write two brief reflection papers about your experience documenting the organizations we study, and contribute to a written history and the presentation of that history to the greater community. Generally, every group member will receive the same grade, but I reserve the right to divide a grade if there is clear evidence that some group members have contributed substantially more than others. The project will be conducted along the following timeline:

September 14 (roughly) - Begin work on the project

Initial work will include site visits, historical research, and making contacts for interviews.

September 26 - First Group Progress Report Due

These reports give a brief summary of what the group has accomplished. In addition, every member of the group will turn in a pie chart documenting the contribution of every member.

October 19 - Second Group Progress Report Due

October 23 - First Applied Reflection Due

Turn in a brief (2-3 page) paper in response to a reflection question that you will receive in class about your research in the context of the course.

November 9 - Third Group Progress Report Due

November 14- Second Applied Reflection Due

November 30 - Rough Draft of Group web entries due, final group progress report due

TBA - Presentation of Research

Grading:

30 out of 100 total points for the community-engaged learning component will be awarded to the applied reflections, which will be graded more formally than, but using the same criteria as, the on-line journal entries. That is, good reflections will critically engage both the question posed and your experiences, raising new questions and making connections to issues we discuss in class.

35 points will be awarded for the history of your organization that your group produces. This will be graded using the following criteria:

1. Does the paper have a clear thesis?
2. Is this thesis well supported using specific examples?
3. Is the writing clear, concise and grammatically correct?

Good papers, in other words, will make a clear and well reasoned argument, supporting that argument with specific examples from class materials and your projects. Good papers will also be well written and follow the conventions of English grammar.

This is, of course, easier said than done. To assist you in the production of a good paper, I am happy to read as many drafts as you can give me before the final analysis paper is due. Also, I encourage you to work with your classmates as you go through this process. Writing is about communication, after all, and the more you practice communicating, the better your writing will be. Show people drafts, talk about ideas, and be willing to do the same for others.

Finally, 35 points will be awarded for the project itself. That is, for your contributions to, and participation in, the history of the Dallas organizations that we will produce and present as a class. Periodically, each group will present a BRIEF group progress report which documents the work the group has done, including everyone's hours toward the project, and which includes a pie chart produced by every member of the group which documents everyone's participation. These reports will be due every two weeks. Your final grade, then, will reflect not only the overall quality of what we produce as a group, but also your participation (or lack thereof) in that production.

How to Read Theory

(based in part on information from <http://www.wam.umd.edu/~jklumpp/comm652>)

The Theory on Reading Theory:

1. Read theory in 2 different modes

Read theoretical systems. Theories assume a perspective and elaborate that perspective. Try to understand that perspective comprehensively. Think of it as a system that allows you to see things a certain way once you understand it enough to use it as a kind of intellectual platform. Try to see and describe the world the way the theoretical system does.

Read lines of inquiry. Theoretical work proceeds one problem at a time. Theorists consider problems they see in the theory and work to address those problems. Learn to follow this work. Learn to see the reason why the problem is significant to the theory, and to understand what happens when the problem is successfully addressed.

2. Techniques when reading theory

Get beneath the reading to see:

the mind that generates it. Theory is written by an author. Try to understand the strategies that the author is using to construct the theory.

the action performed with it. Theories allow us to do things. Try to understand what the power of a theory is. Also try to see the limits of that power, the things we cannot do with a theory.

Read abstractly and concretely simultaneously

You must read abstractly. Theory involves concepts that must be related to each other. You must be able to work with concepts as abstract.

But make your reading empirical too. Keep working your abstract understanding against the events of the world around you.

3. Make notes of the building blocks of theory
 - **Vocabulary.** What are the key terms? the key concepts?
 - **How are the concepts related to each other?** How does the theory construct accounts?
 - **To what does the theory attend?** All theories construct accounts which emphasize some things and ignore other things judged important by other theories. What are those choices?
 - **What does the theory do?** All theories have problems they seek to solve or powers that they permit us to exercise. What are these?
 - **What are the key strategies the author uses to bring the theory to life?** How does he or she perceive the world in terms of the theory? How does she or he write about the world using the theory?

Other Practical Advice:

Orient yourself:

Read the introductory paragraph, the section headings, and then the last four sentences. This should give you an overview of the argument, or at least some key words the author uses to make his or her argument. If you know what's important, you know what to look for later.

Go back and fill in the blanks:

Figure out what problem each section addresses (probably related to the section heading) and how this relates to the conclusion.

Don't let the big words get you down.

Theorists love to use gigantic words to convey their thoughts. Sometimes, you can read around them. Other times, you'll need to look them up. Often you can correctly guess the meaning of the word from its context.

University Policies of Which You Should Be Aware

* Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) at 214-768-1470 or www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4; an attachment describes the DASS procedures and relocated office.)

I am happy to work with you if you have a disability, but you need to let me know so we can find the best way for you to succeed in this class. Please do not suffer in silence!

* Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class **should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.** (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

* Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. **It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work.** (University Undergraduate Catalogue)