

**REL 692: Approaches to the Study of Religion II**  
Syracuse University, Department of Religion  
Spring 2015

**Instructor:** Vincent Lloyd  
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**Office Hours:** Thursdays, 122  
Feel free to stop by any time, or e-mail me for an appointment

**Overview:**

This course will orient students to the study of religion. What are the different approaches that can be taken? How have they developed? What methods are particularly influential? The course is meant to equip students to become religious studies scholars. It is also meant to be part of students' preparation for their first comprehensive examination.

**Objectives:**

By the end of the course the student should be able to:

- 1) Identify and understand important approaches to the study of religion.
- 2) Enter into current conversations about the study of religion.
- 3) Understand the theoretical / methodological background of recent scholarship in religious studies.

**Workload:**

Conventional wisdom for graduate courses holds that, for each hour a student spends in class, she or he should spend about four hours on coursework outside of class. If you find yourself spending substantially more or less time than this suggests, please speak with the instructor.

**Readings**

Can be found on Blackboard

**Assignments and Grading:**

- Weekly 2-3 paragraph reading responses by 9am Wednesdays (25%)
- 7-8pp critical reflection paper by February 20 (25%)
- Presentation on a recent religious studies book of your choosing (25%)
- Final project: construct syllabus for REL 120, Introduction to the Study of Religion, due April 29 (25%)

## Schedule:

### January 14

#### Interpretation

- Jeffrey Stout, "What is the Meaning of a Text?"
- Daniel Boyarin, "Shattering the Logos"
- Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire"

### January 21

#### Chicago School I

- Joseph Kitagawa, *The History of Religions*, ix-xv, 133-157
- Charles Long, *Significations*, 1-9, 27-37
- Mircea Eliade, "The History of Religions and a New Humanism"
- Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Chapters 1 and 4

### January 28

#### Chicago School II

- Bruce Lincoln, *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars*, Chapters 1-15; 53-62; 121-136
- Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Devil in Mr. Jones" & "In Comparison a Magic Dwells"
- Jonathan Z. Smith, *On Teaching Religion*, 11-19; 37-48; 73-76
- Kathryn Lofton, *On On Teaching Religion*

### February 4

#### Challenging "Religion"

- Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Chapters 2-3
- Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*, Introduction and Chapter 1
- Tomoko Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, Introduction

### February 11

#### Tradition I

- Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Rationality of Traditions" and "Tradition and Translation"
- Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 265-307
- Robert Brandom, "Freedom and Constraint by Norms"

### February 18

#### Tradition II

- George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, Chapters 2 and 6
- John Milbank, "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism"
- Michael Walzer, "The Practice of Social Criticism"
- Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Chapter 1

## February 25

### Culture and Religion

- Clifford Geertz, "Religion As a Cultural System"
- Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight"
- Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category"
- Lila Abu-Lughod, "Writing Against Culture"

## March 4

### Ritual and Religion

- Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas"
- Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Chapter 4
- Amy Hollywood, "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization"
- Philippe Buc, "Ritual and Interpretation: The Early Medieval Case"

## March 18

### Psychology and Religion

- Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, Book I
- Carl Jung, "Christ, A Symbol of the Self"
- Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, "Freud and Love" and "God is Love"
- T. M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, Chapter 8

## March 25

### Religion and Differences

- Georges Bataille, *Erotism*, Introduction and Chapters II:5-6
- Thomas Tweed, "Crossing: The Kinetics of Itinerancy"
- Ann Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History"
- J. Kameron Carter, "Paratheological Blackness"

## MONDAY, March 30

### Special Evening Meeting: Approaches to American Religion

## April 1

NO CLASS

## April 8

### Religion and Capitalism

- William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish", I and II
- Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, Chapter 2
- William Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*, Chapter 4
- Bethany Moreton, "The Soul of Neoliberalism"

April 15

Politics and Religion

- Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, Lectures 5 and 9
- Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, Part II
- Carl Schmitt, "Political Theology"

April 22

Religion and Literature

- Jacques Derrida, "Tower of Babel"
- Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, Chapters 1 and 5
- Amy Hungerford, *Postmodern Belief*, Chapters 1 and 5

TBD

Student presentations