

Postcolonial Religion
Syracuse University, Department of Religion
Fall 2014

Instructor: Vincent Lloyd
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 12:45-3:45
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 in a postcolonial context, where "postcolonial" refers both to a time after colonialism and to the critique of colonialism. We will read classic works of postcolonial theory with attention to the role that religion plays in theory as well as to the usefulness of postcolonial theory for the study of religion. We will examine the way colonial and postcolonial religions have been distorted. We will read a series of recent case studies of postcolonial religion in a variety of regions. Finally, we will read recent theoretical work attempting to move the study of postcolonial religion in new directions, with attention to the themes of secularism, race, sexuality, and settler colonialism (can the US be understood as "postcolonial"?).

Objectives:

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

- 1) Identify and understand important approaches to postcolonial religion.
- 2) Enter into current conversations about postcolonial religion.
- 3) Plan and conduct a small independent research project, culminating in a final paper.

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.

Grading:

60%: Final Paper (15-20pp), due via e-mail Thursday, December 11, 5pm. I do not give incompletes except in extraordinary circumstances. Late papers will receive grade reductions.

20%: Weekly Reading Responses (2-3 paragraphs embedded in e-mail to class, not attached)

20%: Critical Response Paper (6-8pp), due via e-mail Monday, October 6, 5pm

Readings:

For Purchase, Available in the Library Bookstore –

1. Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago, 2005)
 2. Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and England* (Princeton, 2001)
 3. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton, 1998)
 4. Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton, 2007)
 5. Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (California, 1998)
 6. Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church* (California, 2007)
 7. Pamela Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism: Medicine, Healing, and Liberal Christianity* (California, 2011)
 8. Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Duke, 2007)
- Other readings will be made available via e-mail.

Schedule:

Introduction

September 4

- Aime Cesaire, "Notebook of a Return to a Native Land"
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Shivering" in *The Thing Around Your Neck* (Anchor, 2009)

Orientations

September 11

- Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency" in *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford, 1988).
- Partha Chatterjee, "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness," *Subaltern Studies VI* (Oxford, 1992)
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Illinois, 1988).
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Time of History and the Times of Gods" in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Duke, 1997).

September 18

- Jared Hickman, "Globalization and the Gods, or the Political Theology of 'Race'," *Early American Literature* 45:1 (2010), 145-182.
- Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3:3 (2003): 257-337.
- Willie James Jennings, "Binding Landscapes: Secularism, Race, and the Spatial Modern" in *Race and Secularism in America* (forthcoming).
- J. Kameron Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence: W. E. B. Du Bois, Karl Barth, and the Problem of the Imperial God-Man," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 11:3 (Winter 2011): 167-224.

September 25

- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Introduction and Chapter 1
- Edward Said, "Islam as News" in *The Edward Said Reader*
- Edward Said, "Secular Criticism" and "Religious Criticism" in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Harvard, 1983).
- Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion* (Routledge, 1999), Chapters 4 and 5.

October 2

- Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*

October 9

- Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*

Case Studies

To Be Scheduled

- Angie Heo, *Likeness and Limit: The Powers and Problems of Holy Media in Egypt* (manuscript) – and Skype discussion with the author

October 16

- Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*

October 23

- Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony*

October 30

- Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*

November 6

- Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence*

November 13

- Pamela Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism*

New Directions

November 20

- Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*

December 4

- Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18:2 (2006), 323-347.
- Talal Asad, "Free Speech, Blasphemy, and Secular Criticism," in *Is Critique Secular?* (California, 2009)
- Hussein Ali Agrama, "Secularism, Sovereignty, Indeterminacy: Is Egypt a Secular or Religious State?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52:3 (2010): 495-523.
- Gil Anidjar, "Secularism," *Critical Inquiry* 33:1 (2006): 52-77.