

RELIGION, ETHICS, POLITICS:

RELS 8210

Instructor: Vincent Lloyd
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Office Hours: 10.30-1.30, Mondays, and by appointment

Overview:

We will study recent work examining the intersection of religion, ethics, and politics. How can religious studies scholars, whether their work is primarily historical, anthropological, regional, or philosophical, address questions of ethics and politics? A significant component of the course will be visiting speakers who will share their work in progress on these issues.

Objectives:

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

- 1) Identify distinct approaches to religion, ethics, and politics, and discuss their advantages and disadvantages.
- 2) Charitably read, and constructively criticize, contemporary work in the field.
- 3) Identify and discuss relevant methodological debates.

Texts for Purchase:

- 1) Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)
- 2) Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
- 3) George Shulman, *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)
- 4) Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)
- 5) Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008)

Other Readings:

Are available through the GSU library's "e-reserves" (go to <http://www.library.gsu.edu/services/> and click on "Find Course Reserves" from the left column; the password is 63vmk8gkS). You must bring a paper copy of the readings to class during the relevant week.

Meetings and Attendance:

Attendance when visiting speakers visit is mandatory. In general, *you* are responsible for finding out what happened in class when you were absent. From the GSU catalog: “The resources of the university are provided for the intellectual growth and development of its students; it is expected that students should attend class regularly.”

Grading:1/3: Reading Responses

By noon Mondays, e-mail the instructor, the discussion leader, and classmates in your small group a 1-2pp reflection on the week’s readings.

1/3: Leading Discussion and Responding to two Speaker

During the semester you will have the opportunity to lead the discussion. It is recommended that you do this by providing the group with a few of your initial thoughts on the reading, and then posing some questions to the group. You are also welcome to use questions prompted by reflection papers. Once during the semester you will have the opportunity to respond to a visiting speaker with five minutes or so of comments critically engage with his or her presentation.

1/3: Paper(s)

16-20pp, due the time of our scheduled final exam

Notes: I average letter grades, not numbers. Department policy says final grades can have +’s and –’s, including A+’s.

Visitors:

All are during our usual meeting time, but in the Religious Studies Department seminar room, unless otherwise indicated. An updated schedule will be distributed soon.

Friday January 23: Professor Angie Heo, Barnard College / Columbia University

January 28: Professor Fareeha Khan, Georgia State University

February 4: Professor David Sehat, Georgia State University

February 18: Professor Marni Davis, Georgia State University

February 25: Professor Michael Perry, Emory University

February TBA [with Philosophy]: Professor Lanier Anderson, Stanford University

March 11: Professor Elliot Ratzman, Swarthmore College

March 18: Dr. Joshua Dubler, Columbia University

March 25: Professor Pamela Hall, Emory University

April 1: [to be confirmed] Dr. R. Drew Smith, Morehouse College

April TBA: Professor Tina Pippin, Agnes Scott College

April 22: Professor Timothy Jackson, Emory University

Schedule:

The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

Week 1: January 5 and 7

→ Daniel Boyarin, “Shattering the Logos: Hermeneutics Between a Hammer and a Hard Place,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Oxford: 2001), pp. 311-323.

→ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

Week 2: January 12 and 14

→ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Chapters 3-5 on the 12th; Chapters 7-10 on the 14th.

Week 3: January 21

→ Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, chapters 1 and 3

→ Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*, chapters 2 and 4

→ Marilyn Strathern, “Partners and Consumers: Making Relations Visible” in *The Logic of the Gift*, edited by Alan D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 292-312.

SPECIAL MEETING: January 23

Week 4: January 26 and 28

→ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*

Week 5: February 2

→ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*

Week 6: February 9

→ Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), Chapters 2 and 9

→ Geoffrey Koziol, “England, France, and the Problem of Sacrality in Twelfth-Century Ritual,” in *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson, 124-48 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995)

Week 7: February 16

→ Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, Chapters 2 and 7

→ Geoffrey Koziol, “The Dangers of Polemic: Is Ritual Still an Interesting Topic of Historical Study?” *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002): 367-88

→ Philippe Buc, “The monster and the critics: A ritual reply”, *Early Medieval Europe* 15:4 (2007), 441-452

Week 8: February 23

- Graeber, *Possibilities*, Chapter 5, 12
- Graeber, “Fetishism and Social Creativity: Or, Fetishes are Gods in Process of Construction,” *Anthropological Theory* 5:4 (2005): 407-438
- Graeber, “The New Anarchists,” *New Left Review*

[no class: spring break]

Week 9: March 9

- Shulman, *American Prophecy*

Week 10: March 16

- Shulman, *American Prophecy*

Week 11: March 23

- Eddie Glaude, “Pragmatism and Black Identity: An Alternative Approach,” *Nepantla* 2:2 (2001), 295-316
- Eddie Glaude, “Pragmatic Historicism and the Problem of History in Black Theology,” *American Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 19:2 (1998)
- Eddie Glaude, “Agency, Slavery, and African American Christianity” in *In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black America*
- Eddie Glaude, “Myth and African American Self-Identity” in *Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity*, edited by Craig R. Prentiss (New York: NYU Press, 2003) 28-42

Week 12: March 30

- J. Kameron Carter, “Religion, Race, and the Contradictions of Identity” *Modern Theology* 21:1, January 2005, pg. 37-65
- J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, Interlude, Chapter 6, Epilogue

Week 13: April 6

- Agamben, *Homo Sacer*

Week 14: April 13

- Agamben, *Homo Sacer*

Week 15: April 20

- Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope*

Week 16: April 27

- Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope*