

SPRING 2019

REL 490.001 SENIOR CAPSTONE SEMINAR:
"TRADITION"

Lectures: Thursdays 3:30 – 5:50 at MA210

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Course Website

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-490-001-capstone-senior-seminar-2/>

Description and Objectives

"Tradition" has a long history within the field of religious studies, and seems to play an important role in the study of religion. Scholars often talk about religious traditions, or even traditional discourses. But like many terms "tradition" has a variety of meanings and usages. This course will bring "tradition" in its critical thinking laboratory, and explore some of the following questions: What is tradition? How are traditions made and transmitted? What are traditions good for? What do people do with tradition? Are traditions invented? Are they genuine or spurious? What is the relation between "tradition" and "the past"? And eventually will have to consider whether and how the term "tradition" has any analytical utility in the study of religion.

Learning Outcomes

In this course students will be able to:

1. Recall the history of the term "tradition" within the field of religious studies.
2. Identify scholarly trends and debates in relation to "tradition" both within and outside the field of religious studies.
3. Evaluate the utility of the term "tradition" in the study of religion.
4. Implement the above knowledge in writing assignments.
5. Effectively make oral presentations with the use of technology.

Readings

This course has no required books but PDF readings that will be available through the course's Blackboard site—you are required to print each reading and have a hard copy with you in class. The tentative schedule below provides a list of the readings that you will be responsible for on any given day. Doing all of your assigned readings well in advance of class is important because our lectures and discussions all presume that you have the necessary background knowledge provided by these readings.

Excused Absences and Late Assignment Policy

If you miss a class you must contact the professor immediately to explain your absence. There will be several assignments throughout the semester (see Requirements below) that you will need to hand in in class at the date specified in the syllabus (see tentative schedule below). Late assignments will not be accepted which will reflect in your final grade. Students who fail to hand in

their abstracts, assignments, and final paper at the date determined by the tentative schedule of the syllabus must speak with the professor immediately to discuss their options.

Requirements

1. Attendance

Regular attendance, and adequate preparation for each day's readings are expected and required to do well in this course. See the tentative schedule, below, for each day's readings.

2. 12 Abstract Assignments (60%)

You must write 12 abstracts/summaries throughout the course relating to the readings (see tentative schedule below-You can choose one of the two readings of the day). Each abstract is worth 5% of your overall course grade. Each abstract should summarize the main argument of the article in a **non-evaluative** manner. The abstract bearing the name of the student is to be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins, and 12 point Times Roman or Times New Roman font, should be between 400 and 500 words, and **must** be followed by one question. Abstracts must be handed in on the date determined by the tentative schedule—late abstracts will not be accepted (see Excused Absences and Late Assignment Policy above).

3. 2 Oral Presentations (20%)

I. Lead the discussion on one of the course's readings. (10%)

II. Present an example related to tradition. (10%)

For each presentation you will have to make a hand out.

4. Final Paper (20%)

Your final paper will be based on your second oral presentation that you will elaborate in more detail. The final paper bearing the name of the student on a cover sheet, is to be stapled and typed, double spaced, with one inch margins, and 12 point Times Roman or Times New Roman font and it should be 3000words. The final paper is worth 20% of your course grade (see tentative schedule below).

Grading Scale

A+	95-100%	C	70-74
A	90-94	D+	65-69
B+	85-89	D	60-64
B	80-84	D-	50-59
C+	75-79	F	below 50

General Comments

1. Plagiarism is a serious scholarly offence and amounts to using the intellectual labor of another author without proper quotation, citation, and acknowledgment. If the instructor suspects that a student has copied the work of another author (whether that author is a peer, classmate, or published author), the case will immediately be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

2. No grades of "I" (incomplete) will be assigned in this course. In my experience, when awarded at the 100-level a grade of "I" rarely leads to the completion of course requirements. Please speak with me well in advance if you are having difficulties satisfactorily completing the course's requirements on time or if you anticipate your absence from class becoming routine. Although I cannot guarantee that reasonable accommodations can be made for all occasion that may arise, speaking with me before a problem arises will greatly enhance our ability to address the situation in a way that is both fair to your classmates and beneficial to you.

3. Students with documented physical and/or learning disabilities should contact the professor outside of class time as soon as possible to review documentation and discuss accommodations.

Also, students should familiarize themselves with the Office of Disability Services at <http://www.ods.ua.edu>.

4. UA's primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at www.ua.edu. In the event of an emergency, students consult this site for further directions. Also familiarize yourselves with UA's Severe Weather Protocol at www.prepare.ua.edu

5. The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides a list of reporting channels that can be used to report incidences of illegal discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, sexual violence, retaliation, threat assessment or fraud.

Tentative Schedule

Jan. 10	Intro to the Course
Jan. 17	Valliere "Tradition" T.S. Eliot "Tradition and Individual Talent"
Jan. 24	Boyer "Stuff Traditions are made of" Mellor "Reflexive Traditions"
Jan. 31	Hobsbawm "Inventing Traditions" Trevor-Roper "The Highland Tradition"
Feb. 7	Post "Rituals and the Function of the Past" Spooner "Weavers and Dealers"
Feb. 14	Lowental "Fabricating Heritage" Mackridge "The Heritages of Modern Greeks"
Feb. 21	Handler-Linnekin "Tradition Genuine or Spurious" Soares "Reformulation of the Concept of Tradition"
Feb. 28	Johnson "Authenticity" McCutcheon "The Jargon of Authenticity"
Mar. 7	Movie
Mar. 14	Spring Break

- Mar. 21 Grieve-Weiss "Half-Life of Tradition"
Hjelm "Tradition as Legitimation"
- Mar. 28 Hughes "The 'Gold Age' of Muslim Spain"
Colby "The Rhetoric of Innovative Tradition"
- Apr. 4 Noyes " Tradition: Three Traditions"
Taira "Wicca"
- Apr. 11 Satlow "Traditon: The Power of Constraint"
Philips "What is Tradition when it is not invented"
- Apr. 18 Touna "Traditioning Acts of Identification"
- Hand in first Draft of your final Paper**
- Apr. 25 Individual meetings to talk about your Paper

Final paper due May 2

REL490 READINGS

Boyer, Pascal. 1987. "The 'Stuff' Traditions are Made of: On the Implicit Ontology of an Ethnographic Category." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 17: 49-65.

Colby, Frederick S. 2005. "The Rhetoric of Innovative Tradition in the Festival Commemorating the Night of Muhammad's Ascension." In Engler and Grieve, *Historicizing "Tradition" in the Study of Religion*, 33-50. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." In *Perspecta*, Vol. 19. (1982): 36-42.

Grieve, Gregory P. and Richard Weiss. 2005. "Illuminating the Half-Life of Tradition: Legitimation, Agency, and Counter-Hegemonies." In Engler and Grieve, *Historicizing "Tradition" in the Study of Religion*, 1-8. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Handler, Richard and Jocelyn Linnekin. 1984. "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious?" *Journal of American Folklore* 97: 273-90.

Hjelm, Titus. 2005. "Tradition as Legitimation in New Religious Movements." In Engler and Grieve, *Historicizing "Tradition" in the Study of Religion*, 109-123. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1983. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, 1-14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hughes, Aaron. 2005. "The 'Golden Age' of Muslim Spain: Religious Identity and the Invention

- of a Tradition in Modern Jewish Studies.” In Engler and Grieve, *Historicizing “Tradition” in the Study of Religion*, 51-74. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Johnson, Greg. 2008. “Authenticity, Invention, Articulation: Theorizing Contemporary Hawaiian Traditions from the Outside.” In *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 20: 243-258.
- Lowenthal, David. 1998. “Fabricating Heritage.” In *History and Memory* 10: 5–24.
- MacKridge, Peter. 2012. “The Heritage of the Modern Greeks.” *British Academy Review*, 19: 33-41.
- McCutcheon, Russell. 2003. “The Jargon of Authenticity and the Study of Religion.” In *The Discipline of Religion: Structure, Meaning, Rhetoric*, 167-188. London and New York: Routledge.
- Mellor, Philip A. 1993. “Reflexive Traditions: Anthony Giddens, High Modernity, and the Contours of Contemporary Religiosity.” In *Religious Studies*, 29(1): 111-127.
- Noyes, Dorothy. 2009. “Tradition: Three Traditions.” In *Journal of Folklore Research* 46: 233-68.
- Philips, Mark Salber. 2004. “What is Tradition When It Is Not ‘Invented’? A Historiographical Introduction.” In *Salber and Schochet*, 3-29.
- Post, Paul. 1996. “Rituals and the Function of the Past: Rereading Eric Hobsbawm.” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 2: 85-107.
- Satlow, Michael L. 2011. “Tradition: The Power of Constraint.” In R. Orsi (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*, 130-150. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Soares, Joseph A. 1997. “A Reformulation of the Concept of Tradition.” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 17/6:6-21.
- Spooner, Brian. 1988. “Weavers and Dealers: The Authenticity of an Oriental Carpet.” In A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, 195-235. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taira, Teemu. 2010. “Religion as a Discursive Technique: The Politics of Classifying Wicca.” In *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 25(3): 379-394.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. 1983. “The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland.” In Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, 1-14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Touna, Vaia. 2017. “Traditioning Acts of Identification: The Case of Greek ‘Traditional’ Villages.” In *Fabrications of the Greek Past: Religion, Tradition, and the Making of Modern Identities*, 116-139. Leiden: Brill.
- Valliere, Paul. (2005 [1987]). “Tradition.” In Lidsay Jones (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 9267-9281. Detroit: Thomson Gale.