



**REL 504: Special Topics in Religion *in* Culture
RELIGIOUS STUDIES AS HISTORY, DISCIPLINE & FIELD**

Spring 2019

Instructor: Richard Newton, PhD

(1/11/19)

Class Meetings: Manly Hall M, 3:30-5:50pm

Office Hours: Wednesday and Friday, 2:30-3:30pm and By Appointment

Office Location: Manly Hall 204

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Prerequisites: Permit Requirement for Enrollment.

Course Description and Credit Hours:

This recommended section of our graduate special topics course surveys the origins, objects of study, and pivotal thinkers that scholars often highlight when outlining the historical development/current shape of Religious Studies. By course end, each student will narrate the study of religion in light of their own research interests. **3 Credit Hours (MA in Religion *in* Culture).**

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to do the following:

- (1) *Articulate the academic study of religion as history, discipline & field.*
- (2) *Narrate the development of Religious Studies with regard to a select area of critical inquiry .*
- (3) *Craft a literature review inclusive of works from different academic writing genres.*
- (4) *Historicize contributions of pivotal thinkers in the study of religion.*
- (5) *Situate one's own academic history within the academic study of religion.*

Required Course Materials

Bibliography:

The following resources are required purchases. Please bring all of these materials to class with you every day so that you may reference them should they make an appearance in the day's discussion.

Aaron W. Hughes, *Theory in a Time of Excess: Beyond Reflection and Explanation in Religious Studies* (Sheffield UK: Equinox 2016), <https://www.equinoxpub.com/home/theory-time-excess/>.

Hughes's volume is an anthology of intersecting dispatches from the field of Religious Studies. Scholars from various subfields hold forth about a thesis central to their work. Respondents from outside those subfields respond in an exchange designed to unearth the underlying assumptions and stalwart convictions that shape 21st century scholarship—all of which are part of a broader genealogy illustrated for our purposes by Masuzawa and Sharpe.

Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: or How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago 2005) <https://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/I/bo3534198.html>.

Masuzawa's redescription of the world religions paradigm is widely cited as a helpful history of Religious Studies. Friedrich Max Muller, Ernst Renan, and the European area/tradition specialists are presented as not only complicit in late modern colonial efforts, but also exemplars of the postcolonial reality that is unraveling the modern presuppositions upon which the West was built. While a presumptively classic work in the field, we will consider the extent to which her history corresponds with our critical read of her data—represented in this course by Sharpe's canonical history and selections of foundational Religious Studies literature.

Eric Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, Second Edition (New York: Bloomsbury 1994 [1975]), <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/comparative-religion-9780715610817/>.

Sharpe's history is often assigned as a definitive handbook to the roots of Religious Studies. And it is this disciplinary quality that we will interrogate. We will read it to become acquainted with the 19th and 20th century conversations that precede our work. But we will also consider how the volume conscientiously and unwittingly trains a certain type of student of religion. How that training works and what kind of student remains to be seen throughout our seminar.

Jacques Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods, and Theories of Research. Introduction and Anthology*, Second Edition, with preface by Russell T. McCutcheon (Berlin: De Gruyter 2017 [1973]), <https://www.degruyter.com/view/product/469130>. <In the Religious Studies Library, 1st Edition available at Gorgas Library, excerpts provided.>

Waardenburg's anthology is a substantial collection of contributions that have largely advanced the field of Religious Studies. We will couple short excerpts from key thinkers with our readings of Sharpe and Masuzawa to better understand the moments being

discussed. You are also invited to use those beyond the assigned to begin to fill in gaps in your own reading.

Blackboard and Slack

Blackboard is going to be the learning management software will house all of our assignments and readings. It is also where you will submit your completed work. On Blackboard, you’ll see a menu on the left-hand side of the screen. From there you’ll be able to navigate our course shell and even access Slack.

We’ll also use Slack to communicate in between classes. Please make sure that notifications are enabled so that you can stay current. I will comment after many classes just so you have an additional sense of what we did, a log of where we’ve been, and a heads-up about where we are going.

Outline of Topics:

Below you’ll find a course calendar. Each box notes the content for the day and the materials you need to prepare prior to class. On Blackboard, the modules are divided by weeks for your convenience.

| Unit Focus | Monday |
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| Week 1 | No Class |
| <p>Week 2</p> <p><i>The Modern Study of Religion, or “What have I gotten myself into?”</i></p> | <p>1/14</p> <p>Read (in chronological order):</p> <p>Aisha M. Belisio-De Jesús, “Confounded Identities: A Meditation on Race, Feminism, and Religious Studies in Times of White Supremacy,” <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> 86.2 (2018): 307-340.</p> <p>David Chidester, “Anchoring Religion in the World: A Southern African History of Comparative Religion,” <i>Religion</i> 26 (1996): 141-160.</p> <p>Richard Newton, “Signifying “Der Rassist” in Religious Studies and the Axes of Social Difference,” presented at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the North American Association for the Study of Religion,” November 17, 2018.</p> <p>Write—Introduction Paper</p> <p>**1/16 is the last day to drop w/o a grade of “W.”</p> |

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| <p>Week 3 <i>Getting Setup</i></p> | <p>1/21 No class meeting. Write—Keyword Proposal by 1/25</p> |
| <p>Week 4 <i>The Science of Religion</i></p> | <p>1/28 Read: Sharpe, 1-96. Cornelis P. Tiele, “Elements of the Science of Religion I & II,” 94-101. Pierre D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, “The Science of Religion” and “Phenomenology of Religion,” 102-112. Seminar Presenters: (a) (b)</p> |
| <p>Week 5 <i>The Social Experienced</i></p> | <p>2/4 Read: Sharpe, 97-194. William James, “The Study of Religious Experience,” 182-192. Rudolf Otto, “The Idea of the Holy” and “Religious History,” 425-452. Max Weber, “Symbolic Meaning and Religion,” 346-353. Seminar Presenters: (c) (d)</p> |
| <p>Week 6 <i>Religion and/as Worldviews?</i></p> | <p>2/11</p> |

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| | <p>Read:</p> <p>Sharpe, 195-294.</p> <p>Sigmund Freud, “Religion as Illusion,” “The Question of a <i>Weltanschauung</i>,” and “The Story of Religion,” 354-372.</p> <p>Joachim Wach, “Religion and Society,” “On Comparative Studies in Religion,” “Universals in Religion,” “The concept of the Classical” in the Study of Religions” “The Meaning and Task of the History of Religions (<i>Religionwissenschaft</i>),” 480-518.</p> <p>Seminar Presenters:</p> <p>(e)</p> <p>(f)</p> |
| <p>Week 7</p> <p><i>Putting it together; Pulling it apart.</i></p> | <p>2/18</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Sharpe, 295-319.</p> <p>Masuzawa, 9-36.</p> <p>Update Day</p> |
| <p>Week 8</p> <p><i>Primitivity</i></p> | <p>2/25</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Masuzawa, 37-120.</p> <p>Herbert Spencer, “Ancestor-Worship,” 193-203.</p> <p>Edward B. Tylor, “Animism,” 204-214.</p> <p>James George Frazer, “The Golden Bough and the Study of Religion,” 239-251.</p> |

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| | <p>Seminar Presenters:</p> <p>(a)</p> <p>(b)</p> |
| <p>Week 9</p> <p><i>The Historical...</i></p> | <p>3/4</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Masuzawa, 121-206.</p> <p>Albert Schweitzer, “The Quest of the Historical Jesus,” 170-180.</p> <p>Ernst Renan, “Vindication of a Critical Mind,” 122-128.</p> <p>Seminar Presenters:</p> <p>(c)</p> <p>(d)</p> |
| <p>Week 10</p> <p><i>Spring Break</i></p> | <p>3/11</p> <p>No Class</p> |
| <p>Week 11</p> <p><i>Classification as Political Act; Classification as Necessity?</i></p> | <p>3/18</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Masuzawa 207-308.</p> <p>F. Max Müller, “Plea for a Science of Religion” and “The Comparative Study of Religions,” 83-93.</p> <p>Seminar Presenters:</p> <p>(e)</p> <p>(f)</p> |

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| <p>Week 12</p> <p><i>Theory Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow</i></p> | <p>3/25</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Masuzawa, 309-328.</p> <p>Mircea Eliade, "Human Existence and Sanctified Life," <i>The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion</i> (Orlando: Harcourt, 1987 [1957]), 162-215.</p> <p>Hughes, 1-18 and 179-205.</p> <p>Update Day</p> |
| <p>Week 13</p> <p><i>Phenomenology</i></p> | <p>4/1</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Hughes, 21-56.</p> <p>Seminar Presenters:</p> <p>(a)</p> <p>(b)</p> |
| <p>Week 14</p> <p><i>Critical Studies and Social Theory</i></p> | <p>4/8</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Hughes, 59-91.</p> <p>Seminar Presenters:</p> <p>(c)</p> <p>(d)</p> |
| <p>Week 15</p> <p><i>Cognitive Science of Religion</i></p> | <p>4/15</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Hughes, 95-135.</p> |

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| | <p>Seminar Presenters:</p> <p>(e)</p> <p>(f)</p> <p>4/19 Annotated Bibliography Due</p> |
| <p>Week 16</p> <p><i>Religious Studies— Field or Discipline: The Stakes</i></p> <p>No new grades this week</p> | <p>4/22</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Hughes, 139-178.</p> <p>Keyword Prospectus/Drafts Due by 8am.</p> <p>Seminar Celebration</p> |
| Final | Keyword Essay Due May 2, 2019 at 11:59pm |

Exams and Assignments

The level to which you've met our Student Learning Outcomes will be measured by the following assignments:

INTRODUCTION PAPER

After having read the articles for the assigned day, compose a 1250-word (max), thesis-driven paper that encapsulates your understanding of the study of religion using (a) your current research interests [potential/actual thesis topic] as an example and (b) *each* of the three articles provided here. This paper should not draw upon other sources except in footnotes that you choose to provide. It should use the author-date format in the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

KEYWORD PROPOSAL

With your advisor, you will select a keyword—pertinent to your ongoing research—that you will investigate throughout the semester. In this preliminary assignment, you will simply provide the word and an abstract (150-words) articulating how/why this word factors into your work. I also ask that you confirm with me what you will submit toward your annotated bibliography by the two **update days** listed on the calendar. It is entirely up to you and your advisor what you submit by that point. This is a measure for me to help you stay accountable to the research tasks at hand.

In class on those days you'll discuss where you are, where you've been, and where you're going in carrying out that research.

SEMINAR PAPERS (3)

Three times during the semester, you will take the lead in leading a portion of our seminar discussion. These 1250-word (max), thesis-driven papers should present (a) a socio-historical framing for the moment represented by the readings [i.e. when are we talking about] (b) what is happening intellectually in Religious Studies [i.e. what are we talking about], and (c) what are the stakes for the study of religion *in* culture then and today [i.e. why are we talking about this].

Each paper will be submitted to Blackboard by 8am of the respective class along with three discussion questions your paper raises about the readings.

In class you will read your paper aloud, fielding questions of clarification and substance from the group.

After receiving feedback from me, you will have one week to conference and revise your paper for a grade.

EXPANDED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

To help you navigate Religious Studies as a scholarly enterprise, this course has the practical benefit of helping you develop research skills. Throughout the course you will be developing an annotated bibliography designed to help you in your active research (i.e. your thesis project or developing area of expertise).

In addition to required seminar readings, you will be reading (at minimum) the following additional sources on your keyword:

- 1 pivotal/foundational monograph
- 2 book reviews on that monograph
- 5 peer-reviewed journal articles
- 2 scholarly encyclopedia entries

You and your advisor may negotiate which, what, and when you read these works throughout the semester. But the weeks you are not leading the seminar are designated to this aspect of your study. On Update Days, we will discuss progress and problems faced in your research.

Toward the end of the semester, you will submit a working annotated bibliography in the citation style of your choice. Following the citations, each entry will include:

- Topic
- Research Question
- Thesis

- How do you see this work relating to Religious Studies (e.g. as history/field/discipline)?
- How's this work relate to my on-going research?
- Where do I go next in my research?
- Pertinent Quotations/Summations

KEYWORD ESSAY

Using the works on your annotated bibliography, along with the readings from class, you will develop a literature review centered around your keyword in which you will (a) redescribe your best understanding of Religious Studies [i.e. what do we do here] (b) your understanding of the best to approach the literature on your keyword (e.g. genealogy) [i.e. who does what I do in Religious Studies and on what terms], and (c) the question the literature leaves you wondering and to presumably answer in your on-going research [i.e. what might I do as a student of religion *in* culture]. This paper should be between 3250-3750 words and formatted according to the style requirements you will use in ongoing research.

KEYWORD PROSPECTUS/DRAFTS

At the end of the semester, you will submit a 500-word prospectus & outline for your keyword essay or rough draft, detailing the elements enumerated in the KEYWORD ESSAY description. I will give you substantive feedback on this so that you may use this as a guide for your final course submission. This assignment's completion is worth 10% of your Keyword Essay.

| Assignment Type | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Introduction Paper | 10% |
| Keyword Proposal | 10% |
| Seminar Papers (I,II,III) | 30% |
| Expanded Annotated Bibliography | 20% |
| Keyword Essay | 30% |

C. Grading Scale

≤59 =F Unacceptable Performance
 60-69 =D Needs Improvement Performance
 70-79 =C Adequate Performance
 80-89 =B Promising Performance
 90-100=A Superior Performance

Classroom Policies

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

This course is taught from the perspective that higher education is a professional endeavor that you've chosen. Just as there are ramifications for missing a job, there are ramifications for missing class. Your attendance and participation are assumed as they are central to the seminar.

If you know you're going to be absent/late/leaving early for a class, please email me as soon as possible (preferably 48 hours, but ASAP) so we can work out how to help you get credit. In the case that you miss two class sessions, you and I will be speaking with the graduate advisor to determine how this course will or will not factor into your program requirements. If you are not making progress toward the completion of our SLOs and the life of the seminar, I will recommend that re-take or drop the course.

PROFESSIONALISM—DEADLINES

Anytime you miss class, you should take the following steps (in this order): (1) meet with a classmate to copy any notes, (2) schedule an appointment with the instructor to get clarity on the notes, missed lesson, and any handouts, (3) study the material and come back ready to actively participate in class.

You are still responsible for submitting assignments by their deadlines. Late work and exams are only accepted in the most extreme circumstances—that is, matters of life and death, not pass or fail. Be aware that for me to justify this decision, I will likely require external documentation of the matter in consultation with campus administrative offices and reserve the right to make any deductions. I implore you to be proactive and keep me posted within in 24 hours of the issue or as soon as circumstances feasibly allow. Tardiness here will leave me less equipped to be gracious.

I do not permit incompletes except in the most extreme circumstances. Should you find yourself considering an incomplete or dropping the class, come see me first to discuss your profess. I can only work with you if you are doing your part to work with me and with the class.

OFFICE HOURS AND COMMUNICATION

Office hours are an opportunity for you to get one-on-one assistance with the course. I invite you to come prepared with questions and to take advantage of the opportunity. I don't worry about students who come to office hours. I worry about those who never do. As I'm often on campus, please feel free to drop by if you see my office door open. Otherwise come by during my appointed office times or make an appointment. Do not be afraid to ask for help learning something you don't know well. That's precisely what we're here to do.

Online communication is a wonderful convenience, but it can give a false impression of engagement. Please note that I will generally respond to emails within 36 hours of receipt during the work week. I may not see emails during the weekend or otherwise noted occasions, so please be patient. Similarly, my communications with you will happen primarily during the work week.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE POLICIES

Notification of Changes

The instructor will make every effort to follow the guidelines of this syllabus as listed; however, the instructor reserves the right to amend this document as the need arises. In such instances, the

instructor will notify students in class and/or via Blackboard and will endeavor to provide reasonable time for students to adjust to any changes.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the official [Code of Academic Conduct](#) provided in the Online Catalog.

Statement On Disability Accommodations

Contact the [Office of Disability Services \(ODS\)](#) as detailed in the Online Catalog.

Severe Weather Protocol

Please see the latest [Severe Weather Guidelines](#) in the Online Catalog.

Pregnant Student Accommodations

Title IX protects against discrimination related to pregnancy or parental status. If you are pregnant and will need accommodations for this class, please review the University's FAQs on the [UAct website](#).

Religious Observances

Under the Guidelines for Religious Holiday Observances, students should notify the instructor in writing or via email during the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class for religious observance. The instructor will work to provide reasonable opportunity to complete academic responsibilities as long as that does not interfere with the academic integrity of the course. See full guidelines at [Religious Holiday Observances Guidelines](#).

UAct Statement

The [UAct website](#) provides an overview of The University's expectations regarding respect and civility.