



**REL 504: Special Topics in Religion *in* Culture  
HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF RELIGION**

Spring 2020

Instructor: Richard Newton, PhD

**Class Meetings:** Tuesday 1:30-3:20PM, MA210

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Office Location:** MA 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.*

## 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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/l/bo3534198.html>.

Masuzawa's redescription of the World Religions Paradigm is widely cited as a helpful history of Religious Studies. Friedrich Max Müller, Ernst Renan, and the European area/tradition specialists are presented as not only complicit in late modern colonial efforts, but also exemplars of scholars working in the colonial reality that is unraveling along with 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. It is this disciplinary quality that we will interrogate. We will read it to become acquainted with the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 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>. <Also In the Religious Studies Library>

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 readings beyond the assigned to begin to fill in gaps in your own reading.

\*From time to time, you'll be required to read things from outside of the listed works. These will be available in Box.

### **Class Resources**

#### SLACK + BOX

Media sharing (including readings, assignments, and other finds) will use a combination of Slack and Box. 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.

#### RESEARCH LIBRARIAN

I encourage you to meet with James Gilbreath, our research specialist at Gorgas Library, as you look for resources pertinent to your work. He can help you make the most of the resources at your disposal, especially when it comes to issues of accessing "the literature." (205) 348-6529, [jngilbreath@ua.edu](mailto:jngilbreath@ua.edu).

### **Course Preparation**

This course will require a combination of seminar preparation and independent research. For each class period. Each week you will be focusing your efforts on both, but you might divide your energy differently depending on your responsibilities for our class meeting.

#### SEMINAR PREPARATION:

Three times in the semester (once per required assigned volume), you will be writing and presenting a seminar paper, the thesis statement of which answers a question pertinent to the assigned readings. Your paper should be ~1250 words, make use of all the readings for the day, and use in-text citation according to the Chicago Manual of Style. The question and schedule for this assignment will be designated at the beginning of the semester. You will read your paper in class, and it will help focus our seminar discussion. Those not presenting a seminar paper that day will need to take notes on the reading as

well as have preliminary answers and thoughts to contribute to the discussion of the readings and the papers.

#### INDEPENDENT RESEARCH:

You are responsible for engaging scholarly literature pertinent to an issue in the academic study of religion that you will be investigating and historicizing. It is your responsibility to find this literature prior to submission of your annotated bibliography. I encourage you to use the weeks when you are not writing a seminar paper to find a resource and annotate it. For details on the requirements, read closely the Course Calendar.

#### COURSE CALENDAR:

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. You'll also see slots for seminar presentations, explanations about assignments, and notes about the day. Update your syllabus as details come so that you know what is going on in class and can come ready.

Unit Focus	Monday
<b>Week 1</b> <i>Getting Setup</i>	<p>Classes start on 1/15. Please review the syllabus. We will hit the ground running next class. Note that you have work due next week. You are responsible for using this week to prepare yourself and to complete it.</p> <p>Please first study the resources found in the Critical Reading and Writing series at <a href="#">SowingTheSeed: Fruitful Conversations in Religion, Culture, and Teaching</a>.</p> <p>Then as best as you can, apply what you've learned to the reading and writing assignment in Week 2. The point here is to slow things down. We need to read and write with intention this semester. Let's start things off right!</p>

<p><b>Week 2</b></p> <p><i>The Modern Study of Religion, or “What have I gotten myself into?”</i></p>	<p><b>1/14</b></p> <p><b>Have Read (in chronological order):</b></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>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>Richard Newton, “Signifying “Der Rassist” in Religious Studies and the Axes of Social Difference,” Forthcoming in <i>Key Categories in the Study of Religion: Contexts and Critiques</i> (Equinox 2021).</p> <p><b>Have Written—Introduction Paper:</b></p> <p>After having read the above articles, compose a 1250-word (max), thesis statement-driven paper that encapsulates <u>your</u> definition of the academic study of religion using :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● a current research interest as an example -- and--</li> <li>● <i>each</i> of the three articles provided here.</li> </ul> <p><u>This paper should not draw upon other sources</u> except in supplemental endnotes that you choose to provide in the case that a reader wants to know more. It should use the author-date format in the <i>Chicago Manual of Style</i>. In applying the reading and writing skills you reviewed last week, this paper should substantively and creatively engage the articles in service of your thesis-statement and assertions.</p> <p>**1/15 is the last day to drop w/o a grade of “W.”</p>
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<p><b>Week 3</b></p> <p><i>The Science of Religion</i></p>	<p><b>1/21</b></p> <p><b>Have Read:</b></p> <p>Sharpe, 1-96.</p> <p>Cornelis P. Tiele, “Elements of the Science of Religion I &amp; II,” In Waardenburg, 94-101.</p> <p>Pierre D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, “The Science of Religion” and “Phenomenology of Religion,” In Waardenburg, 102-112.</p> <p><b>Seminar Presenters:</b></p> <p>(a) Name: Question:</p> <p>(b)Name: Question:</p>
<p><b>Week 4</b></p> <p><i>The Social Experienced</i></p>	<p><b>1/28</b></p> <p><b>Have Read:</b></p> <p>Sharpe, 97-194.</p> <p>William James, “The Study of Religious Experience,” In Waardenburg, 182-192.</p> <p>Rudolf Otto, “The Idea of the Holy” and “Religious History,” In Waardenburg, 425-452.</p> <p>Max Weber, “Symbolic Meaning and Religion,” In Waardenburg, 346-353.</p> <p><b>Seminar Presenters:</b></p> <p>(c) Name: Question:</p>

	(d)Name: Question
<p><b>Week 5</b></p> <p><i>Religion and/as Worldviews?</i></p>	<p><b>2/4</b></p> <p><b>Have Read:</b></p> <p>Sharpe, 195-294.</p> <p>Sigmund Freud, “Religion as Illusion,” “The Question of a <i>Weltanschauung</i>,” and “The Story of Religion,” In Waardenburg, 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>),” In Waardenburg, 480-518.</p> <p><b>Seminar Presenters:</b></p> <p>(e) Name: Question:</p> <p>(f) Name: Question:</p>
<p><b>Week 6</b></p> <p><i>Putting it together; Pulling it apart.</i></p>	<p><b>2/11</b></p> <p><b>Have Read:</b></p> <p>Sharpe, 295-319.</p> <p>Masuzawa, 9-36.</p> <p>Russell T. McCutcheon, <a href="#">“Studying Religion in Culture: A Tale of Propositions and Conjunctions.”</a> <i>The Department of Religious Studies at the University of Alabama.</i></p> <p><b>Have Written and Prepared—Issue Proposal and Pitch</b></p>

	<p>In class you will have two minutes to pitch the class on an issue that you think is worth further reflection given your study of the history of Religious Studies. Your pitch should be framed in conversation with what you've read in Sharpe and Waardenburg. Your issue should not be data-based (i.e. about a certain place, time, and people) but a theoretical one (i.e. a thing we think we know about having studied religion <i>in</i> culture) or methodological consideration (i.e. how we know what we know in the study of religion <i>in</i> culture). So you would not write about diary entries from Portuguese Catholic missionaries of the 17th century. Your paper instead would be about "institutionalization" (cf. theory) or the problematics of the archive work (cf. methods). A paper in either would equip you to not only develop a better project on those 17th century Portuguese Catholic missionary diaries, but also help you advocate why your project is a Religious Studies project (rather than a "History" one or some other area of inquiry).</p> <p>Keep in mind that you are pitching an issue that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● is not self-evidently interesting, so show us why it's worthwhile to you (tell us the the stakes.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">--and --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You will eventually historicize, research, and further hypothesize (make sure you care about this enough to work on it for a semester).</li> </ul> <p><u>Please also submit</u> a 250-word proposal (and any notes/slides for your presentation) into Box <u>before class starts</u>.</p>
<p><b>Week 7</b></p> <p><i>Primitivity</i></p>	<p><b>2/18</b></p> <p><b>Have Read:</b></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> <p><b>Seminar Presenters:</b></p> <p>(a)Name: Question:</p> <p>(b)Name: Question:</p>
<p><b>Week 8</b></p> <p><i>The Historical...</i></p>	<p><b>2/25</b></p> <p><b>Have Read:</b></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><b>Seminar Presenters:</b></p> <p>(c) Name: Question:</p> <p>(d)Name: Question:</p>

<p><b>Week 9</b></p> <p><i>Classification as Political Act; Classification as Necessity?</i></p>	<p><b>3/3</b></p> <p><b>Have Read:</b></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><b>Seminar Presenters:</b></p> <p>(e)Name: Question:</p> <p>(f)Name: Question:</p>
<p><b>Week 10</b></p> <p><i>Theory Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow</i></p>	<p><b>3/10</b></p> <p><b>Have Read:</b></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><b>Have Written and Prepared--Précis</b></p> <p>Thus far our readings have encouraged you to consider histories of the field (i.e. Sharpe) and discipline (i.e. Masuzawa). Hughes introduces some meta-reflections on the field and discipline at present. For class, I want you to write 500 words reflecting upon how you see the project that you pitched within the discussion of the three. In other words re-introduce your project to the class (cf. Get to the Point Introduction) in such a way that it responds to Sharpe, Masuzawa, and Hughes. As always, use <i>CMOS</i> author-date system for in-text citations. Be prepared to read this in class.</p>

	<p>Please submit this in Box before class. ** Last Day to withdraw w/ a “W.”</p>
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>3/17 No Class</b>
<b>Week 12</b>  <i>Phenomenology</i>	<b>3/24</b>  <b>Have Read:</b>  Hughes, 21-56.  <b>Seminar Presenters:</b>  (a)Name: Question:  (b)Name: Question:
<b>Week 13</b>  <i>Critical Studies and Social Theory</i>	<b>3/31</b>  <b>Have Read:</b>  Hughes, 59-91.  <b>Seminar Presenters:</b>  (c) Name: Question:  (d)Name: Question

**Week 14**

*Cognitive  
Science of  
Religion*

4/7

**Have Read:**

Hughes, 95-135.

**Seminar Presenters:**

(e)Name:

Question:

(f)Name:

Question:

**Have Submitted: Annotated Bibliography**

By this point in the semester, you have researched your issue and are moving into organizing your notes. You'll represent this stage in your work through the completion of your annotated bibliography. You will have entries for the following types of sources:

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

Each entry should include a sentence for the following:

- Topic
- Research Question
- Thesis
- How do you see this work relating to Religious Studies (e.g. as a history, field, discipline)?
- Where do I go next in my research?
- (optional) Pertinent quotations/summations.

Remember that you are noting the author's understanding of the topic, research question, and thesis statement. Please use the Bibliographic form

	<p>from the author-date system in <i>CMOS</i>. I would review the Get to Point Introduction video/handout to make sure you are clear on these elements.</p> <p>Please submit in Box by the end of class.</p>
<p><b>Week 15</b></p> <p><i>Religious Studies—Field or Discipline: The Stakes</i></p>	<p><b>4/14</b></p> <p><b>Have Read:</b></p> <p>Hughes, 139-178.</p> <p><b>Have Prepared: Prospectus and Revised Annotated Bibliography</b></p> <p>By this point in the semester, you have read histories and debates representative of different orientations to the academic study of religion. Through your Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography, you are making known your orientation. Your 500-word prospectus should narrate--to me , you, and the class--your understanding of the literature on your chosen issue. Is it best read chronologically? Should it be understood in thematic chunks? Is there an overarching dialog between intellectual camps? Then you will explain where and how you see your work making an intervention into what you just sketched. Keep in mind the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Don't reinvent the wheel.</i> This assignment is designed to build upon your annotated bibliography, your pitch/proposal, and your introductory essay.</li> <li>● <i>Don't confuse this for your actual literature review.</i> This assignment is about documenting and organizing what you've seen in the literature. In other words, you can be more transparent with process here (e.g. "I see...I think....I've observed" statements are encouraged).</li> <li>● <i>Do engage Masuzawa, Sharpe, Waardenberg, and Hughes.</i> Each of these works should give you coordinates to locate the literature and your own work.</li> <li>● <i>Do feel free to use diagrams, slides, or any other aids to help you get your thoughts together.</i> Include these in the paper if they aid the text. But the text should work without them.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do revise your annotated bibliography.</i> You'll have received feedback to strengthen this piece of your work. Take advantage of it.</li> </ul> <p>You will each get four minutes to present your Prospectus as you see fit. I encourage you to include any questions you have for the class as they will get ten minutes to discuss and give you feedback. Then you will get one minute to respond and provide closing remarks.</p> <p><u>Please submit</u> a revision of your annotated bibliography and prospectus in Box <u>by the beginning of class.</u></p>
<p><b>Week 16</b></p> <p><b>No new grades this week</b></p>	<p><b>4/21</b></p> <p><b>Final Class--Seminar Celebration</b></p> <p>Location:</p> <p><b>**Last Day to withdraw.</b></p>
<p><b>Week 17</b></p> <p><b>Final Submission</b></p>	<p><b>4/28</b></p> <p><b>Have Written: Literature Review</b></p> <p>We've spent a lot of time thinking about orientations in this class. We are going to end this class by creating an artifact to help orient you in your future work in the study of religion <i>in</i> culture.</p> <p>Your final essay is a ~3250-3750 word literature review in which you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (a) present a thesis-statement that redescribes your best understanding of Religious Studies in light of your select issue [i.e. what do we do here and with your issue],</li> <li>• (b) your understanding of the best approach to reviewing and engaging the literature on your issue (this includes all of your readings from the annotated bibliography), --and --</li> <li>• (c) the question the literature leaves you wondering and how you would respond at this point given your on-going research [i.e.</li> </ul>

	<p>what does your M.A. thesis research or project add to the discussion].</p> <p>Your paper should substantively draw upon Masuzawa, Sharpe, Waardenburg, and Hughes. You should have in-text citations in <i>CMOS</i> style. You can draw upon previously written work from this class.</p> <p>This paper should be between 3250-3750 words and formatted according to the style requirements you will use in ongoing research.</p> <p><u>Final Essay due in Box by 11:59pm.</u></p>
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## Grades

### ASSIGNMENT WEIGHTS

Assignment Type	Percentage
Introduction Paper	10%
Issue Proposal and Pitch	10%
Seminar Papers (I, II, III)	30%
Précis and Revised Annotated Bibliography	20%
Final Essay-Literature Review	30%

### GRADE 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 you retake 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.