Religion 101
Tools and Methods in the Study of Religion

Term: Spring 2016
Professor Babak Rahimi

Section ID: 864259
Location: WLH 2204
Room:

Day/Time:
9:30 am-10:50 am
Tuesdays and Thursdays

Office Hours: Wed 1-2pm; Tuesday 5-7pm

Description of the Course

This course introduces the students to the academic study of religions by exploring the most prominent theories and methodologies for studying religions. We will study some of the most influential thinkers in the field of religious study (Frazer, Freud, Marx, Weber, etc.), focusing on how these thinkers understood and studied religion in their distinct historical context. We will also look at the more recent approaches in studying religion from postmodernism to postcolonialism. Some other key topics studies include secularism and secularization. While this course is deeply theoretical, we will not be limited to abstract ideas. With the objective of applying theory to practice, we will engage in a number of “methodological experiments,” assignments and exercises that involve integrating theories, methods and concepts critical to the study of religion.
Objectives of the Course

The basic goals of the course are as follow:
1. To acquire basic themes in the relationship theory and methodologies for studying religions.
2. To engage with theory and method through several project-based activities.
3. To foster an alternative understanding of religion as a distinct human practice.
4. Study of key theorists and their methodologies for studying religions.
5. To gain a familiarity with basic theoretical debates on gender, secularism and modernity.
6. To be able to conduct research using articles, books, websites and other scholarly resources relevant to the theme of religion.
7. To improve one’s writing in the development of expository and analytical-critical skills based on qualitative or/and quantitative methodologies, as discussed in class.

Prerequisites
Non

Assignments and grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance and participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Film Reviews</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyzing From Islam to the Cross of Calvary (midterm)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finding Religion at UCSD</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Film Reviews are an important part of your course assignments. We will be watching a number of films in class, based on which you will write your reviews. Your reviews should be 200 to 300 words of critical, meditative or descriptive reflections. Be spontaneous; be creative, but always reflective! Email your reviews on the day when the films are shown (by mid-night) to: religion101ucsd@gmail.com. You can include one review based on a film watched outside of the classroom.

* Please note that films shown in class may include sexually explicit or violent scenes.
Exams

**Midterm:** Analyzing *From Islam to the Cross of Calvary* is a 1000 to 1500 word essay assignment. Based on theories and methodologies studied in class, you will produce an analytical paper about a conversion narrative. You will also explain the methodology you adopt for your study. Your essay should have a bibliography and references to the lecture and the reading assignments. You are not required to make reference to outside of classroom sources. You will have to adopt a reference style (MLA, Chicago, etc) and include it at the end of the paper. I will give more instructions about this exercise a week before the papers are due.

* Make sure: Have a thesis statement (in the introduction); number your pages; do not write long paragraphs; make references to reading and lectures; and staple your paper.

This paper is due on **Thursday, May 5**.

**Final:** Finding Religion at UCSD. 3000-word (maximum) fieldwork research paper due on **Tuesday, June 7th**. Through various methodologies such as interviews or ethnography, you can locate a place, a group of people, a public activity, a ceremony, or anything that you may consider as “religious” and, accordingly, analyze and hypothesize based on methods of data collection and theories you have learned in class. This activity should include a section for research design, identifying the core research question, support and expand on a core research question, choosing a theory, and selecting a method (or methods). You will have to adopt a reference style (MLA, Chicago, etc.) and include the bibliography at the end of the paper. I will provide more instructions about this exercise weeks before the papers are due.

Final papers are due at the Literature Building on the day of exam, **June 9th**.

**Presentations:**
Two weeks prior to the final exam date, each student will have to give a 5-minute presentation of his or her research project to class. The presentation should include a description of the research topic, research design, theory and methodology adopted for the project.

**Extra Credits:**

1) For attending special events, you can earn extra credits toward your grade in class.
**Class attendance and participation:** your attendance and participation in class is a must! You are expected to attend each class and express your views, engage in discussions and show what you have learned based on the reading assignments. You can be excused from only **three** classes for the term. Any subsequent absences will effect your 20% attendance and participation grade.

**Class Policy**

_Late papers:_  
Late papers will be penalized a half letter grade for each day that they are late. Please turn in your papers in class, _not_ via email or fax.

- **Plagiarism**  
A major part of your course assignments involves writing based on your assigned reading. So, make sure to cite your sources, either quoted directly or paraphrased, so to avoid plagiarism. See me if you have any questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism.

- **Assistance**  
In case of disability that may require accommodation, please see me on the first day of class.

**Reading**  
It is important for each student to know that this theory and method course requires weekly reading. You will be expected to understand the readings and create thesis statements and make support of your claims with evidence in your writings. Make sure you do the reading before the class.

**Writing**  
This course involves substantial writing outside of the classroom. So, be prepared to write!

**Required Text**

_UCSD Bookstore:_

Schedule of Classes

Final due: Finals Week: June 4-10

Thursday March 24 Spring Quarter begins

C. Chavez Holiday March 25
Instruction begins Monday, March 28
Memorial Day Observance Monday, May 30
Instruction ends Friday, June 3
Final exams: June 4-10
Spring Quarter ends: June 10
49 Days of Instruction
57 Days in Quarter

Week 1

March 29, Tuesday
- Introduction to the course

March 31, Thursday
- Is there such a thing as a “science of religion”? A short history of the field of religious study

Read: Nine Theories of Religion, 1-14

Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader, 3-14
Week 2

April 5, Tuesday

● Guest Lecture on “Sociology of Religion”

From Higher Criticism to the Darwinian Revolution

* Documentary Film: Darwin's gift to science and religion
  Burke Lecture: Francisco J. Ayala (UCTV)

April 6, Wednesday, Room 155, Literature Building
Nazanin Shahrokni
“Riding Buses in Tehran: Gendered Politics of Mobility”
(Extra Credit)

April 7, Thursday

● Religious Decline: Animism and Magic

Read: Nine Theories of Religion, 15-48
  Introducing Religion, 37-70

Week 3

April 12, Tuesday

● Psychology and Religion

Read:
  Nine Theories of Religion, 49-79
* Film

**April 14, Thursday**

- Psychology and Religion

  Read: *Introducing Religion*, 71-97

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**Week 4**

**April 19, Tuesday**

- Society as Sacred

  Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 81-111
  *Introducing Religion*, 99-142
  *Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 93-126

  Catherine Malabou, 5:30pm-7:30 pm (Extra Credit)
  "Plato Reader of Agamben from Homo Sacre to the Myth of Er"

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**April 21, Thursday**

- Guest Lecture on “Religion as ideology”

  Religion as False-consciousness

  Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 113-142
  *Introducing Religion*, 143-170

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* Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
  "*Foucault, Spirituality and the Perils of Universal History: The Arab Spring through the Prism of the Iranian Revolution*"
  April 21, 7:00pm, Room 155 Literature Building
  (Extra Credit)
Week 5

April 26, Tuesday

● Religion and Truth

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*,

Read: Non

* Film

April 28, Thursday

● Religion as Social Action

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 143-184
*Introducing Religion*, 237-270

* Film

Week 6

May 3, Tuesday

● Religious Experience

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 185-226
*Introducing Religion*, 171-235

May 5, Thursday

● The sacred: Mircea Eliade

Read:

*Nine Theories of Religion*, 227-261
*Introducing Religion*, 271-308
*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 127-178

Analyze *From Islam to the Cross of Calvary* papers are due!
Week 7

May 10, Tuesday

- Orientalism and Secularism in the Postcolonial Era

Read:

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 179-236

- Yasmeen Daifallah, “Critical Rumblings: Postcolonial Critique in Contemporary Arab Political Thought” 11:00am-1:00pm, Room 155 Literature Building. (Extra Credit)

May 12, Thursday

- Spiritualism and Religion

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 263-292
  *Introducing Religion*, 309-340

Week 8

May 17, Tuesday

*Presentations*

May 19, Thursday

*Presentations*
Week 9

May 24, Thursday

- Science Fiction and Religion

Read:

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader, 237-254*

Film:

May 26, Thursday

- Science Fiction and Religion

Film:

Read:


Week 10

May 31, Tuesday

Religion as Culture: Clifford Geertz

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 293-323

*Introducing Religion*, 341-372
June 2, Thursday

- Conclusion

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 325-352

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**Week 11**

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June 7, Tuesday
Final papers are due!
EMAIL THEM