

# **Religion 101**

## **Tools and Methods in the Study of Religion**

Term: Spring 2015  
Professor Babak Rahimi

**Section ID:** 832428

**Location:**  
Room: PCYNH 120

**Day/Time:**  
11:00 am-12:20 pm  
Tuesdays and Thursdays

**Office Hours:** Wed 9-11 am; Thursday 10am-11am



## **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. 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 and critical skills.

### Prerequisites

Religion 1 or a basic knowledge of religions.

### Assignments and grades:

Class attendance and participation	20%
Presentations	20%
Invent your own religion (midterm)	20%
Finding religion at UCSD	40%

### Exams

**Midterm: Invent your own Religion:** A 1000 to 1500 word writing assignment. Based on theories and methodologies studied in class, you will come up with your own religion. You will also explain *how* and *why* you choose the method and theory to invent your religion. Your religion, which should have a name, could be anything as long as you explain, based on the reading assignments and lectures, various features of it. You can structure your paper however way you like (analytical, descriptive, narrative, etc.), but the paper should have a bibliography and references to the lecture and 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 in class (not via email!) **Tuesday, May 5.**

### **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.

**Final: Finding Religion at UCSD.** 3000-word fieldwork research paper due on **Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup>.** In this research exercise you are expected to “find” religion on campus at UCSD. 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** (not via email).

### **Extra Credits:**

- 1) For attending special events (May 8th), you can earn extra credits toward your grade in class.
- 2) Field trip to a religious site in San Diego on a weekend (date TBA)

**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 two 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.

## **Readings**

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.

## **Required Text**

### UCSD Bookstore:

Daniel L. Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 2015.

Daniel L. Pals, *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*. 2009.

### CALCOPY:

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*

## **Schedule of Classes**

Thursday March 26

C. Chavez Holiday March 27

Instruction begins Monday, March 30

Memorial Day Observance Monday, May 25

Instruction ends Friday, June 5

**Final exams: June 8-12**

Spring Quarter ends: **June 12**

49 Days of Instruction

57 Days in Quarter

### **Week 1**

#### **March 31, Tuesday**

- Introduction to the course

#### **April 2, 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*, pp. 1-14

### **Week 2**

#### **April 7, Tuesday**

- From Higher Criticism to the Darwinian Revolution

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 67-144

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

**April 9, Thursday**

- Religious Decline: Animism and Magic

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 15-48.  
*Introducing Religion*, 37-70.  
*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 5-17

**Week 3**

**April 14, Tuesday**

No Class

**April 16, Thursday**

- Psychology and Religion

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 49-79  
*Introducing Religion*, 71-97

**Week 4**

**April 21, Tuesday**

- Society as Sacred

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 81-111  
*Introducing Religion*, 99-142  
*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 18-33

**April 23, Thursday**

- Religion as False-consciousness

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

## Week 5

### April 28, Tuesday

- *The Invention of Lying* (2009)

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 197-230

### April 30, Thursday

- Religion, Language and Power

Read: Non

\* Documentary to watch in class

[http://www.openculture.com/2013/04/martin\\_heidegger\\_talks\\_about\\_language\\_being\\_m  
arx\\_religion.html](http://www.openculture.com/2013/04/martin_heidegger_talks_about_language_being_m<br/>arx_religion.html).

## Week 6

### May 5, Tuesday

- Religion as Social Action

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 142-184

*Introducing Religion*, 237-270

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 34-44

**Return your “Invent your religion” papers!**

### May 7, Thursday

- Religious Experience

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 185-226

*Introducing Religion*, 171-235

**May 8, Friday, 2-4 pm.**

**\*Lecture: Professor Said Arjomand**

“Islam: From World Religion to Civilizational Complex”

## Week 7

### May 12, Tuesday

- The sacred: Mircea Eliade

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 227-261

*Introducing Religion*, 271-308

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 145-196

### May 14, Thursday

- \* Presentations

## Week 8

### May 19, Tuesday

- \*Presentations

### May 21, Thursday

- \*Presentations

## Week 9

### May 26, Thursday

- Spiritualism and Religion

Read: *Nine Theories of Religion*, 263-292

*Introducing Religion*, 309-340



**May 28, Thursday**

Religion as Culture: Clifford Geertz

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

*Introducing Religion*, 341-372

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 45-82

**Week 10**

**June 2, Tuesday**

- Orientalism and Secularism in the Postcolonial Era

*Tools & Methods Study of Religion Reader*, 231-287

**June 4, Thursday**

- Conclusion

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

**Week 11**

**June 9, Tuesday**  
**Turn in your papers**