

Course Justification:

I developed this course to negotiate a growing methodological tension between the study of religion and the anthropology of religion. As someone with a PhD in cultural and social anthropology but who teaches in a department for the study of religion, it is obvious that anthropological approaches inform the study of religion. My concern of late has been that students of religion too often try to be anthropologists, whatever that might mean. This course, in response, attempts to spark a conversation about the study of religion and the insights that anthropology can provide the study of religion.

Method and Theory in the Study of Religion: An Anthropological Approach

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Course Abstract:

The anthropology of religion is a discipline-specific endeavor. British Functionalism, French Structuralism, American cultural anthropology—the history of anthropological thought can be taught through the very category of religion. But what of the study of religion's continued rapprochement with the anthropology of religion? How might the study of religion, a discipline in its own right, draw upon anthropological approaches to religion without succumbing to discipline-specific debates? This graduate course addresses this methodological question through a reading intensive course. While its success will turn on the entire class keeping up with the readings for each week, its lasting effect will depend on the student's ability to appreciate not so much the history of anthropological thought or the anthropology of religion but rather what this course ultimately calls "anthropological approaches to the study of religion."

Course Requirements:

- Response paper for each week (500 words maximum) (20%)
- Class participation (10%)
- A 4-page paper proposal (15%) to be discussed in class in the penultimate week of term
- An annotated bibliography of 20 items (25%)
- A 4000-word semester paper (30%). This may comprise a piece of ethnographic fieldwork, a documentary, or cultural analysis from an anthropological perspective

Week 1: Religion

- Mircea Eliade. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Trans. W.R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, 1987 [1959]. Selections.

- Jonathan Z. Smith. *Map is not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. Chapter 8: “The Temple and the Magician.” 172–189.
- Catherine Bell. “Paradigms Behind (and Before) the Modern Concept of Religion.” *History and Theory* 45, no. 4 (December 2006):27–46.
- Joel Robbins. “Anthropology and Theology: An Awkward Relationship?” *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (Spring 2006):285–294.

Week 2: Magic, Religion, Science

- Emile Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Trans. J.W. Swain. New York: Dover Publications, 2008 [1915]. Selections.
- Sigmund Freud. *The Future of an Illusion*. Ed. Todd Dufresne. Trans. Gregory C. Richter. Peterborough: Broadview, 2012 [1927]. Selections.
- Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah. *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Selections.

Week 3: World Religions

- Tomoko Masuzawa. *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Week 4: Power/Knowledge

- Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990 [1976]. Selections.
- Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973. Chapter 4: “Religion as a Cultural System.” 87–125.
- Talal Asad. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993. Chapter 1: “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category.” 27–54.

Week 5: Embodiment

- Michael Taussig. *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Week 6: Ritual

- Victor Turner. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967. Chapter 4: “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*.” 93–111.
- Pierre Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003 [1977]. Chapter 1: “The Objective Limits of Objectivism.” 1–25.
- Catherine M. Bell. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. Selections.

Week 7: Performance

- Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999 [1990].

Week 8: Postcolonialism

- Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. 25th anniversary ed. New York: Vintage, 1994 [1979].

Week 9: Words

- J.L. Austin. *How to Do Things with Words*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979 [1962]. Lectures I-IV: 1–52.
- Webb Keane. “Sincerity, ‘Modernity’, and the Protestants.” *Cultural Anthropology* 17, no. 1 (2002):65–92.
- Simon Coleman. “Materializing the Self: Words and Gifts in the Construction of Evangelical Identity.” In *The Anthropology of Christianity*. Ed. Fenella Cannell. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. 163–184.
- Matthew Engelke. “Text and Performance in an African Church: The Book, ‘Live and Direct.’” *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 1 (February 2004):76–91.

Week 10: Secularism

- Talal Asad. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. Selections.
- Saba Mahmood. “Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?” *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 4, “The Fate of Disciplines” (Summer 2009):836–862.

Week 11: Affect

- William T.S. Mazzarella. “Affect: What is it Good For?” In *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization*. Ed. Saurabh Dube. London: Routledge, 2009. 291–309.
- Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. Selections.
- Elizabeth Povinelli. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. Chapter 4: “Shamed States.” 153–186.
- Melani McAlister. “What is Your Heart For? Affect and Internationalism in the Evangelical Public Sphere.” *American Literary History* 20, no. 4 (2008):870–895.

Week 12: Diaspora

- Jhumpa Lahiri. *The Namesake*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. Selections.
- Stephane Dufoix. *Diasporas*. Berkeley: California University Press, 2006. Chapters 1 and 2: “What Is a Diaspora?” and “The Spaces of Dispersion.” 4–58.
- James Clifford. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. Chapter 10: “Diasporas.” 244–279.
- Brian Keith Axel. “The Diasporic Imaginary.” *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002):411–428.

Week 13: Neoliberalism

- Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans. Talcott Parsons. Mineola: Dover, 2003 [1958, German 1905]. Selections.
- Daromir Rudnycky. “Spiritual Economies: Islam and Neoliberalism in Contemporary Indonesia.” *Cultural Anthropology* 24, no. 1 (2009):104–141.
- Bethany E. Moreton. “The Soul of Neoliberalism.” *Social Text* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2007):103–123.
- Kevin Lewis O’Neill. “The Soul of Security: Corporatism, Christianity, and Control in Postwar Guatemala.” *Social Text* 32, no. 2 (2012):21–42.