HONS 175 APPROACHES TO RELIGION:
RITUAL AND PERFORMANCE IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Tuesdays/Thursdays 1:40-2:55pm in
Berry Rm 104

Instructor: Lenny J. Lowe, Ph.D.
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Phone: 843-953-8033 (Office)
419-889-8749 (Cell)
Office Location: 4A Glebe 102
Office Hours: M/W 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to theoretical and methodological approaches to the academic study of religion. The course takes as its gravitational center the concept of performance as a key approach to understanding religion and its role in the production of self, the social world, values, politics, and economy as well as its potential to introduce ruptures and changes to all of these. By the end of the course, you will have developed a more complex understanding of religion and will have learned several key methodological approaches to its study.

REQUIRED TEXTS

RECOMMENDED/SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

All other readings will be provided on OAKS.

SPECIFIC COURSE GOALS

- Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of performance theory and its relevance to the study of religion.
- Students will be able to identify and describe methodological approaches that correspond to this approach (e.g. historical-critical, textual-critical, critical-ethnographic).
• Students will demonstrate familiarity with beliefs, texts, objects and practices across three broad cultural-religious domains: East and Southeast Asian traditions, American Protestant traditions, and the traditions of the Black Atlantic.
• Students will be able to speak and write critically and thoughtfully about ritual and performance in relation to religion.
• Students will demonstrate a critical-empathetic approach to encountering cultural and religious differences.

GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture. (Evaluated through Writing Project #2)
2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the humanities area under study and interpret the material in writing assignments. (Evaluated through Writing Project #1)

RELS STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

1) Students recognize and explain the major theoretical perspectives and key issues of debate in the academic study of religion. (Evaluated through Writing Project #1)

HONS FOUNDATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE AND METHODS OF INQUIRY SLOs

1. Demonstrate the ability to create and communicate analytic arguments supported by evidence
2. Analyze and synthesize information within and/or across disciplines
3. Design and implement a major research project that reflects a high level of proficiency in methods of inquiry and ways of thinking

*HONS SLOs will be evaluated using Writing Project #2 – Religion as Performance Essay

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Participation: In a small course, like this one, our collective success rests upon our shared commitment to one another. Yet, we are living in highly irregular and unpredictable circumstances right now. Therefore, it is my hope and expectation that you will commit to being on time, present, prepared, and participatory at every class session. In phases one and three of our course (synchronous online), this means you will log in to participate in reading responses, discussion threads, quizzes, etc. It also means you will attend our live zoom sessions. In phase two, this means you will arrive prior to the start of class, participate during class, and stay until the end of class. In the event that you must miss a class session, please make an effort to let me know before (if possible) or after (if necessary). If you miss more than three class sessions, do not be offended when I reach out to you to ask why. We will have a discussion ONLY to be sure that everything is going well for you.

Netiquette: Due to the circumstances, our course will make robust use of a variety of online tools. Because most online interaction takes place through text and video, it is important to remember several things:
Because online communication often lacks the body language and nonverbal cues we’re used to in a normal face-to-face course, it is important to set some expectations for each other in this brave new world we’re embarking on.

- Be patient. Stuff goes wrong...a lot.
- Be kind. Treat each other with the full respect and dignity each of you deserve.
- Be flexible. Be ready to make a change without anger or frustration. Have a growth mindset and be prepared to learn new things and extend a lot of kindness to one another (and me).
- Be ethical. Racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and/or any language or behavior that dehumanizes or degrades others will not be tolerated. Period.
- Be professional. Even if we’re online, this is a class, and we should all act like it.
- Help each other. If a peer posts a question and you know the answer, help them!
- Cite your sources. When you’re building off or borrowing from others’ ideas, give them the credit they deserve, whether it’s from a reading or a classmate.
- Take the time to learn new tools and resources: OAKS, Zoom, Voicethread, FlipGrid, etc. If you don’t know how to do something, use the CofC tutorials here to teach yourself before you ask.
- Think and reread before you post (hit enter/reply). Once up, you can’t go back.
- Use proper capitalization/punctuation when writing online and keep in mind how people will read what you write. For example, ALL CAPS IS LIKE YELLING!!!

**Communication:**

Just because we won’t be together in person doesn’t mean that we can’t cultivate community together. I will work hard to help each of us to get to know one another, trust one another, and learn together. Here’s how we can communicate well:

- You should have a CofC email address linked to OAKS. Email is my most frequent and effective means of communication. Make sure you check your email daily! Please include “RELS 450” in the subject line of all emails to me or classmates.
- I will respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays—I don’t check email on weekends, so if you email me on a weekend your response will wait until Monday. Hence, the sooner you would like a response, the sooner you should write me.
- I will host open office hours on Zoom once a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9-12. “Open office hours” means I’ll be online and you can chat with me without an appointment.
- If you would like to schedule a private one-on-one Zoom meeting with me and/or our Tuesday time doesn’t work, email me to arrange an appointment.
- When you attend a Zoom session for our course (whether it is an office hours session with me or a scheduled online session as a class), please try to call from a quiet place where you won’t be disturbed, dress appropriately, and be aware of your surroundings. Remember, whatever your webcam sees, EVERYONE sees!

**GENERAL POLICIES**

**Honor Code and Academic Integrity**

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.
Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: [http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php](http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php).

**Disability/Access Statements:**

1. Any student eligible for and needing accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class or as soon as the student has been approved for services so that reasonable accommodations can be arranged.

2. The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply for services at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed.

3. This College abides by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see an administrator at the Center of Disability Services/SNAP, 843.953.1431 or me so that such accommodation may be arranged.

**OAKS**

OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

**Recording of Classes (via ZOOM)**

Class sessions may be recorded via both voice and video recording. By attending and remaining in this class, the student consents to being recorded. Recorded class sessions are for instructional use only and may not be shared with anyone who is not enrolled in the class.
Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Interruption of Instruction
If in-person classes are suspended, faculty will announce to their students a detailed plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and Internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools.

Center for Student Learning:
The Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services provide assistance in study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. Services include tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at http://csl.cofc.edu or call (843) 953-5635.

Mental & Physical Wellbeing:
At the college, we take every students’ mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at http://counseling.cofc.edu or 843.953.5640 3rd Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php, or meet with them in person 3rd Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.

Food & Housing Resources:
Many CoC students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (such as not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the Dean of Students for support (http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/about/salt.php). Also, you can go to http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/student-food-housing-insecurity/index.php to learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. In addition, there are several resources on and off campus to help. You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (2nd floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to any student in need. Please also consider reaching out to Professor ABC if you are comfortable in doing so.

Inclusion:
It is my aim, as part of our class commitments and my personal commitments as a member of society, to cultivate an inclusion classroom space, especially as regards an individual’s identity. The College of Charleston offers many resources for LGBTQ+ students, faculty and staff along with their allies:

- Preferred Name and Pronoun Information
- On Campus Gender Inclusive facilities
- Campus Resources
- College of Charleston Reporting Portals
RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS

The College of Charleston community is enriched by students of many faiths that have various religious observances, practices, and beliefs. We value student rights and freedoms, including the right of each student to adhere to individual systems of religion. The College prohibits discrimination against any student because of such student’s religious belief or any absence thereof.

The College acknowledges that religious practices differ from tradition to tradition and that the demands of religious observances in some traditions may cause conflicts with student schedules. In affirming this diversity, like many other colleges and universities, the College supports the concept of “reasonable accommodation for religious observance” in regard to class attendance, and the scheduling of examinations and other academic work requirements, unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship on the College.

The accommodation request imposes responsibilities and obligations on both the individual requesting the accommodation and the College. Examples of reasonable accommodations for student absences might include: rescheduling of an exam or giving a make-up exam for the student in question; altering the time of a student’s presentation; allowing extra-credit assignments to substitute for missed class work or arranging for an increased flexibility in assignment dates. Regardless of any accommodation that may be granted, students are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives, requirements and prerequisites as defined by the instructor and by the College.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Holiday</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 18, 2020</td>
<td>Rosh Hashanah(^2)</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 28, 2020</td>
<td>Yom Kippur(^2)</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2 – October 9, 2020</td>
<td>Sukkot(^2)</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 9, 2020</td>
<td>Shemini Atzeret(^2)</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 19 - October 26, 2020</td>
<td>Navaratri</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 19, 2020</td>
<td>Birth of Baha’u’llah</td>
<td>Baha’i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 7, 2021</td>
<td>Christmas(^3)</td>
<td>Orthodox Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 17, 2021</td>
<td>Ash Wednesday (Beginning of Lent)</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 25-26, 2021</td>
<td>Purim(^2)</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15, 2021</td>
<td>Great Lent Begins</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20, 2021</td>
<td>Naw-Ruz</td>
<td>Baha’i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2, 2021</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26 - April 3, 2021</td>
<td>Passover(^2)</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12-May 11, 2021</td>
<td>Ramadan</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30, 2021</td>
<td>Good Friday (Orthodox)(^3)</td>
<td>Orthodox Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20 and 28, 2021</td>
<td>Ridvan</td>
<td>Baha’i</td>
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**CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**

YOU SHOULD:
1) Come to class (or Zoom meeting) regularly, on time, and prepared. Preparation means reading, to the best of your ability and with strategy and attention, all materials prior to the class meeting. Additionally, you should have thought critically about the materials and be ready with questions.
2) Make every effort to eliminate distractions and engage in the class session with your full attention.
3) Engage in discussion with classmates and professor in a way that is, affirmative, open, and above all, respectful. The classroom is a safe place to ask questions and express ideas, so never hesitate. However, words matter, and we are surrounded by differences. So, think carefully before you speak, and cultivate a curious, thoughtful, respectful way of engaging in the classroom.
4) Turn assignments in on time. In extraordinary circumstances, please contact me in advance or as soon as possible.

I WILL:
1) Always be on time, prepared, and happy to see you.
2) Patient, empathetic, energetic, and interesting.
3) Concerned about your academic success and also your personal well-being and happiness.
4) Fair in my policies and respectful of your time and energy.
5) Available throughout the semester at most times of the day (notice….not the night, though maybe) to sit with you, listen to you, and help you with whatever you need.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Our course will utilize an alternative style of grading, commonly called “Specifications Grading.” In this model of grading, each assignment will come with clear “specifications.” If those specifications are met and if the assignment is turned in on time, then it is marked as complete. You will receive qualitative feedback, but you will NOT receive individual grades on assignments.

Your final grade will be determined on the basis of the number of achievements you earn. Our total list of assignments can be found below:

**Writing Projects**
- #1 – Letter Home Theorist Paper (+ Option to Revise)
- #2 – Religion as Performance Paper (+Option to Revise)

**Discussion Threads**
- 8 online semi-formal discussions.

**Reading Responses**
- 8 submitted either as text in Discussion Board or via FlipGrid
# Achievement Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Grade Earned</th>
<th>Reading Responder Achievement</th>
<th>Discursive Dynamite Achievement</th>
<th>Theorist Achievement</th>
<th>Researcher Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (95%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 8</td>
<td>Lvl. 8</td>
<td>Lvl. 2 (+Lvl. 2 Researcher)</td>
<td>Lvl. 2 (+Lvl. 2 Theorist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A - (90%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 8</td>
<td>Lvl. 8</td>
<td>Lvl. 2 (+Lvl. 1 Researcher)</td>
<td>Lvl. 2 (+Lvl. 1 Theorist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+ (88%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 8</td>
<td>Lvl. 8</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (85%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 7</td>
<td>Lvl. 7</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- (80%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 6</td>
<td>Lvl. 6</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+ (78%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 5</td>
<td>Lvl. 5</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (75%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 4</td>
<td>Lvl. 4</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C- (70%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 3</td>
<td>Lvl. 3</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+ (68%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 2</td>
<td>Lvl. 2</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (65%)</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>Lvl. 1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D- (60%)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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**Tokens**: Each student will receive 3 magical Tokens at the beginning of the course. Tokens can be redeemed to submit a) a late assignment for credit or b) a redo for an “incomplete” assignment. (Note: Tokens cannot be redeemed after the final class period, so plan accordingly. Also, tokens cannot be used to submit a late revision).

Starting “B+”: Each student will start with an 88% B+, and you will only move up or down as assignments are completed (or not) and achievement badges earned. Most of you will stay at this “B+” for most of the semester, as you can only climb with revisions.
COURSE SCHEDULE

MODULE 1: THEORY

Week 1 (August 25, 27)

*LIVE ZOOM*
- Aug. 25: Introduction to the Course, Expectations, Assignments, and Grading Scheme
  - In preparation, please have a hard or digital copy of the syllabus for reference. Ideally, examine the syllabus closely prior to our first meeting, and come prepared with questions.
  - Assignment: Introductions Thread (OAKS)
  - Assignment: Syllabus Quiz

*LIVE ZOOM*
- August 27: Un-defining Religion
  - Reading: Nongbri (1-24) in OAKS

DISCUSSION #1 (Sun)

Week 2 (Sept. 1, 3) Modern Religious Theory

*LIVE ZOOM*
- Sept. 1: Religion IS, Religion DOES, Religion Identifies Something Else Entirely?
  - Lecture & Discussion: Essentialist and Functionalist Definitions of Religion
    RR #1 (Mon)

*SELF-PACED*
- Sept. 3: Religion IS (Essentialist Theories)
  - Reading: Otto, selections from The Idea of the Holy; Review all materials on OAKS

DISCUSSION #2 (Sun)

Week 3 (Sept. 8, 10)

*LIVE ZOOM*
- Sept. 8: Religion DOES (Functionalist Theories)
  - Reading: Durkheim, selections from Elementary Forms of Religious Life (OAKS)
    RR #2 (Mon)

*SELF PACED*
- Sept. 10: Functionalism Continued
  - Reading: Marx, Karl, “Estranged Labour” (OAKS): Review all materials on OAKS

DISCUSSION #3 (Sun)
[BEGIN PHASE 2: IN PERSON CLASSES]

Week 4 (Sept. 15, 17)

Sept. 15: Religion is Crowd-Think
- Elias Canetti, “Crowds and Power” (OAKS)  
  RR #3 (Mon)

Sept. 17: Religion is Intimacy Lost
  DISCUSSION #4 (Sun)

Week 5 (Sept. 22, 24)

Sept. 22: Writing Assignment #1 Workshop
- In Class: Assignment #1 Specifications (OAKS)
- Group Brainstorm Exercise
- Handout: Exemplars

Sept. 24: Ritual Studies: Liminality and Communitas
- Reading: Victor Turner, *Ritual Process*, selections (OAKS)

Week 6 (Sept. 29, Oct. 1)

Sept 29: Performance Studies
- Reading: Schechner, Chs. 1, 2

Oct. 1: Ritual and Play
- Reading: Schechner, Chs. 3-4

**WRITING #1 “LETTER HOME” DUE SUNDAY, OCT. 3**
MODULE 2: CASE STUDIES IN PERFORMANCE
BUDDHIST, PROTESTANT, AND AFRO-ATLANTIC RITUAL

Week 7 (Oct. 6, 8)

Oct. 6: Buddhism
• Introducing Buddhism: The Life and Teachings of the Buddha
• Reading: DeCaroli, “Coming to Terms,” in Haunting the Buddha (OAKS)

RR #4 (Mon)

Oct. 4: Buddhist Ritual Performance
• Reading: Owens, “Blood and Bodhisisattvas” (OAKS)

DISCUSSION #5 (Sun.)

Week 8 (Oct. 13, 15)

Oct. 13: Protestantism and the Enlightenment (or...Am I a Protestant?)
• No Reading
• Lecture: Introducing the Spirits of Progress

RR #5 (Mon)

Oct. 15: Capitalism and the Performance of Predestination
• Reading: Weber, “The Spirit of Capitalism” (OAKS)
• Lecture: Welcome to the Iron Cage

Week 9 (Oct. 20, 22)

Oct. 11: Performing Presence in Protestantism
• Reading: Luhrmann, “Let’s Pretend” and “Lord, Teach Me to Pray” (OAKS)

RR #6 (Mon)

Oct. 22: Performing Spontaneity
• Reading: Hinson, Chs. 1-3 from Fire in My Bones (OAKS)

DISCUSSION #5 (Sun.)
Week 10 (Oct. 27, 29)

Oct. 27: Introducing the Black Atlantic

- No Reading
- Historical Context and the Afterlife of Slave Trade

Oct. 29: Hot and Cool in the Black Atlantic

- Reading:
  - Robert Farris Thompson, Chs. 1-2 in *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (OAKS)

DISCUSSION #6 (Sun.)

Week 11 (Nov. 5)

Nov. 5: Vodou Cosmos

- Reading:
  - Desmangles, “The Faces of the Cosmic Gods” (OAKS)
  - Thompson, Ch. 3 in *Flash of the Spirit* (OAKS)

DISCUSSION #7 (Sun.)

Week 12 (Nov. 10, 12)

Nov. 10: Performing Divinity In Haitian Vodou

- Reading:
  - Maya Deren, “The Trinity” and “White Darkness,” in *The Divine Horsemen* (OAKS)
  - Schechner, Ch. 6 “Performing” (170-220)

RR# 7 (Mon)
Nov. 12: Performing Violence and Trauma
  • Reading:
    o Elizabeth McAlister, “Mystical Work” in *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and its Diaspora* (OAKS)

  DISCUSSION #8 (Sun)

Week 13 (Nov. 17, 19)

Nov. 17: Gullah/Geechee – Performing Memory
  • Reading:
    o LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant, Intro and Ch. 1 in *Talking to the Dead: Religion, Music, and Memory Among Gullah/Geechee Women* (OAKS)

  RR #8 (Mon.)

Nov. 19: Critical Reflections
  • Reading:
    o Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, Intro and Ch. 8 in *Death, Memory, and Material Culture* (OAKS)

Week 14 (Nov. 24)

Nov. 24: Black Atlantic Ritual Performance
  • Film: Maya Deren’s *The Divine Horsemen* (1954)

**WRITING #2 – RELIGION AS PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS DUE NOV. 24th**

[BEGIN PHASE 3: ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS]

Week 15 (Dec. 1,3)

Dec. 1: Performance Studies and Implications for how we understand “religion”
  • No reading

Dec. 3: Course Evals/Flex Day

**WRITING #2 REVISIONS DUE BY DEC. 8th**
Writing Projects:

Writing Project #1 – “Letter Home”

Prompt:

You are writing a letter home to a family member (your family member is NOT familiar with the academic study of religion, it’s terms or ideas, etc.). Your family member is curious about what you’ve been learning in our class. Choose one of the theorists we have studied in our first unit (Otto, Marx, Bataille, Canetti, Durkheim), and write a letter explaining that theorist’s thinking and how it impacts our understanding of what religion is and how we should study it.

Specifications: For a grade of “Complete”, be sure to adhere to the following specifications.

- Length: 1500 to 2000 words (approx. 3-4 pages)
- Genre: Written as a letter to a family member, i.e. using first person voice and in the tone and language appropriate for a family member
- Format: Word Document (.doc or .docx), 1 inch margins, 12 pt. Times or Times New Roman, Divided into paragraphs
- Contents:
  - Heading: Should contain Student Name, Date, Professor Name
  - Pages should be numbered in top right corner
  - Should contain a greeting, e.g. “Dear Aunt Suzie,”
  - Should contain a paragraph that introduces your family member to the theorist and to the study of religion
  - Should contain multiple paragraphs that analyze the writing of the theorist (with direct interaction with the text via direct or indirect quotes)
  - Should contain parenthetical citations of your source, e.g. (Bataille 18) or (Durkheim 234), etc.
  - Should contain a concluding paragraph or paragraphs that summarize why you think this theorist’s ideas are important and the implications it has for thinking about and studying religion.
- Quality Component:
  - Should contain both description/evidence (i.e. a discussion of what the theorist says) and analysis/implications (i.e. some reflection upon what you think the theorist means and why it is important).

Due Date: **Sunday, Oct. 3rd at 11:59pm** via Dropbox on our OAKS page.

Revision Due Date: **Two weeks from receipt of returned/graded paper**
Project #2: Religion as Performance and Performance as Religion

Description:

Religion, religion everywhere! The theorists we have studied have undoubtedly expanded our vision of what constitutes “religion.” From sporting events to political marches, everywhere we turn, we begin to see the fuzzy outlines of religion. Using the approach learned in this course (via Schechner’s “performance studies” writing), you will develop a short essay that takes the form of:

[A selected ritual practice] as the performance of ________________ in [Buddhism/Protestant Christianity/Haitian Vodou]

Examples:

- [Rituals for the dead] as performance of social responsibility in Haitian Vodou
- [Speaking in Tongues] as a performance of social status in American Pentecostalism
- [Animal sacrifice] as a performance of enlightenment status in Newar Buddhism

These are just examples. You will inevitably be choosing a topic about which none of you are experts. The goal is not “mastery” or “expertise,” but rather experimentation. Choose a ritual practice or behavior that we have discussed or one that you are interested in, select at least three outside resources concerning that ritual (from the library!), and using Schechner (mandatory) and another other theorist we’ve studied (mandatory), you will imagine how the ritual might work as a performance in the social, political, economic life, etc.

Specifications:

- A complete essay will be between 1800 and 2200 words long, double spaced, 1-inch margins, Times or Times New Roman
- A complete essay will include an introduction that clearly identifies your topic and offers a guiding THESIS for the analysis that follows the “_______ as performance of _________ in _________” structure.
- A complete essay will offer a description of the ritual practice based on at least one library resource
- A complete essay will analyze the “performance” aspects of the ritual.
- A complete essay will engage with at least one theoretical idea/model from Schechner (and will potentially incorporate compelling ideas from other theorists we’ve talked about).
- A complete essay will offer a conclusion that summarizes the arguments contained in the essay and restates the THESIS based on the evidence given.
- A complete essay WILL INCLUDE PROPER CITATION for all direct and indirect quotes and an accompanying Works Cited page

How to Turn it in:

- This essay is due as a Word File (.doc or .docx) in dropbox on Nov. 24 by 11:59pm