

**College of Charleston
Department of Religious Studies
Spring 2014**

**RELS 210: Theories in the Study of Religion
Tues and Thurs 9:25-10:40; Ed Center 219**

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler

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Office: 4 Glebe St. #103 Entryway C

Office Hours: Tues and Thurs 11-12 and 2-3 or by appointment

What is religion? How did it start? How should it be studied? This course introduces students to some of the many ways these questions have been answered. We focus on great thinkers important to the study of religion (including Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx) as well as disciplinary approaches to its study (anthropology, sociology, etc.) We also look at selected contemporary approaches to the study of religion. This class aims to instill an appreciation of both the multi-faceted nature of religion and of the necessarily interdisciplinary quality of its study.

This course will fulfill the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes:**

Student Learn Outcome #1: Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture.

Student Learn Outcome #2: Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.

These two learning outcomes will be assessed in the midterm exam, which will ask students to identify and interpret primary sources (namely theorists of religion).

Required Texts:

Introducing Religion, Daniel Pals

A critical introduction to the study of religion, Craig Martin

There are also required short readings on OAKS. Print these out. Please bring the relevant book or printout to class.

Course Requirements:

* Participation and attendance including small group discussion, random attendance checks, and in-class writing assignments: **10%**

* Serving as class discussion leader, including preparing a PowerPoint on a particular theorist: **5%**

* One 6-7 pp. site visit paper: **20%**

* One 6-7 pp. critical analysis paper: **20%**

* Two out of four 1-2 pp. "memos" based on the readings: **2 x 5% = 10%**

* A midterm exam on February 27: **15%**

* A final exam on May 2 from 9-11: **20%**

We will review and discuss each assignment before it is due. Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. Students can find a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook, available online.

Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 61-62 F: 60 or below.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Thurs Jan 9— What is this class about?
Read: Martin 1-8

Tues Jan 14— How did theories of religion emerge from modernity?
Read: OAKS #1 (“Eight Theories”); OAKS # 2 (T. Jefferson); Pals xiii- xvii

Thurs Jan 16— How do theories of religion work?
Read: Pals xvii- xxvi; Martin 8-18

Tues Jan 21— E.B. Tylor: Religion as Animism
Read: Pals 1-8, 10-15, 22-24, 29-35, 66-67

Thurs Jan 23— James Frazer: Religion and Magic (**Guest Lecturer: Dr. Z. Bjerken**)
Read: Pals 37-58, 68-70; OAKS #3 (Laughlin)

Tues Jan 28— Sigmund Freud: Religious as Neurosis
Read: Pals 71-83; OAKS #4 (“Future of An Illusion”)

Thurs Jan 30— Freud, cont.
Read: OAKS #4, cont.
Memo #1 Due

Tues Feb 4— Joseph Campbell: Religion as Hero’s Journey
Read: OAKS #5 (Campbell Interview)

Thurs Feb 6— William James: Religion as Experience
Read: Pals 171-182, 188-193, 195-202
Memo #2 Due

Tues Feb 11—Emile Durkheim: Religion as Community
Read: Pals Chapter Four (excerpts)

Thurs Feb 13— Durkheim, cont.
Read: Pals Chapter Four, cont.
Memo #3 Due

Tues Feb 18— Karl Marx: Religion as Oppression
Read: Pals Chapter Five (excerpts)

Thurs Feb 20— Critiquing theories of “Primitive religion”
Read: Pals 325-340
Midterm Exam review handed out
Memo #4 Due

Tues Feb 25— Catch-up and Exam review

Thurs Feb 27— **Midterm exam**

SPRING BREAK

Tues March 11— Rudolf Otto: Religion as the Numinous
Read: Pals Chapter Seven (excerpts)

Thurs March 13— Mircea Eliade: Religion as Sacred Time and Sacred Space
Read: Pals Chapter Nine (excerpts)

Tues March 18— Eliade, cont.
Read: Pals Chapter Nine, cont.

Thurs March 20— J.Z. Smith: Religion as “Invention of the Scholar’s Study”
Read: OAKS #6 (J.Z. Smith)

Tues March 25— Max Weber: Religion and Society Intertwined
Read: Pals Chapter Eight (excerpts)
Site Visit Paper Due

Thurs March 27— Evans-Pritchard and C. Geertz: Towards a “Thick Description”
Read: Pals Chapters Ten and Eleven (excerpts)

Tues April 1—Peter Berger: Religion as Social Construct
Read: Martin 19-32, 45-58

Thurs Apr 3— Feminist Theories of Religion (**Guest Lecturer: Prof L. Doire**)
Read: Martin 32-44, 65-69; OAKS #7 (TBA)

Tues Apr 8—Pierre Bourdieu: Religion and Habitus
Read: Martin Chapter Four

Thurs Apr 10— Bruce Lincoln: Religion and Legitimation
Read: Martin Chapter Five

Tues Apr 15—Religion and Authority
Read: Martin Chapter Six

Thur Apr 17—Religion and Authenticity
Read: Martin Chapter Seven
Critical Analysis Paper Due

Tues April 22— What have we learned?
Final Exam review handed out

Thurs May 1, 9-11 AM: Final exam

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Note: Students with documented disabilities who have been approved to receive accommodation through SNAP should feel free to discuss this during office hours. For more information, contact Disability Services at 953-1431.

Help for writing papers

A good resource for how to write a religious studies paper:
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/religious-studies/>

The Center for Student Learning on campus has writing labs and consultations:
<http://www.cofc.edu/~csl/>
953-5635