

College of Charleston
Department of Religious Studies
Spring 2023

RELS 210: Theories in the Study of Religion
Mon and Wed 3:25-4:40; Ed Center 219

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler

Email: siegler@cofc.edu Office phone: **953-3910**

Office: 4 Glebe St. 2nd floor; "virtual office": <https://cofc.zoom.us/my/elijahsiegler>

Office Hours: MWF 11:00-12:00, 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 L. **Pals** (978-0195181494)

A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion, 2nd edition, Craig **Martin** (978-0415419932)

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 7-8 pp. site visit paper: **25%**

* five out of ten 500-word "memos" based on the readings: **5 x 5% = 25%**

* A midterm exam on Wed March 1: **15%**

* A final exam on Sat April 29, 3:30-5:30: **20%**

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.

We will review and discuss each assignment before it is due. There will also be various opportunities to gain bonus marks by attending relevant lectures and writing short papers about them.

Expect emails from me the day before most classes with reminders, pro tips, and a preview of questions and issues we will be discussing in the next day's class. I love getting replies to my emails!

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

Wed Jan 11— **What is this class about?**

Read: Martin 1-4; Pals xvii- xxvi

MLK Day Holiday

Wed Jan 18— **How did theories of religion emerge from modernity?**

Read: OAKS #1 ("Eight Theories"); Pals xiii- xvii; Martin 4-13

Mon Jan 23— **How and why should we Define Religion?**

Read: Martin 13-32; OAKS #2 (W.C. Smith)

Memo #1 Due

Wed Jan 25— **E.B. Tylor: What is Animism?**

Read: Pals 1-8, 10-15, 22-24, 29-35

Mon Jan 30— **James Frazer: What is Magic?**

Read: Pals 37-58, 66-70; OAKS #3 (Siegler on Trump)

Wed Feb 1— **Sigmund Freud: Is Religion Neurosis?**

Read: Pals 71-83; OAKS #4 ("Future of An Illusion") pp. 19-37

Mon Feb 6— **Freud, cont.**

Read: OAKS #4 pp. 38-57

Memo #2 Due

Wed Feb 8— **What is the New Animism?**

Read: OAKS #5 (Laack)

Mon Feb 13— **William James: Is Religion an Experience?**
Read: Pals 171-182, 188-194, 195-202
Memo #3 Due

Wed Feb 15— **Emile Durkheim: Is Religion Community?**
Read: Pals 99-108, 111-122, 123-129

Mon Feb 20— **Durkheim, cont.**
Read: Pals 130-138. OAKS #6 (“Sports”)
Memo #4 Due

Wed Feb 22— **Karl Marx: Is Religion Oppression?**
Read: Pals 143-147, 149-153, 167-170
Midterm Exam Study Guide handed out

Mon Feb 27— **Critiquing Theories of “Primitive religion”**
Read: Pals 325-340
Catch-up and Exam review
Memo #5 Due

Wed March 1— **Midterm exam**

SPRING BREAK

Mon March 13— **Rudolf Otto: Is Religion A “Numinous” Feeling?**
Read: Pals 205-217, 222-223, 232-235

Wed March 15— **Mircea Eliade: Is Religion Sacred Time and Sacred Space?**
Read: Pals 271-286

Mon March 20- **Eliade, cont.**
Read: Pals 295-308
Memo #6 Due

Wed March 22— **J.Z. Smith: Is Religion an “Invention of the Scholar’s Study”?**
Read: OAKS #7 (J.Z. Smith)

Mon March 27— **Evans-Pritchard and Geertz: Is Religion a “Cultural System”?**
Read: Pals 309-311, 319-325, 341-343, 347-362; OAKS # 9 (Asad)
Memo #7 Due

Wed March 29— **Max Weber: How are Religion and Society Intertwined?**
Read: Pals 237-242, 251-256, 265-266

Mon April 3— **Peter Berger: Is Religion a Social Construct?**

Read: Martin 33-45, 51-74

Memo #8 Due

Wed April 5— **Joseph Campbell: Is Religion a “Hero’s Journey?”**

Read: OAKS #9 (Campbell Interview)

Mon Apr 10—**Mary Daly: Is Religion Patriarchy?**

Read: Martin 45-50, 74-83; OAKS #10 (Mary Daly)

Memo #9 Due

Wed Apr 12—**Pierre Bourdieu: Religion and Habitus**

Read: Martin 85-102

Mon Apr 17— **Bruce Lincoln: Religion and Legitimation**

Read: Martin 103-120 OAKS # 11 (“Theses On Method”)

Rough draft of paper due

Wed Apr 19—**Religion and Authority/ Paper Workshop**

Read: Martin 121-141

Memo #10 Due

Mon Apr 24—**Religion and Authenticity**

Read: Martin 143-157; OAKS #12 (TBD)

Final Paper Due

Final Exam Guidelines handed out

Wed April 26— **What have we learned?**

Final Exam Review and Summary Discussion

Sat April 29, 3:30-5:30— Final exam

&&&

Class Policies and Important Information

In-person attendance is required, this is not a hybrid course. If you must miss class, you can get notes from someone in class. (If I must isolate, we will meet at our regular time on Zoom.) If you are coming out of isolation, please wear a mask to class (and feel free to wear a mask anytime for any reason). Find out more about C of C’s current COVID-19 policies [here](#).

Help for writing papers: A good resource for how to write a religious studies paper is

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/religious-studies/>

The Center for Student Learning on campus has writing labs and consultations:

<https://csl.cofc.edu/> or 953-5635.

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are **violations of our Honor Code** that, when identified, are investigated. Any acts of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students and addressed through the conduct process. Students can find a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes in the [Student Handbook](#).

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 953-143 or at snap@cofc.edu. You can find additional information and request academic accommodations at the [Center for Disability Services/SNAP website](#).

Diversity and Inclusion in the classroom: I am committed to creating an inclusive and accessible classroom environment for all students. I view the diversity that students bring to this class as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity. Any suggestions for promoting a positive and open environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration. I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name and gender pronouns of your choice. The **Multicultural Student Programs and Services** provide a safe haven for students to develop connections with other students.

Mental & Physical Wellbeing: We take every student's 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 homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at [CofC Counseling Center](#) or 843.953.5640 3rd Floor of Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, or meet with them in person 411 (4th Floor) Stern Center). Learn more about [Students 4 Support on CofC's Hub](#). 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 CofC 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 ([SALT - Student Affairs Leadership Team](#)). Also, you can go to [Student Food and Housing Insecurity](#) to learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. 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.