Catalog Description: Exploration of the history and methodology of Religious Studies, including the analysis of several significant theories of the origin and function of religion. Methods and theories drawn from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, philosophy, and feminist theory.

HRS 108 is required for the B.A. in HRS with Religious Studies Concentration and for the Religious Studies Minor. The course employs a modified seminar format, featuring extensive class discussion and oral reports.

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete HRS 108 will be able to:

• Explain the historical development of the field of Religious Studies, identifying major thinkers in the field of Religious Studies and describing their primary contributions.
• Describe significant theoretical approaches to the study of religion, including their intentions and applications.
• Demonstrate familiarity with the ways “religion” is conceptualized and categorized in academic study.
• Apply appropriate academic approaches (e.g. empathy) to the study of religions, and demonstrate ability to distinguish academic study of religion from personal perspectives (e.g. “faith” perspective).
• Demonstrate analytical reading skills, the ability simultaneously to extract and construct meaning when reading diverse texts.
• Demonstrate critical thinking skills, comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.
• Demonstrate written communication skills, through using appropriate structure, development, usage, and reference sources to write clear, purposeful, analytical prose.
• Demonstrate oral communication skills, by presenting information orally in a persuasive, logical, and organized manner that draws effectively on relevant evidence.

Required Texts

Daniel L. Pals, *Introducing Religion*
Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*
Various readings provided via SacCT

Requirements and Grading

All reading assignments are to be completed prior to the meetings for which they are listed (see “Schedule and Assignments” below). Course grades will be based on the following:

- Attendance and class participation: 10%
- Six brief responses to readings: 30%
- Midterm exam (take-home/in-class): 20%
- Focused study report: 10%
- Final exam (take-home/in-class): 30%
General information on the response papers
Responses are to be approximately 500 words in length (i.e., about 1½ pages, double-spaced). While there is not necessarily a “right” or “wrong” way to respond to the prompt, a good response will invariably be based on a good reading and thoughtful interpretation of the relevant text(s). It is recommended that some specific references to passages be included, but be careful not to go overboard. Citations can be made as simply as possible in parentheses; there is no need to include foot/endnotes or a bibliography. Grading will be based primarily on understanding of the material as demonstrated through sound analysis and relevant choices of ideas and references. Some consideration will be given to overall presentation quality.

General information on the focused study report
Each student will choose a relatively brief written work (e.g., an article or a chapter from a book) as a means of augmenting one of the assigned course readings. Directives regarding choices will be provided. During the course period in which the assigned reading is discussed, the student will assist the professor in leading the discussion, contributing at the minimum these two things:

1. A brief statement on the content of the additional reading, and how it affected your reading of the assigned material.
2. A discussion question pertinent to the assigned reading to ask the class, not to be dependent directly on the additional reading. (In other words, a question relating directly to the assigned reading.)

As a follow-up to the class experience, the student is to hand in a written summary of the focused study of approximately 2 pages (600-750 words).

A passing grade requires completion of both exams and the focused study report. Use in class of laptop computers must be approved by the instructor. Use of cell phones, including texting, is unacceptable in HRS classrooms and is prohibited. Compliance with rules prohibiting cheating and plagiarism along with principles of courteous conduct are required (i.e., no ‘chatting’ during class, no leaving class without prior permission, no walking in front of the instructor if ever one needs to arrive late) (for the University’s policy on plagiarism, see: http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353). If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008; 278-6955. Please discuss your accommodation needs with the instructor after class or during office hours early in the semester.

SacCT and Turnitin
Our course SacCT 9.1 site will provide access to the syllabus, readings, focused study reports, directives for response papers and exams, and grades. Papers are to be submitted via Turnitin (instructions will be provided).

Schedule and Assignments (reading assignments are underlined and are to be completed by date listed)

Introductions
Wed 1/28 “Thoughts on Defining Religion,” and Smith, “The Bare Facts of Ritual” (SacCT)

The new and the old: Ninian Smart’s “worldview analysis”; the founding of Religious Studies
Mon 2/2 Smart, Worldviews, Introduction and chs. 1–3 (1–70). Response1 due
Wed 2/4 Smart, Worldviews, chs. 4–8 (71–144)
Mon 2/9 Ninian Smart (cont.). Friedrich Max Müller. Smart, Worldviews, ch. 9 and Postscript (145–162), and Pals, Nine Theories of Religion, Introduction (1-14)

Foundational studies of religious experience
Mon 2/16 William James. Pals, Nine Theories, ch. 6 (185–226)
Wed 2/18 Rudolf Otto. Pals, Introducing Religion, first part of ch. 7 (205–222). Response2 due
Mon 2/22 Otto (cont.). Pals, Introducing Religion, second part of ch. 7 (222–235)
Karl Marx: religion as oppression and alienation  
Wed 2/24  Pals, *Nine Theories*, ch. 4 (113–142)

Psychological perspectives on religion  

Sociological perspectives on religion  

Midterm exam: Wednesday 3/18 (take-home due, in-class portion of the exam)

Sociological perspectives on religion (cont.)  
Wed 4/1  Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, chs. 3 and 4 (53–101)

Mircea Eliade and the phenomenology of religion  
Mon 4/6  Pals, *Nine Theories*, first part of ch. 7 (227-246), and Pals, *Introducing Religion*, first part of ch. 9 (271–297)  

Recent anthropological perspectives  

Philosophy of religion  
Mon 4/20  Proudfoot, “Philosophy: Philosophy of Religion,” and Hick, “The Conflicting Truth Claims of Different Religions” (SacCT)

Feminist theory and Religious Studies  
Wed 4/22  Buchanan, “Women’s Studies” (SacCT)  
Mon 4/27  Gimbutas, “Women and Culture in Goddess-Oriented Old Europe,” and Ruether, “Sexism and God-Language” (SacCT). *Response6 due*

The natural sciences on Religion  
Wed 4/29  Wilson, “Forgiveness as a Complex Adaptation,” and Walsh, “The Psychological Health of Shamans” (SacCT)  
Mon 5/4  Boyer, “What Is the Origin?” (SacCT)

A contemporary example: Bruce Lincoln on religion and violence  
Wed 5/6  Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, chs. 1 (and Appendix A), 2 (and Appendices B and C), and 3 (and Appendix D) (1–50 and 97–111; read the appendices with their correlative chapters)  
Mon 5/11  Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, chs. 4–7 (51–95)  

Final exam: Wednesday 5/20, 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.