

California State University, Sacramento
Approaches to Religious Studies
Spring 2009

Humanities and Religious Studies 108-01
Mendocino 4004
Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-2:45

Dr. Jeffrey Brodd **jbrodd@csus.edu**
Office: Mendocino 2028 278-7703
Hours: TR 12:15-1:15, T 4:45-5:45, and by appt.

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. The course will employ a modified seminar format, emphasizing analysis of central theorists and texts by way of discussion. Students will present oral reports on significant theorists and works, in order to augment our core topics and readings.

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete HRS 108 will be able to

- Identify major thinkers in the field of Religious Studies
- Understand the reasons behind different theoretical approaches to the study of religion
- Compare and contrast theoretical points of view both across and within disciplines
- Explain the historical development of the field of Religious Studies

Required Texts

Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*, 3rd ed. (1999)
Daniel L. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 2nd ed. (2006)
Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*
Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*
Course Reader

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:

Contribution to class discussions	10%
Midterm exam (in-class)	25%
Oral report and written paper	35%
Final exam (in-class)	30%

A passing grade requires completion of both exams, the oral report and the written paper.

Use in class of laptop computers must be approved by the instructor; use (or ringing) of cell phones is not permitted. 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.

Schedule and Assignments (reading assignments are underlined; complete by date listed)

Introductions

Tues 1/27 Religion / Religious Studies. Issues and approaches.

A contemporary example: Ninian Smart's "worldview analysis"

Thur 1/29 Smart, *Worldviews*, Introduction and chs. 1-4 (1-86)

Tues 2/3 Smart, *Worldviews*, chs. 5-9 and Postscript (87-162)

Origins and early theories of Religious Studies

Thur 2/5 Friedrich Max Müller. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, Introduction (3-17)

Tues 2/10 E. B. Tylor and James Frazer. Pals, ch. 1 (18-52)

Rudolf Otto: the "holy" as the irreducible essence of religion

Thur 2/12 Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, chs. 1-4 (1-24)

Tues 2/17 Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, chs. 5-6 and 9 (25-40 and 60-71)

Karl Marx: religion as oppression and alienation

Thur 2/19 Pals, ch. 4 (118-148)

Psychological perspectives on religion

Tues 2/24 Sigmund Freud. Pals, ch. 2 (53-84)

Thur 2/26 Carl Jung. De Laszlo, Editor's Introduction to *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung* (in Course Reader)

Tues 3/3 Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" (in Course Reader)

Sociological perspectives on religion

Thur 3/5 Émile Durkheim. Pals, ch. 3 (85-117)

Tues 3/10 Max Weber. Pals, ch. 5 (149-192)

Thur 3/12 Peter Berger. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, chs. 1 and 2 (3-51)

Tues 3/17 Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, chs. 3 and 4 (53-101)

Midterm exam: Thursday 3/19 (in class)

Mircea Eliade and the phenomenology of religion

Tues 3/24 Pals, ch. 6 (193-228)

Thur 3/26 Eliade, Introduction to and ch. 1 of *The Sacred and the Profane* (in Course Reader)

Recent anthropological perspectives

Tues 4/7 E. E. Evans-Pritchard. Pals, ch. 7 (229-259)

Thur 4/9 Clifford Geertz. Pals, ch. 8 (260-291)

NOTE:

The specific schedule from Tuesday 4/14 through Tuesday 5/12 is to be determined based on students' choices for report/paper topics. A finalized schedule will be issued in class. Common readings during this period will include the first part of Pals' Conclusion (292-304) which is to be read for 4/14 (see also the Conclusion's bibliography), and the material in the Course Reader on the philosophy of religion (articles by Smith and Proudfoot) and on feminist theory (article by Buchanan, chapters by Gimbutas and Ruether).

Thur 5/14 Summary and conclusions. Pals, second part of Conclusion (304-323). **Paper due**

Final exam: Thursday 5/21, 12:45-2:45