

CSU Sacramento
Spring 2012
M 6-8:50
MND 4004

Prof. Joël Dubois
MND 2016, (916) 278-5332
Tu 2:30-3:30, W 3:45-4:45, Th 10-11
jdubois@csus.edu

HRS 198: Senior Seminar in Religious Studies
“The Religious Landscape of the Sacramento Valley”

Catalog Description

Senior seminar for Humanities and Religious Studies majors with Religious Studies Concentration; focuses on the perspectives and methods of the academic study of religion. Topics chosen by the instructor. **Note:** May be repeated once for credit. **Prerequisite:** Completion of 9 units of HRS lower division core courses, HRS 108 and senior status; or instructor permission.

This Section of the course, based largely on a course created by Professor Erin Styles in 2004, introduces students to the religious landscape of our area and the field study of religious communities. We also consider broader issues of the nature of religious pluralism in the US today. The practice and belief system and religious reflection of at least five different religious communities will be studied. Students are required to do an in-depth term project based on research in one or more religious communities.

Subject Matter Focus. The Sacramento Valley has a long history of cultural and religious diversity. The first part of the semester focuses on this diversity and the nature of religious pluralism in the US. We consider the religious make-up of the Sacramento area and look at the development and growth of different religious communities in the area over the last century. In the second part of the course, we cover methodologies in the field study of religion. In the third and largest part of the course, we focus our attention specifically on several local religious communities and traditions, including Sikhs, Christians, Jews, Native Americans, Muslims, Hindus, and various forms of “New Age” spirituality that are influenced by religions of South and East Asia. Through individual research projects, students will study the religious practice of a chosen community and explore the expression of religious values through art, architecture, and other forms of material culture.

IMPORTANT: Given that students are expected to have taken HRS 140, “Exploring World Religions” (or some equivalent course), by their senior year, this course is not an introduction to world religions. (Students will thus be expected to do outside reading on the religious communities of their choice to acquire background information if necessary).

Inquiry-Centered Approach. Although we will address the specific subject matter described above, the course as whole places greater importance on inquiry into the nature of religious life. At the heart of this inquiry are three interrelated questions:

- In what ways and to what extent does religious **practice** shape what people in religious **communities** feel and think about (i.e., **reflection**) when they practice?
- In what ways and to what extent does what people feel and think about (**reflection**) in religious **communities** shape their religious **practice**?
- To what extent and in what ways have **communities of practice** shaped **what they reflect**?

about over years and generations, and in what ways has reflection shaped practice?

To support this inquiry, during most class periods students will work in small teams to analyze assigned readings as well as each others' written work. As part of this inquiry, each student will choose one of the theories of religion examined in HRS 108 and relate their insights to that theory.

Field Study Skills. A primary goal of this course is to introduce students to field study of religion. In class, students will learn skills associated with different types of interviewing, participant-observation, and survey design. Students will also improve their writing skills through incremental writing assignments. During initial trips, students will practice taking field notes and sharing their observations with others. At the midterm, each student will choose a particular religious community to observe in depth and then actively engage in on-site research of that community, including participant observation of worship practice and community life as well as interviewing; sites may include temples, mosques, gurdwaras, churches, meeting-halls, religious organizations and/or in inter-faith communities and councils. (A NOTE ABOUT SAFETY: while local communities are very welcoming and open to visitors, students should nevertheless **keep an eye out for potentially unsafe situations** and alert the instructor immediately.) The end product of these efforts will be (a) a research report of approximately 2500 words in length by each student (word count should be printed at the top, though reports may incorporate words into visual content); and (b) a class presentation by each team of students which highlights the most powerful observations and insights gathered in individual reports.

Learning Goals

By the end of the semester, students who have attentively participated in the course should be able to:

- understand the nature and complexity of religious diversity in the Sacramento area
- utilize ethnographic field methods in the study of that religious diversity
- describe the ritual and religious practice of several religious communities
- write clear and effective analyses of relevant sources and reports on observed practices, assembled in stages and revised over time in collaboration with peers
- relate the religious phenomena observed and read about to major theorists of religion studied in HRS 108
- analyze and describe the relationship of between religious practice and religious reflection, both in a given situation and over time

Required Texts

- *A New Religious America*, Diana Eck
- *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Emerson, Fretz and Shaw
- *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, Anne Fadiman
- *New Wine in Old Wineskins: Evangelicals and Liberals in a Small-Town Church*, R. Stephen Warner
- *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream*, Greg Sarris
- *Eight Theories of Religion*, Daniel Pals [from HRS 108]

Suggested Texts

- *Dharma in the Golden State: South Asian Religious Traditions in California*,

- Cybelle T. Shattuck
- *California Jews*. Kahn et al.
 - *Karma Cola*, Gita Mehta

Websites

- The Pluralism Project <http://www.pluralism.org/>
- The American Religious Experience <http://are.as.wvu.edu>
- Religion in America <http://www.academicinfo.net/amrelig.html>
- Official Denominational Websites <http://www.electronicchurch.org/links.html>

Library Resources

- Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements Ref BL 2525 E53 1988
- Encyclopedia of Native American Religions Ref BR 563 N4 E53 1993
- Dictionary of African American Religious Bodies Ref Br 563 N4 D57 1995
- Atlas of Religious Change in America 1952-1990 Ref BR 148 H3 1994
- New Historical Atlas of Religion in America 2 South Atlas G 1201 E4 2001

Assignments and Grading

- 10% Focused Notes on Assigned Readings
- 30% In-class Application Exercises (including peer review)
- 20% Fieldnote Assignments
- 40% Written Project Paper (draft and final paper)

SCALE: 94-100% points=A, 90-93%=A-, 87-89%=B+, 84-87%=B, 80-83%=B-, etc.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week	Topic	Reading and Assignments
	Part ONE: Religious Pluralism in the US and Sacramento	
January 23	Religious Communities in Sacramento: History and Demographics	this syllabus! + also check out: www.csus.edu/sringeri
January 30	Religious Pluralism in the USA: Trends and Topics	Eck: 1-77 Fadiman: chapters 1-4
	Part TWO: Methodologies in Studying Religion	
January 31 - February 5	OBSERVATION VISIT #1: attend worship in groups of 3-4	write observation notes

February 6	Ethnography: Participant-Observation + writing fieldnotes **DUE: fieldnotes #1** --> exchange & peer review	<i>Fieldnotes</i> : chapters 1-4 Fadiman: chapters 5-7
February 7-12	OBSERVATION VISIT #2: attend worship in groups of 3-4	write up interview notes
February 13	Interviewing: Styles & Skills + writing effective reports **DUE: fieldnotes #2** --> exchange & peer review	<i>Fieldnotes</i> : chapters 5, 7, 8 (skim chapter 6) Fadiman: chapters 7-9
February 20	Approaching Diversity (case study: Hmong culture) Representing the Observer's Perspective **DUE: revised fieldnotes #1 & 2** (one copy for each team member; peer reviewed fieldnotes #1 & 2 and analysis of peer comments ATTACHED TO MY COPY ONLY) --> decide on best product(s)	Fadiman: chapters 10-19
February 27	Review of Theorists from HRS 108 (in relation to ethnography) presentation of best fieldnotes & images (distributed electronically by Feb 24)	Pals: review entire book, & HRS 108 notes/ paper(s)
	PART THREE: Our Religious Landscape	
February 28 - March 18	INITIAL OBSERVATIONS of chosen community site	write up observations and interview notes
March 5	Hindu Communities + elements of the research report	Eck 80-141
March 12	Sikh Communities	TBA (on reserve)
March 19	Buddhist Communities	Eck 142-221

	DUE: initial brainstorming reports --> exchange for peer review	
March 20 - April 8	FOLLOW UP RESEARCH at chosen community site	research additional sources (printed and digital)
March 26	Spring Break	
April 2	Muslim Communities --> return peer comments on initial brainstorming reports	Eck, pp 222-293 TBA (on reserve)
April 9	Native American Communities (case study: Mabel McKay) **DUE: research report** (one copy for each team member; attach brainstorming report & analysis of prior peer comments FOR ME ONLY) --> distribute reports to team	Sarris, entire book
April 16	Jewish Communities --> team discussions of best products and how to combine them	TBA (on reserve)
April 23	Christian Communities (case study: Presbyterians in California) --> preparation for team presentations	Warner, entire book
April 30	Team Presentations of Best Products	Eck 294-385
May 7	Team Presentations of Best Products	review <i>Fieldnotes</i> , chapters 4 & 7
May 11 (Friday)	**DUE: REVISED research reports** (with revised fieldnotes #1 & 2, peer reviewed brainstorming reports, analysis of peer comments, and first draft of research report ATTACHED)	review notes and follow-up research