

THEORIES IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION:
RELIGION AND MODERNITY IN WESTERN THOUGHT
JSISC/CHID 380 AND JSISC 590B
SPRING 2015 | GOWEN HALL 201*
LECTURE MONDAY, WEDNESDAY 12:30-2:20
FRIDAY SECTIONS

CHID Gateways Course | I&S | Comparative Religion Majors Required Course

"Modernity is the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art of which the other half is the eternal and the immutable."

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867)

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*Note that we must meet in Exed 110 on April 13 and April 15.

Course Description

This course provides students with a variety of approaches to the study of religion centered on examining the relationship between religion and modernity in the tradition of post-enlightenment, Euro-American scholarship. The central thesis of this course is that what we understand to be "religion" today was fashioned out of Western modernity, similar to other "modern" ideas such as science, democracy, the modern state, humanism, and capitalism. Religion is not a relic from a pre-modern period or the purview of non-modern, non-Westernized, "irrational" societies, but rather is the creation of the modern world itself. We will examine this thesis in relation to several disciplines: history, anthropology, sociology, Marxism, feminism, postmodernism, political theology, and Freudian psycho-analytical theory. As a survey course, we will appraise these areas with the goal to provide opportunities for future study and ideas for critically thinking about the history and role of religion in modern public and political culture.

Format: This is a lecture course with a quiz section each week. The lectures together form your "textbook" for this course and so attending lectures and taking good notes is essential in this class. I encourage questions during lectures, so don't be shy. Quiz sections provide opportunities for you to discuss the material with your teaching assistant and with your colleagues. Verbal participation in quiz section is very important. Three times in the quarter we will watch a film in the course. The use of this media is meant to get us to engage with the themes of the course, and return those themes and theories to creative interpretations of the media. **Please note that my lectures do not summarize the readings but contextualize them in the broad intellectual history**

that we study. If you do not do the readings you will have a hard time following the lectures. If you do not attend the lectures, the readings will lack context.

Section: Sections are on Fridays 12:30-1:20, 1:30-2:20, and 4:30-5:20. Sections are opportunities to ask questions, discuss material, and for us to gauge how you are doing in the class. Each section will include an **in-class writing project**. We'll begin each section with a short writing prompt. The reflections will involve the reading *for that week* and may also involve readings from previous weeks so be sure to do the reading before section. We assess these written assignments based on the way in which you engage the materials, even if you are still in the process of understanding the materials. In other words, we are not expecting "mastery" just sincere and thoughtful engagement. Sections may also include group projects or other activities at the discretion of your teaching assistant.

Assignments:

Your grade for this course will be distributed evenly among three components:

- **Participation in Class and Section**—Participation is measured by active and attentive engagement during class, such as asking questions relevant to the material of lecture or reading. Participation is also measured by active, verbal, and consistent engagement in quiz section in ways that show that you have done the readings, attended lectures, and thought about the material. Participation also involves attentive participation in all assignments and components of the course. In section, an important part of your participation grade will involve in-class writing projects and other projects. Participation in these various areas—lecture and quiz section—combined are worth one-third of your grade.
- **Two In-Class Essay Exams**—You will complete two in-class essay exams, a mid-term essay exam and a final essay exam on the last day of class. The final essay exam will be cumulative, and we will devote one class to preparation for that exam and for a review of the course. These essay exams are to be (legibly) hand-written. You may use the readings, your notes on the readings, your materials from quiz section, and your class lecture notes. **Lecture notes in particular will be vital.** The nature of the questions will allow many possible answers but will rely on materials in lecture and readings. A high grade will be determined by the quality of your thought in the essay, the organization of your response, and your ability to reference the ideas and materials of the course. Each exam will account for one-third of your grade—that is, both exams combined will be equivalent to two-thirds of your grade.

*****Students Registered for JSISC 590B: Please consult me for graduate-level requirements for this class, which are different from those listed above.*****

Readings: All readings for this course are in a course pack at Ram Copies located at 4144 University Way NE. Phone is 206-632-6630. Email is ramscopy@gmail.com. You are responsible for bringing readings to class on the day we discuss the material. If you are interested in buying the

books from which these readings are drawn, please talk to me and I'll give you advice on what to purchase.

Grading: I use the standard 4.0 grading system in use at the University of Washington. My teaching assistant and I together complete your final grading.

Class Etiquette: Please do not use computers, smartphones, mobile phones, ipods, gameboys, gadgets, doohickeys, thingamabobs or other devices in class. If you must use a computer in class as a way to accommodate a disability, please talk to me before class begins and/or visit Disabled Student Services (see below). Use pen/pencil and paper to take notes and exams; do not read other materials, like books, newspapers, magazines, letters, etc., in class; **do not eat in class**, though caffeinated beverages are encouraged. Please come on time and stay for the entire class.

Email Etiquette: Please address emails regarding class to me (Novetzke@uw.edu) *and* Adam Tyson (tysona@uw.edu). Be sure to write from your UW email account and sign off with your name, so we know who wrote the email.

Syllabus: I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any point, including the readings and assignments, as required in order to adapt to the needs of the class or other factors.

Lecture Materials: I do not give students copies of my lecture notes or powerpoint slides. They are cues to help me lecture and are not intended to be stand-alone documents.

Absences: Please try to let us know if you'll be absent from class. Also keep in mind that I do not give my lecture notes or powerpoint slides to students (as noted above), so you will need to get lecture notes from colleagues in the class.

How to Get an A: You can get an A by attending class, taking notes, asking questions, attending section, and participating in all aspects of the course.

How to Get an F: I will strictly enforce the University's rules on Student Academic Responsibility (<http://depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf>) and the Student Conduct Code (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=478-120>). **It is your responsibility to understand what your responsibilities are as a student and the consequences involved in transgressing your responsibilities.** Also, generally checking out or disappearing, especially throughout the middle of the quarter, is a bad idea.

Disabled Students: If you would like to request accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz Hall, 543-8924 (V/TDD). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you require accommodations, please present the letter to me as soon as possible so that I can make necessary arrangements.

Syllabus

✚ Religion and Modernity

- **Monday: Introduction, review syllabus | March 30**
 - No Reading
- **Wednesday: What is modernity? | April Fools Day**
 - Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (1784)
- **Friday Sections | April 3**
 - Subjects: Kant, modernity, definition of religion

✚ The social argument

- **Monday: “Religion” and Modern Society | April 6**
 - Emile Durkheim, selections from *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Introduction, Chapter 1, and Conclusion.
 - James Frazer, selections from *The Golden Bough* (1922)
- **Wednesday: The Creation and Maintenance of Society | April 8**
 - Screen the *The Matrix* (1999; 136 minutes)
 - Peter Berger, “Religion and World-Construction” from *The Sacred Canopy*, 1967, 1-52.
- **Friday Sections | April 10**
 - Subjects: finish *The Matrix*, then discuss in relation to Durkheim, Berger, and Kant
- **Monday: Belief and the Idea of the Cultural Field | April 13 [Meet in Exed 110]**
 - Pierre Bourdieu, selections from *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 29-40, 74-81, 95-97, 101-103, 106-111.

✚ The cultural argument

- **Wednesday: Illusion and Neurosis | April 15 [Meet in Exed 110]**
 - Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), entire.
- **Friday Sections | April 17**
 - Subjects: Continue discussion of *The Matrix* adding Bourdieu and Freud
- **Monday: Language, Symbols, and Structures of Belief | April 20**
 - Screen in class: The Inauguration of 44th President of the United States (January 20, 2009; first five minutes)
 - C. Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” (1966), 87-125.
 - V. Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” (1969), 94-130.

✚ The historical argument

- **Wednesday: Spirit and the End of History | April 22**
 - Hegel, from *The Philosophy of History*, (1837) 1-54.

- **Friday Sections | April 24**
 - Subjects: Discuss anthropological approaches and Hegel; prepare for midterm

- ✚ **Midterm Exam Monday April 27**
 - **Monday: Midterm Exam**

- ✚ **The historical argument continued...**
 - **Wednesday: Marx and the Beginning of History | April 29**
 - Karl Marx
 - Skim: “The Communist Manifesto,” entire (44 pages)
 - “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” Introduction.
 - “The German Ideology—Ideology in General” (1844–46)
 - “Concerning Feuerbach” (1845)
 - **Friday Sections | May 1**
 - Subjects: Marxism and Religion
 - **Monday: Religion, History, and Capitalism | May 4**
 - Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* 1904 chapters 1, 2, and 3 (pgs 1-23 plus notes).

- ✚ **The postmodern argument**
 - **Wednesday: How Did God Die? | May 6**
 - Screen *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989, 104 minutes)
 - F. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra’s Prologue*, entire.
 - Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §§ 108, 125, 335, 343, 345, 350, 373.
 - Nietzsche, “The Religious Nature.”
 - **Friday Sections | May 8**
 - Subjects: Discuss the film in relation to Nietzsche’s ideas
 - **Monday: Religion and the Modern Self | May 11**
 - Michel Foucault, “Hermeneutics and the Self” (1980).

- ✚ **The feminist/gender argument**
 - **Wednesday: The Body and God | May 13**
 - Screen in class *Babette’s Feast* (1987 103 mins).
 - Mary Daly, “After the Death of God the Father” (1971)
 - **Friday Sections | May 15**
 - Subjects: Discuss the film in relation to the ideas of Mary Daly
 - **Monday: Motherhood, Womanhood, and Religion | May 18**

- “Stabat Mater Dolorosa [13th Century]”
- Julia Kristeva, (1987) “Stabat Mater.”

✚ **The political argument**

- **Wednesday: The Nation, the State, and Religion | May 20**
 - Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” (1882)
 - Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America” (1967)
- **Friday Sections | May 22**
 - Subjects: Discuss *Babette’s feast* in relation to Kristeva, then move on to a discuss of Renan and Bellah

✚ **NO CLASS MONDAY, MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 25**

- **Wednesday: Religion and the Clash of Civilizations | May 27**
 - Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History” (1989)
 - Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations” (1993)
- **Friday Sections | May 29**
 - Subjects: Discuss Fukuyama and Huntington, along with initial exam prep

✚ **The Final Exam**

- **Monday: Final Exam Preparation and Course Review | June 1**
- **Wednesday: In Class Exam | June 3**