

Religion Theorized

Graduate Seminar

draft

Relig 501 | Autumn 2018 | Tuesdays 11:30am to 2:20pm | Thomson Hall 231

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OFFICE HOURS: Thursdays 2-3pm

Course Description

From myth to politics, from the animal world to office cubicles, from Muslim American hip-hop to Sri Lankan Buddhist monasteries, this seminar provides graduate students with the opportunity to explore how the humanistic and social sciences explore the role of religion in the world. The goal of this seminar is to pursue these subjects at the cutting edge of research, engaging in contemporary understandings of religion, and find your own theoretical approach to the study of religion. In this effort, all texts assigned will be not more than ten years old, with half published in the last two years.

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

- **Participation**—As a graduate seminar, discussion is the core of our meeting. This is not a lecture class! Class participation is measured by active engagement with the readings and with each other's ideas, as well as generally positive investment in the learning environment of the class. *Actively and verbally engaging in class with the course material is essential for performing well in this class and counts for a third of your grade.*
- **Weekly Reading Reflection**—On Sunday night before class you will post online a short reading reflection on the readings for Tuesday. In this posting, please critically engage the readings and pose questions for group discussion. Limit your posting to 750 words. I encourage you to read one another's postings before class, and if interested, respond online to posts by Monday night. *This will account for a third of your grade.* The board can be found at: TBD.
- **A Final Paper**— For your **final paper**, you will write an essay on the concept of "religion" informed by the readings in this class and your opinion. While this essay should require no additional outside research, you must make a clear and strong **argument** in your essay. Your essay should be around 5000 words. The essay should be double-spaced in 12-point font, and with numbered pages. If you want to submit a complete and polished draft for my review before the final paper is due, I must receive this no later than our class session in Week VIII. *This paper will account for the last third of your grade.*

I cannot accept late work or incompletes.

Grading: I use the standard 4.0 grading system in use at the University of Washington.

Syllabus: I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any point, including the readings and assignments, as required.

Etiquette:

- Strive to create a positive learning environment for all, with respect for everyone's ethnicity, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, citizenship status, sex, pregnancy, age, marital status, disability, or veteran status.¹
- Express yourself in a manner that is consistent with UW's values of equality and respect for all campus community members.
- Help create a safe and comfortable environment for all seminar members.
- Please unplug. Do not use computers, iphones, mobile phones, ipods, gameboys, PS-whatevers, or other devices in class. Please come on time and stay for the entire class. Be here now...

Academic Conduct:

- I will strictly enforce the University of Washington Student Conduct code, including the policy on plagiarism. For your reference, the entire code can be found at <http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html>. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, it is your responsibility to understand plagiarism. Ignorance of the definition of plagiarism will not excuse plagiarism in this class.
- Please be aware of the University of Washington's Sexual Harassment Policies: <http://www.washington.edu/sexualassault/reporting/policies/>. Harassment of any kind, based on sex, gender, race, religion, age, ethnicity, or any else, will not be tolerated in or out of class. Your treatment of your colleagues and others outside of class is part of your social being in class as well.

Students: and Accessibility: 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.

Required Texts: This is a book-club kind of class. We read a book a week. I suggest you purchase these texts on your own for class use. I have not order them at the bookstore but leave buying them up to you. I will endeavor to have copies on reserve but be aware the check-out period is only two hours for reserve books.

¹ This is an adaptation of UW's Executive Order No. 31: Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action, which itself is "in compliance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq](#)) and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ([20 USC § 1681](#)), Title I and II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as amended, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-11) and [45 C.F.R. Part 84](#), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq](#)), Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq](#)), [Chapter 49.60 RCW](#), and Gender Equality in Higher Education ([Chapter 28B.110 RCW](#))." For full text, see <http://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/PO/EO31.html>. My thanks to Mika Ahuvia for compiling this information.

Weekly Readings

- **Week I: Introduction of Course and Content**
 - **Reading:**
 - Syllabus, in class.

- **Week II: Modernity and the “Classical” Problem**
 - **Reading:**
 - Daniel Pals, *Introducing Religion* (2009), entire.

- **Week III: Comparative Studies**
 - **Reading:**
 - Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider*, (2010), entire.

- **Week IV: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality**
 - **Reading:**
 - Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety* (2011), entire.

- **Week V: Race**
 - **Reading:**
 - Su’ad Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool* (2016), entire.

- **Week VI: Class, Capital, and Consumption**
 - **Reading:**
 - Kathryn Lofton, *Consuming Religion* (2017), entire.

- **Week VII: The Public Sphere**
 - **Reading:**
 - *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (2011), Judith Butler, Jurgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Cornel West, entire.

- **Week VIII: The State**
 - **Reading:**
 - Elizabeth Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom* (2015), entire.

- **Week IX: Disenchantment?**
 - **Reading:**
 - Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment* (2017), entire.

- **Week X: Humans in an Animal World**
 - **Reading:**
 - Radhika Govindrajan, *Animal Intimacies* (2018), entire.