Theory and Method in the Study of Religion
16:840:501:01
Edwin Bryant
Tuesday 10:55 a.m. – 1:55 p.m. (Double period 2/3)
Loree Bldg, Room 131, Douglass Campus.
Office House Tue 2.00 PM-2.45 PM

Course Description
This course will engage the more prominent theories that have emerged since the Enlightenment that have attempted to explain religious phenomenon in rational terms. These include models rooted in social, psychological, economic, political, orientalist, structuralist, post-modern and post-colonial explanatory paradigms. The course will engage in methodological issues central to the field of Religious Studies stemming from these approaches.

Course Objectives
The course is intended to equip students with an exposure to the main theoretical approaches and requisite terminologies that characterize the academic Study of Religion, such that they can engage their own area of interest in a theoretically sophisticated fashion that is in dialogue with the greater field. Students will gain a graduate level understanding of some of the major theoretical models and methods, and some sense of the controversies surrounding them, that characterize the contemporary study of Religion. Students will not only critically engage and analyze these theories and methods, but direct careful attention to the context from which they emerged. Students will be encouraged to engage these approaches in analyzing specific religious beliefs or practices during class discussions and adopt one or more of them in a seminar paper, thus giving them the opportunity to apply them critically to a religious text, belief, or set of practices. Additionally, the paper affords students the opportunity to undertake a research project that should approach the level of sophistication expected for publication in an academic journal. The class presentations on the assigned topics, are aimed at preparing students for participation at future conferences and panels.

Course Requirements.
Students will be required to make weekly presentations on the subject matter, undertake a mid-term exam and two quizzes (more or less corresponding with the different books assigned), and submit a final 15-20 page paper due during the Reading Period. A paper-writing guide is provided all students containing comprehensive instructions on research paper writing. Students will be assessed and graded as follows: class participation and chapter presentations (10%), mid-term exam (20%); two written tests (20%); and research paper (50%).

Required Readings
King, Richard Orientalism and Religion. Routledge, 1999
Additional Recommended Readings:
Eliade, Mircea *The Sacred and The Profane* Orlando: Harcourt, 1959

Week I
**Tue Sept 3rd**
Introduction to the Course

Week II
**Tue Sept 10th**
**Readings:**
*Thinking About Religion, An Introduction to Theories of Religion*, chapters 1-2.
*Thinking About Religion, a Reader*, chapters 1-2

Week III
**Tue Sept 17th**
**Readings:**
*Thinking About Religion, An Introduction to Theories of Religion*, chapters 3-4.
*Thinking About Religion, a Reader*, chapters 3-4
Classic nineteenth century theorists: Max Müller, and Origins; Edward Tylor and ‘the Savage,’ Whitney.

Week IV
**Tue Sept 24th**
**Readings:**
*Thinking About Religion, An Introduction to Theories of Religion*, chapters 5-6.
*Thinking About Religion, a Reader*, chapters 5-6
Week V
Tue Oct 1st
Readings:
Thinking About Religion, An Introduction to Theories of Religion, chapters 7-8.
Thinking About Religion, a Reader, chapters 7-8.
Classic Twentieth Century Theorists: Phenomenology, Max Weber and economic forces,
Kristenson, Malinoski, Otto, Ninian Smart, Hook, Davis.

Week VI
Tue Oct 8th
Readings:
Thinking About Religion, An Introduction to Theories of Religion, chapters 9-10.
Thinking About Religion, a Reader, chapters 9-10.

Week VII
Tue Oct 15th
Readings:
Thinking About Religion, a Reader, chapters, 11-12.
Classic Twentieth Century Theorists (cont): Durkheim and Religious Sociology; Alun Jones
Mircea Eliade; Renni, Conclusion.

Week VIII
Tue Oct 22nd
Readings:
The Invention of World Religions, chapters 1-2. Religion before World Religion;’ Comparative Theology.  Mid-Term Exam.

Week IX
Tue Oct 29th
Readings:
The Invention of World Religions, chapter 3-6. Birth Traumas of a new discipline, Buddhism as a ‘World Religion,’ Philology, the European past and Islam as Semetic Religion.

Week X
Tue Nov 5th
Readings:
The Invention of World Religions, chapter 7-9. Max Müller and classification; Transition into the 20th Century; Hegemony, Troeltsch and European Universalism.
Week XI
Tue Nov 12th
Readings:
Orientalism and Religion, chapter 1-3. Geneologies of Definitions; Disciplining Religion; Sacred texts, hermeneutics and World Religion. Test I.

Week XII
Tue Nov 19th
Readings:
Orientalism and Religion, chapter 4-6. Orientalism; the Myth of Hinduism; Vedanta and the Politics of Representation.

Week XIII
Tue Nov 26th
There is no class this week, due to the substitution of Thursday classes for Tuesday classes, but students are still expected to do the assigned readings
Readings:

Week XIV
Tue Dec 3rd
Readings:
To be determined. Test II.

Week XV
Tue Dec 10th
Conclusory Reflections and paper presentations. Papers due during Reading period.