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 two written exams and submit a final 15 page paper due the last day of class. 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%); two written tests (25% each); and research paper (40%).

Required Readings
Pals, Daniel *Eight Theories of Religion* New York: Oxford University Press, 2006
Masuzawa, Tomoko *The Invention of World Religions*. University of Chicago Press, 2005,
Week I  
Tue Sept 1st  
Introduction to the Course

Week II  
Tue Sept 8th  NO CLASS (all classes switched with Monday’s classes on Rutgers’ academic calender). However, students must keep up with the readings.  
Readings: 
Thinking About Religion, An Introduction to Theories of Religion, chapters 1-3.  

Week III  
Tue Sept 15th  
Readings:  
Thinking About Religion, An Introduction to Theories of Religion, chapters 4-6.  
Edward Tylor and ‘the Savage,’ Whitney; William Smith, Evolution and the Bible; James Fraser and Salvation.

Week IV  
Tue Sept 22nd  
Readings:  
Thinking About Religion, An Introduction to Theories of Religion, chapters 7-9  
Phenomenology; Max Weber and economic forces; Freud and the psyche.

Week V  
Tue Sept 29th  
Readings:  
Malinowski and the ‘sublime folly’ of Religion; Emile Durkhein and religious sociology; Mircea Eliade and the worm of doubt. Conclusion.

Week VI  
Tue Oct 6th  
Readings: Seven Theories of Religion, chapters 1-3  
Tylor, Frazer, Freud, and Durkheim

Week VII  
Tue Oct 13th  
Readings: Seven Theories of Religion, chapters 4-5  
Marx, Eliade Exam I.

Week VIII  
Tue Oct 20th  
Readings: Seven Theories of Religion, chapters 6-8  
Evans Pritchard, Clifford Geertz.
Week IX  
*Tue Oct 27th*  
**Readings:** *The Invention of World Religions*, chapters 1-2. Religion before World Religion; Comparative Theology.

Week X  
*Tue Nov 3rd*  
**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 XI  
*Tue Nov 10th*  
**Readings:** *The Invention of World Religions*, chapter 7-9. Max Müller and classification; Transition into the 20th Century; Hegemony, Troeltsch and European Universalism.

Week XII  
*Tue Nov 17th*  
**Readings:** *Orientalism and Religion*, chapter 1-3. Genealogies of Definitions; Disciplining Religion; Sacred texts, hermeneutics and World Religion.

Week XIII  
*Tue Nov 24th*  
**Readings:** *Orientalism and Religion*, chapter 4-6. Orientalism; the Myth of Hinduism; Vedanta and the Politics of Representation.

Week XIV  
*Tue Dec 1st*  
**Readings:** *Orientalism and Religion*, chapters 7-9. Orientalism and the Discovery of Buddhism; privatization, Hinduism and Mysticism; Religion and Comparativism in the post-Colonial Era. **Exam II.**

Week XV  
*Tue Dec 8th*  
Conclusory Reflections. Final papers due, and paper presentations.