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Fall 2016
Weds 4/5: 2:50–5:50
Bishop House 211

THEORY AND METHOD IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

This course treats theories of religion, with particular attention to issues of theory and method that are of relevance for research at the master's level. We will treat a number of classical theorists such as Mircea Eliade, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Clifford Geertz and also focus attention on important sub-topics such as myth and mythmaking; women and gender; ritual practices; religion and violence; colonialism; and the contributions of cognitive science. The readings are drawn mainly from primary sources and they are organized so as to provoke productive comparisons and counter-point.

Books required for purchase:*

Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory/Ritual Practice* (Oxford, 2009)
Nancy Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion and Paternity* (University of Chicago, 1992)
Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion after September 11* (University of Chicago, 2003)

Course requirements:

1. Attendance, participation (including leading discussion), and reading summaries (roughly 50%). For each class, students will prepare a written reading summaries as follows:
 - a. Summaries will normally run 2–3 pages, single-spaced.
 - b. Summaries must be uploaded to the Sakai site by 12:00 noon each Weds *and* printed out and brought to class. The student leading discussion will send their summary to the instructor by 11:55pm on Tuesday evening.
 - c. Reading summaries may take a variety of forms but they should include an outline of the main arguments and organizing concepts, as well as notes about passages that you find particularly interesting or opaque. As a rule, students should come to class having already asked questions such as: 1) What are the organizing interests, concepts, and arguments of these thinkers? 2) At what points does their thought seem ambiguous or confusing? In other words, “what have I understood and also failed to fully understand?”
 - d. Discussions and peer responses must aim to be generous, respectful, and critical.
2. Final research paper 25–30 pages (roughly 50%), due on the last day of the semester (Friday, Dec. 23, by 5 pm) uploaded to the Sakai site. Students will also give a 10-minute class presentation about their paper during the final weeks of the semester.

* All other readings will be made available on the Sakai course site.

Part I: Classical Theories and Contemporary Critics from E. B. Tylor to Talal Asad

Weds 9/7 Introduction to the course

Weds 9/14 Naturalists and Romantics: The Cases of Tylor and Otto
Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, foreword and preface (i–xix); 1–30; E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. 2, pp. 1–15; 333–45; B. Saller, “E. B. Tylor and the Anthropology of Religion,” *Marburg Journal of Religion* 2.1 (1997) 1–3.

Suggested further readings: Hans Penner, “You Don’t Read a Myth for Information,” in *Radical Interpretation in Religion* (Cambridge, 2002), 153–170; William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Longmans, Green, & Co, 1902); Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (University of California Press, 1985); Matthew Bagger, *Religious Experience, Justification, and History* (Columbia University Press, 2009); R. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Oxford, 1997); R. Orsi, “Fair Game,” *Bulletin of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion* 33/3&4: (2004) 87–89; McCutcheon, “‘It’s a Lie. There’s No Truth in It! It’s a Sin!’: On the Limits of the Humanistic Study of Religion and the Costs of Saving Others from Themselves,” *JAAR* (2006): 720–751; T. Roberts, “Rhetorics of Ideology and Criticism in the Study of Religion,” *JR* 85.3 (2005): 367–389

Weds 9/21 Mircea Eliade and His Critics

M. Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, 1–65; J. Z. Smith, *To Take Place*, 1–23; “The Wobbling Pivot,” in *Map is Not Territory*, 88–103.

Suggested further readings: J. Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark Taylor (University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–284; Edmund Leach, “Sermons by a Man on a Ladder,” *NYRB* Oct (1966): 28–31; Adriana Berger, “Mircea Eliade: Romanian Fascism, and the History of Religions in the United States,” in *Tainted Greatness: Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes* (Temple University Press, 1994), 51–74; McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*; B. Rennie, *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion* (State University of New York Press, 1996).

Weds 9/28 Émile Durkheim: *no class meeting; online forum assignment*
Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (trans. Carol Cosman), selections; Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96.1 (1967): 1–21.

Suggested further readings: Radcliffe-Brown, “The Sociological Theory of Totemism,” in *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (Free Press, 1952); Claude Lévi Strauss, *Totemism* (Beacon, 1952); Émile Durkheim: *Critical Assessments of Leading Sociologists*, ed. Pickering et al. (Routledge, 2001); Terry Godlove, *Religion, Interpretation, and the Diversity of Belief* (Mercer, 1997); T. Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), esp. 34–57; Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

Online forum assignment:

1. By the normal start-time for class (2:50 on Weds), post your reading summaries to the discussion forum (see the Sakai page for week 4).
2. Spend the class time reading and responding to the forum posts of other students (post at least 2 responses by the end of the normal class period).
3. By the following Monday (10/3) at 11:55 pm, post another set of responses to the comments of your peers.

Weds 10/5 Clifford Geertz and Critics

Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," 87–125; "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," 3–30 from *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973); Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz," *Man* 18.2 (1983): 237–259.

Suggested further readings: K. Schilbrack, "Religion, Models of, and Reality: Are We through with Geertz?" *JAAR* 73.2 (2005): 429–452; Alexander, Smith, and Norton, eds., *Interpreting Clifford Geertz: Cultural Investigation in the Social Sciences* (Palgrave, 2011); Stephen Bush, *Visions of Religion Experience, Meaning, and Power* (Oxford, 2014); *Religious Compass* 6.12 (2012) contains a collection of essays devoted to Geertz's work; among others, see Bush, "Are Meanings the Name of the Game? Religion as Symbolic Meaning and Religion as Power," *Religious Compass* 6.12 (2012): 525–53.

Weds 10/12 Weber, Marx, and Colonialism: the Case of "Cargo Cults"

Max Weber, "Types of Authority," 329–373 from *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Free Press, 1964); Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (MacGibbon and Kee, 1968), ix–xxxix; 11–31.

Suggested further readings: Weber, *Sociology of Religion* (Beacon, orig. pub. 1922); *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (orig. 1928); T. Parsons, "Max Weber and the Contemporary Political Crisis: I. The Sociological Analysis of Power and Authority Structures," *Review of Politics* 4.1 (1942): 61–76; S. N. Eisenstadt, "Some Reflections on the Significance of Max Weber's Sociology of Religions for the Analysis of Non-European Modernity," *Archives de sociologie des religions* 16, No. 32 (1971), 29–52; Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Anchor, 1967); Stanley Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets: A Study in Charisma, Hagiography, Sectarianism, and Millennial Buddhism* (Cambridge University Press, 1984); Donald A. Nielsen, "The Incredible Shrinking Protestant Ethic," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 16.4 (2003): 587–598.

Weds 10/19 Cargo Cults and the Millennium

Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, 32–93; 183–194; 221–56

Suggested further readings: Comaroff and Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First thoughts on a Second Coming," *Public Culture* 12 (2000): 291–343; Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (Schocken, 1969); J. Z. Smith, "The Devil in Mr. Jones," in *Imagining Religion* (University of Chicago Press, 1982); Otto Ton, "What Ever Happened to Cargo

Cults?” *Social Analysis* 53.1 (2009) 82–102; see the essays collected in the special issue: “Religiosities Toward a Future: In Pursuit of the New Millennium” *Social Analysis* 53.1 (2009).

Weds 10/26 Abolitionists and Their Critics

T. Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford, 2003), selections; Kevin Schilbrack, “The Social Construction of ‘Religion’ and Its Limits: A Critical Reading of Timothy Fitzgerald,” *M TSR* 24 (2012): 97–117; Fitzgerald, “A Response to Kevin Schilbrack,” *M TSR* 25.1 (2013): 101–106; Schilbrack, “After We Deconstruct ‘Religion,’ Then What? A Case for Critical Realism,” *M TSR* 25.1 (2013) 107–112.

Suggested further readings: Wilfred Cantwell Smith, “‘Religion’ in the West,” in *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Macmillan, 1963), 19–50; J. Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark Taylor (University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–284; Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*; McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (State University of New York Press, 2001); Atalia Omer, “Can a Critic Be a Caretaker too? Religion, Conflict, and Conflict Transformation,” *JAAR* 79.2 (2011): 1–38; S. K. Stowers, “The Ontology of Religion,” in *Introducing Religion: Essays in Honor of Jonathan Z. Smith* (Equinox, 2008), 434–439.

Part II: Sub-topics: Myths, Ritual, Violence, and Cognitive Science

Weds 11/2 Myths and Mythmaking

Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 141–159; *Hymn to Demeter*; *Enuma Elish*

Suggested further readings: Debra Ballentine, *The Conflict Myth in Biblical Tradition* (Oxford, 2015), chap.1; McCutcheon, “Myth,” in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Braun and McCutcheon (Cassell, 2000), 190–208; I. Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth Century History: Cassirer, Eliade, Lévi-Strauss and Malinowski* (University of Iowa Press, 1987).

Weds 11/9 Rituals and Sacrifice: Nancy Jay

Nancy Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity*.

Suggested further readings: Meyers Fortes, *Kinship and the Social Order* (Chicago, 1969), 202–236; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Routledge, 1966); Leslie Goode, “‘Creating descent’ After Nancy Jay: A Reappraisal of Sacrifice and Social Reproduction,” *M TSR* 21 (2009): 383–401; *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice: Images, Acts, Meanings*, ed. Knust and Varhelyi (Oxford University Press, 2011); S. Mahmood, “Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival,” *Cultural Anthropology* 16 (2001): 202–236.

Weds 11/16 Practices, Habitus, and the Social

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, selections; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, selections

Suggested further reading: Schatzki and Natter, *the Social and Political Body* (Guilford, 1996); Erwan Dianteill, "Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Religion: A Central and Peripheral Concern," in *After Bourdieu: Influence, Critique, Elaboration*, ed. Swartz and Zolberg (Kluwer, 2004); *The Sociology of Symbolic Power: A Special Issue in Memory of Pierre Bourdieu* (Dec., 2003) *Theory and Society* 32.5/6 (2003); Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (University of Chicago, 1999); Rogers Brubaker, "Social Theory as Habitus," in *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Calhoun, LiPuma, and Postone (University of Chicago Press, 1993), 212–234; Beate Krause, "Gender and Symbolic Violence: Female Oppression in Light of Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Social Practice," in *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, 156–177; Theodore Schatzki, *The Site of the Social* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

Weds 11/23 *No Class Meeting but See Assignments*

Assignments:

1. Begin reading Bell, *Ritual Theory/Ritual Practice* (for 11/30)
2. Prepare a one-paragraph description of the topic for your research paper, with bibliography; upload to the assignments page by 5:50 pm, 11/23.

Weds 11/30 *Ritual Practices*

Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory/Ritual Practice*, (selections)

Suggested further readings: J. Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Towards and Theory of Ritual* (University of Chicago, 1987); Asad, "Towards a Genealogy of the Concept of Ritual," *Vernacular Christianity: Essays in the Social Anthropology of Religion* (Lilian Barber Press, 1988), 73–87; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969); Tambiah, "A Performative Approach to Ritual," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 65 (1979): 113–169; Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford, 1997).

Weds 12/7 *Cognitive Science: The Return of Big Theory?*

J. Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* (selections); Gardiner and Egler, "The Philosophy and Semantics of the Cognitive Science of Religion," *Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion* 3.1 (2015): 7–35

Paper presentations

Suggested further readings: Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton, 2009); Robert Bellah, *Religion and Human Evolution: from the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Harvard, 2011); E. Slingerland, *What Science Offers the Humanities: Integrating Body and Culture* (Cambridge, 2008); Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained* (Basic, 2001); S. Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds* (Oxford, 1995); Johnson and Bering, "Hand of God, Mind of Man: Punishment and Cognition in the Evolution of Cooperation," *Evolutionary Psychology* 4 (2006) 219–233; Bering, "Intuitive Conceptions of Dead Agents' Minds: The Natural Foundations of Afterlife Beliefs as Phenomenological Boundary," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 2.4 (2002): 263–308.

Weds 12/14 Religion and Violence

B. Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11th*

Paper presentations

Suggested further readings: James W. Jones, *Blood that Cries Out from the Earth* (Oxford, 2012); M. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: the Global Rise of Religious Violence* (University of California, 2000); William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford, 2009); Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); *Apocalypse Observed: Religious Movements and Violence in North America*, Hall, Schuyler, and Trin (Psychology Press, 2000).

Final Papers due on Friday, Dec. 23, at 5 pm, uploaded to the Sakai assignments page.