

Course Outline: Theories in the Study of Religion

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM

Note for students: This short course outline is provided for planning purposes only. Course information is tentative and subject to change; the final course syllabus will be available by the first day of classes.

Course Code

AP/HUMA/RLST 3804 3.0 Theories in the Study of Religion

Course Description

This course introduces students to the foundational theorists and key questions of the academic study of religion. This course examines the lenses through which we view religion, that is, how differing theoretical models shape our understanding of religion as a human phenomenon. In this, it provides students with an overview of the development of the field.

The overall goal is to become familiar with the range of theoretical approaches and history of the field so that we can place ourselves within the stream of critical scholarly thinking about religion. Some of the content of the course will shift from year to year to consider various historical, sociological, psychological, phenomenological, comparative, feminist and/or post-structuralist/literary theoretical approaches. It will expose students to key debates in the study of religion including the history and problems of definitions of religion, the insider/outsider problem, post-colonial critiques and critiques of secularism.

Course Delivery

Delivery Mode: SEMR This course meets in person for three hours once a week. It is a seminar format that focuses on student contributions to discussions and close readings of the texts.

Course Materials

Megan Goodwin and Ilyse Morganstein Fuerst, *Religion is not Done with You*, Penguin Random House, 2024. \$22.95. Available for free through the library.

M. Cooper Minister and Sarah J. Bloesch, eds. *Cultural Approaches to Studying Religion* Bloomsbury Publishers 2nd edition 2023. \$51.16. Available for free through the library.

Bayoumi, Moustafa. "Racing Religion." In *This Muslim American Life*, 48–72. New York, USA: New York University Press, 2020.

Jolyon Baraka Thomas, “Prologue” and “Introduction” *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019.

Tentative Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

Assessment	Weight	Mode	Tentative Deadline
Read and Reflect (Respond to four reading prompts)	60%	There will be four reading prompts to respond to the week’s materials. For each response write 1000-2000 words addressing the questions.	Varies
Engage (Speak in Class discussion)	10%	Much of the work of learning to analyze religion is done through active practice. Therefore, attending seminar, <i>and actively participating</i> is essential. I expect every student to speak every week.	Continual
Compare, Interpret and Synthesize (Analytical paper or project)	30%	Complete an analysis and critique of a Grade 11 World Religions curriculum or a World Religions textbook. Focus on how definitions of religion have real world implications. <i>Choose one</i> of these three formats: Creative Project, Paper or Syllabus.	End of Course
	100%		