

RELIGST 3F03 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION (FALL, 2017)
LRW 1055 MONDAYS, THURSDAYS 12:20 – 1:30 PM

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CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:

“A study of the various ways religious phenomena can be studied, e.g. psychologically, sociologically, philosophically, theologically, comparatively, etc. Attention is also given to the history of the discipline of religious studies.”

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To become familiar with leading scholars in, and influential approaches to, the study of religion;
2. To examine the development of the study of religion from the late 19th to early 21st centuries;
3. To evaluate critically the presuppositions of, and challenges to, the academic study of religion.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Describe key differences in two or more approaches to the study of religion and their historical significance;
2. Develop appropriate questions for future research in religious studies;
3. Evaluate the scholarly debates in the past and present concerning the study of religion as an academic field.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

All texts will be available online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participation and Engagement 25%; Take-Home Exam 25%; Topic Proposal 5%; Research Presentation 10%; Research Paper 35%. NOTE: This is an “active learning” course: regular attendance is required.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

7 SEP	INTRODUCTION		
11 SEP	WAYS TO STUDY RELIGION: SOME PIONEERS		
14 SEP	WAYS TO STUDY RELIGION: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES		
18 SEP	SIMULATION EXERCISE		
21 SEP	SIMULATION DEBRIEF		
25 SEP	J.Z. SMITH	1)“Religion, Religions, Religious” from <i>Critical Terms for Religious Studies</i> , (Mark Taylor, ed.) (This pdf file of a copyrighted work is made available in compliance with McMaster's Fair Dealing Policy.)	
28 SEP	MCCUTCHEON	1)Russell 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.” <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> , Vol. 74, No. 3 (Sep., 2006), pp. 720-750. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4094006 2) Paul B. Courtright, “The Self-Serving Humility of Disciplining Liberal Humanist Scholars: A Response to Russell McCutcheon.” <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> , Vol. 74, No. 3 (Sep., 2006), pp. 751-754. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4094007 3) McCutcheon, “A Response to Courtright.” <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> , Vol. 74, No. 3 (Sep., 2006), pp. 755 - 756. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4094008	

2 OCT	WIEBE	1)Donald Wiebe, "The Role of 'Belief' in the Study of Religion: A Response to W. C. Smith." <i>Numen</i> , Vol. 26, Fasc. 2 (Dec., 1979), pp. 234-249. < http://www.jstor.org/stable/3269722 >	
5 OCT	W.C. SMITH	1)Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "A Reply to a Response." <i>Numen</i> , Vol. 27, Fasc. 2 (Dec., 1980), pp. 247-255.< http://www.jstor.org/stable/3269877 >	
9/12 OCT	READING WEEK		
16 OCT	GEERTZ	1)Clifford Geertz, " Religion as a Cultural System " from <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i> , 1973. (This pdf file of a copyrighted work is made available in compliance with McMaster's Fair Dealing Policy .)	PRELIMINARY PARTICIPATION GRADES RELEASED
19 OCT	ELIADE	1) Mircea Eliade, " Methodological Remarks on Religion's Symbolism " from <i>The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology</i> by Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa (eds.) University of Chicago Press, 1959.	
23 OCT	FREUD	1) Sigmund Freud, <i>The Future of an Illusion</i> < https://archive.org/stream/sigmund-freud-the-future-of-an-illusion/sigmund-freud-the-future-of-an-illusion_djvu.txt >	
26 OCT	DURKHEIM	1)E. Durkheim, <i>The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life</i> , Chap. 1-3 & Conclusion. Available at: < http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/41360 >	
30 OCT	MÜELLER	1) F. Max Müller, "Natural Religion: The Gifford Lectures VI-IX" Available at: < http://www.giffordlectures.org/lectures/natural-religion > 2) E. B. Tylor, "Animism" chapter 11 of <i>Primitive Culture</i> [This book is available online although the free, public domain versions that I've come across are barely acceptable pdf copies of the original publication.]	TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE
2 NOV	BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP	2) Matthew 1 – 3, Mark 1, Luke 1 – 3, John 1. (Any English translation is fine. Find the RSV translation here . [Scroll down to the New Testament.]	
5 NOV	RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS		
9 NOV	RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS		
12 NOV	RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS		
16 NOV	RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS		
19 NOV	RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS		
23 NOV	RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS		
27 NOV	IMPLICIT RELIGION	1) Jedism. < http://www.open.edu/openlearn/whats-on/events/star-wars-vii-can-jediism-be-classed-religion >2)J. Porter, "Implicit Religion in Popular Culture: The Importance of Fan Communities." <i>Implicit Religion</i> , 12.3 (2009) 271–280 (ATLA0001851608)	RESEARCH PAPER DUE 11:59 PM TUES. 28 NOV.
30 NOV	GUEST SPEAKER		
4 DEC	EXAM REVIEW		

THE FINE PRINT:

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or

expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity. The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2. Improper collaboration in group work. 3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AVENUE TO LEARN & TURNITIN.COM

Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor. In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com speak with me immediately. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

MCMASTER STUDENT ABSENCE FORM

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work". Please note these regulations have changed beginning Spring/Summer 2015. The timeframe within which the MSAF is valid has been reduced from 5 days to 3 days. The upper limit for which an MSAF can be submitted has been reduced from 'less than 30%' to 'less than 25%' of the course weight. As per the policy, students must immediately follow up with their instructors to request accommodation for any missed academic work. Failure to do so may negate their relief. If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean's office. **MSAF is now available in MOSAIC Student Center (in the drop-down menu under Academics). Privacy Disclaimer:** By using this tool you understand that some personal information will be submitted to your Faculty Office. ***If you find it necessary to submit the MSAF during this course you must arrange for an extension for any work missed. I do not redistribute grades for missed assignments.***

NOTE ON CHANGES IN THE COURSE

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check her/his McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

SOCIAL SCIENCES FACULTY E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

PERSONAL EMAIL POLICY

I no longer respond to grade queries submitted through email. If you need to discuss a grade in the course please arrange to see me in person. I also do not respond to email messages regarding missed classes. Please arrange to acquire missed notes and other information from a fellow student.

LAPTOPS, TABLETS AND PHONES

There may be times when we will want to access the internet for a classroom activity. As a courtesy to those sitting behind you please ensure that you are discreet and not a distraction to others when using your device(s). Please ensure that your cell phone is on "vibrate" before entering the classroom. (I too will try to remember this!)