Theory and Method II  Spring 2016
REL6036
W 2-4/8:30-11:30
Office Hours: Monday 2-3; Wednesday 11:30-12:30, 3-4

Instructor: Dr. A. Whitney Sanford  Office: 107 Anderson Hall
Email: wsanford@ufl.edu  Telephone: 392-1625

Course Description

This course builds on Method and Theory I, offering a survey of the contemporary theoretical landscape in the study of religion. Following post-modernist and post-structuralist critiques of the essentialist, foundationalist, teleological, and totalizing pretensions of classical methods and theories, this landscape is characterized by a high degree of fragmentation, contestation, fluidity, and cross-fertilization. This craggy and polycentric topography both accompanies and is a response to post-colonialism, globalization, and the emergence of new transportation and communication media, which are decentering the taken-for-granted cartographies of religion, generating increasing religious hybridity, innovation, diversity, and conflicts over orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

The course begins with an examination of the struggles around the legacy of the history of religions approach and the Geertzian phenomenological-hermeneutics synthesis which dominated the study of religion up until the mid-1980s. We will give particular attention to the debate around the viability of category of religion, as well as its implication in power dynamics ranging from colonialism and imperialism to nationalism and capitalism. The second part of the course focuses on emerging directions, themes, tropes, and methods that are likely to define the field of religious studies in the coming years.

Throughout the course, we will discuss various practices associated with the métier of a religion scholar, such as constructing course syllabi and writing and submitting journal articles, grants, and thesis/dissertation proposals. In these discussions, we will place emphasis on the clear and coherent articulation of theoretical assumptions and methodological procedures.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To map out the contours and main “fault lines” of the contemporary theoretical landscape in the academic study of religion

2. To sharpen the students’ capacity to identify and critically evaluate the epistemological and ontological assumptions behind current debates about the “nature” and place of religion.

3. To offer students some hands-on experience in the use of methods and theories in the creation of syllabi, the writing of grant and/or dissertation proposals, and the preparation of articles publishable in scholarly journals.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. **Two-Take Home Exams:** These exams will contain a choice of essay-questions addressing key issues raised in the readings, lectures, and class discussions. The goal of these exams is to test how well students handle concepts, theories, and methods at hand. Since students will have one week to complete the assignments, I expect essays to be not only well-developed, with good grammar, spelling, and syntax, but also analytically substantive, making explicit references to the readings. Each exam will worth be 20% of your final grade, for a total of 40%.

2. **Practicum I: Two Annotated Syllabi (at the undergraduate level):** Students will create two full-fledged syllabi, one for an introductory course and another for an advanced course of their choice. For the introductory course students may selected from the following: Introduction to World Religions, Religions of Asia, Introduction to Islam, Introduction to Christianity, New Testament, Hebrew Scriptures, American Religious History, Religions of Latin America, Religion and Science, Environmental Ethics, Religion and Nature/Ecology, Religion and Society, and Anthropology of Religion. In addition to the syllabi (each with its course description, objectives, required readings, assignments, etc.) students will offer a two-page précis for each class, presenting the theoretical and methodological reasoning behind the choices made (e.g., the textbooks selected, the thematic organization of the course, the type of assignments, etc.). Each syllabus is worth 10% of the final grade, for a total of 20%.

3. **Practicum II: A Grant/Fellowship Proposal or a Draft of a Thesis/Dissertation Proposal.** Following the guidelines of major funding agencies, such as the ACLS, SSRC, NEH, Mellon, Ford, Templeton, MacArthur, and Carnegie, students will elaborate a grant or fellowship proposal to support research for the MA thesis or doctoral dissertation. Alternatively, they will write a draft of their thesis or dissertation proposal, following the guidelines in the Graduate Studies Handbook (see: http://religion.ufl.edu/graduate-studies/handbook/). We will discuss this assignment during the course. This assignment will be worth 15% of your final grade.

4. **Practicum III: A Publishable Review Essay or Journal Article.** In consultation with the instructor, students will review at least three influential books on a particular topic, debate, and sub-field in the contemporary study of religion. Topics, debates, or sub-fields may include: religion and gender, religion and material culture, religion and popular culture, religion and visual media, religion and post-colonialism, religion and the cognitive sciences, religion and globalization, new approaches to textual and historical analysis, etc. The review, which will be 10-12 pages in length, will follow all the specifications required by scholarly journals such as JAAR or Religious Studies Review. It will place special emphasis on the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the works under evaluation. I will provide more detailed instructions later in the course. This assignment will be worth 20% of your final grade.

5. **Attendance and Active Participation.** Since this course is a small advanced seminar, attendance is **mandatory.** Absences will be allowed only under very special circumstances, such as a medical emergency, which will need to be properly documented.
Students are expected to read all the assigned material carefully before coming to class and to participate actively in group discussions. As part of the participation grade, students will post a substantive but brief query or comment connected with the readings assigned for Wednesday by the preceding Tuesday at 10 PM. The aim of these queries/comments is not only to show that the students have done the readings, but also to shape the lectures and conversations on Monday. The instructor reserves the right to give quizzes at any time (in case students are not doing the readings). Attendance and participation represent 5% of your final grade.

**Grading Scale**

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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Grades are consistent with UF policy as stated here: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

**POLICIES AND RULES**

**Late or Make-Up Assignments**

You may take an exam early or receive an extension on an exam or essay assignment only in extraordinary circumstances and with prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down ½ grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

**Attendance and Participation**

Class attendance is required. Poor attendance will harm your course grade. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day’s readings.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

**Honor Code**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required
or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

**Common Courtesy**

Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls during class will be asked to leave. You may take notes on a laptop computer, although the instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer if circumstances warrant. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class.

**Conferences**

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor during office hours or by appointment.

**Accommodation for Disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**Counseling Resources**

Resources available on-campus for students include the following:
1. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling;
2. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling;
3. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling;
4. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

**Software Use**

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

**Online Course Evaluation**
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu.

**Readings**
Required books:


**Additional Readings**
These readings are available either through Canvas or Ares Course reserves.

**READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**I. Contesting and Defending the Foundations of Religious Studies**
**01/06: The Struggle over the History of Religions Research Programme**
Readings:
-- McCutcheon, Manufacturing Religion, Chapter 3, pp. 74-100.

01/13: The Struggle over the Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Research Programme
Readings:
-- Vásquez, Manuel, More than Belief, pp. 87-121, 211-229.

Methodological Interlude I: Reference and database systems

01/20: Entry into Postmodernity: Anti-Essentialism and the Struggle over the Category of Religion
Readings:

Methodological Interlude II: Constructing a Course Syllabus January 20

01/27: Genealogy and the Category of Religion
Readings:
-- McCutcheon, Manufacturing Religion, read all remaining chapters (Intro, 1-2, 4-7).


Methodological Interlude III: Submitting a Scholarly Article

**02/03: World Religions as Colonial Constructs**
Readings:


-- Tomoko Masuzawa, “Preface” and “Introduction,” in *The Invention of World Religions or How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. ix-36.

-- Reid Locklin, Tracy Tiemeier, and Johann Vento, “Teaching World Religions without Teaching ‘World Religions.’” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 15/2 (2012): 159-181.

Methodological Interlude IV: Digital Humanities

*** Practicum I Due on Friday, February 12th at 4 pm ***

**02/10: Assessing Post-Modern and Post-Colonial Approaches: Is Comparison Still Possible?**
Readings:


Methodological Interlude V: Submitting a Grant/ Fellowship Proposals

II. Promising New Directions

02/17: Practice, Performance, and Lived Religion

Readings:


-- Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, read Introduction and Chapters 1, 3, and 5-6.


Methodological Interlude VI: Crafting Thesis and Dissertation Proposals

02/24 Class moved to 02/22 Scudder Lecture – Mark C. Taylor visit

Readings:
-- Taylor, *Recovering Place: Reflections on Stone Hill*
-- Taylor, “End the University as We Know It.”

*** First Take-Home Exam (Section I) due on Friday, February 26th at 4pm ***

03/02: Spring Break. No Class

03/9: Power: Domination and Resistance

Readings:

*** Practicum II Due on Friday, March 11 at 4PM ***

**03/16: Religion, Popular Culture, and Materiality: The End of the Text?**
Readings:
-- Chidester, *Authentic Fakes*, read all.

  Methodological Interlude VII: Publishing a Review Essay

**03/23: Old and New Media: Religion, (Hyper)Reality, and Virtuality**
Readings:

Methodological Interlude VIII: Publishing a Journal Article

**03/30: Religion and Embodiment I: Sexuality and Gender**

Readings: Saba, *Politics of Piety*, read all.


Methodological Interlude IX: Applying for Jobs in Academia

**04/06: Religion and Embodiment II: Conversations with Cognitive Psychology, Evolution, the Neurosciences, and “Performance Studies.”**

Readings:

-- Justin Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* Read all.


*** Practicum III due on Friday, April 8th at 4 PM ***

**04/13: Can Social Constructionist Theories of Religion be Reconciled with the Natural Sciences?**

Readings:


Methodological Interlude X: Applying for Jobs Outside Academia
04/20: Religion, Space, Mobility, and Relationality

Readings:


*** Final Exam (Section II) due Wednesday, April 27 at 5PM ***
Writing Assignments Rubric

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<p>| INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE | The paper demonstrates that the author fully understands and has applied concepts learned in the course. Concepts are integrated into the writer’s own insights. The writer provides concluding remarks that show analysis and synthesis of ideas. | The paper demonstrates that the author, for the most part, understands and has applied concepts learned in the course. Some of the conclusions, however, are not supported in the body of the paper. | The paper does not demonstrate that the author has fully understood and applied concepts learned in the course. |
| TOPIC FOCUS | The topic is focused narrowly enough for the scope of this assignment. A thesis statement provides direction for the paper, either by statement of a position or hypothesis. | The topic is focused but lacks direction. The paper is about a specific topic but the writer has not established a position. | The topic is too broad for the scope of this assignment. |
| DEPTH OF DISCUSSION | In-depth discussion &amp; elaboration in all sections of the paper. | In-depth discussion &amp; elaboration in most sections of the paper. | The writer has omitted pertinent content or content runs-on excessively. Quotations from others outweigh the writer’s own ideas excessively. |
| COHESIVENESS | Ties together information from all sources. Paper flows from one issue to the next without the need for headings. Author's writing demonstrates an understanding of the relationship among material obtained from all sources. | For the most part, ties together information from all sources. Paper flows with only some disjointedness. Author's writing demonstrates an understanding of the relationship among material obtained from all sources. | Sometimes ties together information from all sources. Paper does not flow - disjointedness is apparent. Author's writing does not demonstrate an understanding of the relationship among material obtained from all sources. |
| SPELLING &amp; GRAMMAR | No spelling &amp;/or grammar mistakes. | Minimal spelling &amp;/or grammar mistakes. | Noticeable spelling &amp; grammar mistakes. | Unacceptable number of spelling and/or grammar mistakes. |</p>
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<th>SOURCES</th>
<th>More than 5 current sources, of which at least 3 are peer-review journal articles or scholarly books. Sources include both general background sources and specialized sources. Special-interest sources and popular literature are acknowledged as such if they are cited. All web sites utilized are authoritative.</th>
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