

Studying Religion: Theories and Methods (Religion 3000)

Professor Elizabeth Jemison
Spring 2017 ~ Hardin 201
Tuesday / Thursday 3:30-4:45

Instructor

Dr. Elizabeth L. Jemison, Assistant Professor of Religion

Office: 220 Hardin Hall

Email: ejemiso@clemson.edu (Email is the best way to reach me.)

Email policy: 1) I try to reply to students' emails within 24 hours M-F and 48 hours over the weekend. If I haven't replied, please email me again. 2) I expect a similar response if I send an email to an individual student with a concern or question. Ignoring emails directly to you will hurt your participation grade.

Office phone: 864-656-2001 (It's hard for me to get messages; email me instead of calling).

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 1-3pm

If you have a course, work, sport, or other conflict during my office hours, I am more than happy to meet at other times. Email me well in advance so we can find a mutually convenient time. I expect each student to come to my office hours at least one (1) time by Thursday, March 9 (when your final paper topic is due). But you're welcome to come by often!

Catalog Description & Student Learning Outcomes

Religion 3000 is a discussion- and presentation-based seminar in which students read the writings of the great theorists of religion since the eighteenth century. Social scientific, phenomenological, and cultural approaches to the study of religion will be explored. Basic methodologies and tools for studying religion will also be introduced.

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

- Articulate the key arguments of many major theorists of religion from the eighteenth century to the present.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply these theoretical perspectives to a new phenomenon through analytical writing.
- Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and methods in Religious Studies.
- Identify the value and limitations of definitions of religion.
- Increase critical thinking skills.

Thinking Critically about Religion

Religion 3000, when I teach it, is a Clemson Thinks² course. Clemson Thinks² courses aim to increase students' critical thinking skills. Stated simply, critical thinking is the art of "thinking about thinking." The readings and assignments for this course will augment your skill at this art. Critical thinking is at the heart of what a university education promises, and rigorous humanities courses are an indispensable tool to build this skill. Measuring the success of this critical thinking course and the transferability of critical thinking skills is of importance to Clemson. Consequently the university requires that all students enrolled in critical thinking courses take the California Critical Thinking Skills Test at the start of the semester as well as at the end. For more on Clemson Thinks², see <http://www.clemson.edu/assessment/thinks2/>

The Clemson Thinks² program requires the collection of ‘artifacts’ of student work. The response papers and final paper will serve as student artifacts for this purpose.

Honor Code

“As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson’s vision of this institution as a ‘high seminary of learning.’ Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form.”
(Undergraduate Catalogue)

I take any suspected case of academic dishonesty very seriously because academic integrity is at the core of what we undertake both in this class and at Clemson University. In this course, adhering to the Academic Integrity Policy means that a student neither gives nor receives aid on a quiz or exam and is the sole author of any written work submitted for credit. You must cite the source of any idea or quotation that is not your own. Obviously, actions such as copying material from the internet without citation or paying someone else to write a paper for you constitute violations of the honor code. Students may form study groups in order to prepare for tests and are permitted to discuss their papers with one another prior to submission.

Attendance and Electronics Policy

“The academic resources of Clemson University are provided for the intellectual growth and development of students. Class attendance is critical to the educational process; therefore, students should attend scheduled courses regularly if they are to attain their academic goals . . . A student with an excessive number of absences may be withdrawn at the discretion of the course instructor.”
(Undergraduate Catalogue)

For the purpose of this class, “excessive number of absences” is equal to one-third or more of the total class meetings. In the unlikely event that I am more than fifteen minutes late and have not sent a message to the class, you may leave without penalty.

Cell phones and laptops are prohibited in class. Please take notes with pen and paper. Your cell phone and / or laptop should remain in your bag and should be silent. I reserve the right to ask any student who uses electronic devices in class to leave. I have this classroom technology policy not because I am a Luddite (a term meaning someone who is afraid of or averse to technological innovation), but because I want all of us to engage fully in our work together without distraction. Studies have shown that you will actually learn more if you hand write your notes than if you type them (to say nothing of the distractions presented by email, texting, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and the rest). See the evidence: <http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2014/05/24/taking-notes-bring-pen-skip-computer/e3kGp47M7znyaNKOamUwrO/story.html>. And again: <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Benefits-of-No-Tech-Note/228089/>

Inclement Weather Policy

Any quiz or assignment that was scheduled at the time of a class that was cancelled due to inclement weather, power outages, etc. will be rescheduled for the next class meeting.

Disability Access Statement

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should make an appointment with Dr.

Margaret Camp (656-6848), Director of Disability Services, to discuss specific needs within the first month of classes. Students should present a Faculty Accommodation Letter from Student Disability Services when they meet with instructors. Accommodations are not retroactive and new Faculty Accommodation Letters must be presented each semester.

Title IX (Sexual Harassment) Statement

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, genetic information or protected activity (e.g., opposition to prohibited discrimination or participation in any complaint process, etc.) in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This policy is located at <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix/>. Mr. Jerry Knighton is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator. He also is the Director of Access and Equity. His office is located at 111 Holtzendorff Hall, 864.656.3181 (voice) or 864.565.0899 (TDD).

Required Texts

Daniel L. Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2015) ISBN: 9780199859092

Daniel L. Pals, *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists* (Oxford University Press, 2009). ISBN: 9780195181494

Additional Readings Posted to Canvas. These are marked (C) below.

Course Assignments, Workload, and Grading

Class Participation – 15%

Active, engaged participation in this course requires careful preparation inside and outside of class. You will need to read thoroughly and think critically about the assigned readings before class. I expect each student to contribute regularly to class discussions, and the quality of these contributions matters more than the quantity. Asking a good question can be very helpful to the class discussion. If you find yourself feeling shy or having difficulty joining our discussion, please talk to me about this concern in my office hours. I want to help each of you find ways to participate in our class discussion. Repeated tardiness and unexcused absences will lower your participation grade, as will failure to attend office hours by March 9.

Response Papers – 40%

Ten times in the semester (noted below), you will write an analytical response paper of 300-500 words. These papers are due Monday evenings and should address the readings assigned for the previous Thursday and the next day (Tuesday). Each paper should be double-spaced, proofread, and emailed as a Word document to me with "REL 3000 Response Paper" in the subject line.* Each response paper should address two or more of the following questions.

1. What is the primary question or problem that the author sets out to answer?
2. What is the author's major conclusion or central argument?
3. How would the author define "religion," and what would the author understand as the purpose or value of a "theory of religion"?
4. How does the author defend this argument and this idea of religion? What type of evidence and what methods of interpretation does he /she use?
5. What are the strengths of this argument and approach? What are its limitations? What is revealed--and hidden--through the use of this method?

6. How would you challenge this figure's argument and approach? How would you mount a counter argument?

The response paper should conclude with at least one substantial analytical question for class discussion. Response papers will become anonymous artifacts for Clemson Thinks².

*I reserve the right to change the method of submission as I learn Canvas better.

Religion in the News Presentation – 5%

Each student will each make one 5-8 minute oral presentation using the course material to analyze a recent news event. You will sign up for a day to present a recent news article (or news video) about religion from within the past 6 months. The presentation must include analysis of how at least one theorist we have studied would analyze the religious elements of this news story. Presenters should display the article on the projector for the class, and should give a one-page version of the presentation to Dr. Jemison so that she can follow along (i.e. print one for yourself and one for me).

Final Paper Topic Statement – 5% – March 9

Each student must choose a final paper topic, in consultation with Prof. Jemison. The statement of topic (instructions for which will be posted on Canvas) must be submitted before class (3:30pm) on March 9.

Presentation on Final Paper – 10% - April 25 or 27

Each student will make a formal class presentation of the topic and the argument of his or her final paper. Other students will ask questions of the presenter. The time allotted to each presentation will be determined based on the final class enrollment numbers.

Final Paper: - 25% - Friday, May 5 at 11:30AM.

Your final paper will be a polished essay of 8-10 pages that uses the theories and methods that we have discussed to analyze a phenomenon as religion that is not an organized religion. Is Clemson football a religion? Or environmentalism? Or sorority life? Your paper will make the case that the phenomenon you have chosen should be considered 'religion' by providing a definition of religion, and then will use the approaches to studying religion that we have discussed to analyze this phenomenon. Late papers will not be accepted. Final papers will become anonymous artifacts for the Clemson Thinks² program.

There may be one or more opportunities for extra credit over the course of the semester. Pay attention in class to learn about possible opportunities to attend a lecture or event on campus and write a brief report on its relevance to our course for extra credit.

Course Schedule: Readings and Assignments

Thursday, January 12 – Course Introduction and Overview

Tuesday, January 17 – What is the Study of Religion?

**Critical Thinking Test must be completed before class.

“Introduction” in Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 1-13.

“Introduction” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, xiii-xxvi.

Thursday, January 19 – What are the limits of Religious Studies frameworks?

Catherine Bell, “Paradigms behind (And before) the Modern Concept of Religion” (C)

Carl Ernst, *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*, 1-11, 28-56. (C)

Response Paper #1 Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, January 24 – Evolutionary Approaches to Religion

“Animism and Magic: E.B. Tylor and J.G. Frazer” in Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 15-48.

Thursday, January 26 – E.B. Tylor

“Animism and the Origin of Religion: E. B. Tylor” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 1-36.

Response Paper #2 on Tylor and Frazer Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, January 31 – James Frazer

“Magic and the Rise of Religion” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 37-70.

Thursday, February 2 – Sigmund Freud & Psychology of Religion

“Religion and Personality” in Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 49-80.

Response Paper #3 on Freud Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, February 7 – Sigmund Freud Part 2

“Religion as Neurosis” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 71-98.

Thursday, February 9 – Émile Durkheim & Religion in Society

“Society as Sacred” in Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 81-112.

Response Paper #4 on Durkheim Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, February 14 – Durkheim Part 2

“The Social as Sacred: ‘Emile Durkheim’” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 99-143.

Thursday, February 16 – Karl Marx & Materialist Approaches to Religion

“Religion as Alienation” in Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 113-143.

Response Paper #5 on Marx Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, February 21 – Marx Part 2

“Religion as Agent of Economic Oppression” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 143-170.

Thursday, February 23 – Max Weber & Sociology of Religion

“A Source of Social Action” in Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 143-184.

Response Paper #6 on Weber Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, February 28 – Weber Part 2

“Religion and Culture Interwoven” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 237-170.

Thursday, March 2 – Williams James and Religious Experience

“The Verdict of Religious Experience” in Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 185-226.

Response Paper #7 on William James Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, March 7 – William James Part 2

“The Testimony of Religious Experience” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 171-204.

Final Paper Topic Statement Due to Canvas by class on March 9.

Thursday, March 9 – Mircea Eliade & Phenomenological Approaches to Religion
“The Reality of the Sacred” in Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 227-262.

Response Paper #8 on Eliade Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, March 14 – Eliade Part 2

“Religion as Response to the Sacred” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 271-308.

Thursday, March 16 – Rudolph Otto & The Idea of the Holy

“Religion and the Sense of the ‘Numinous’” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 205-236.

Spring Break – Enjoy! And wear sunscreen!

Tuesday, March 28 – Clifford Geertz & Religion as a Cultural System

“Religion as a Cultural System” in Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 293-324

Thursday, March 30 – Clifford Geertz

“Religion as World View and Ethic” in Pals, *Introducing Religion*, 341-372.

Response Paper #9 on Geertz & Asad Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, April 4– Talal Asad & the Anthropological Approach

Talal Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category” (C)

Thursday, April 6 – NO CLASS. Prof. Jemison will be in [Indianapolis](#).

Tuesday, April 11 – Mary Douglas & Religious Boundaries

Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 1-50. (C)

Thursday, April 13 – Theorizing American Religion and Popular Culture

Robert Bellah “Civil Religion in America” (C)

Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 2004), 1-15 (C)

Response Paper #10 Due Monday at 9PM

Tuesday, April 18 – Theoretical Models for the Study of American Religion

David Chidester “The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, & the Potlatch of Rock 'n' Roll: Theoretical Models for the Study of Religion in American Popular Culture” (C)

Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., “Of the Black Church and the Making of a Black Public,” (C)

Thursday, April 20 – That’s Religion?

Kathryn Lofton, “Reading Religiously: The Ritual Practices of Oprah's Book Club.” (C)

[Additional reading TBD]

Tuesday, April 25 – Final Student Presentations

Thursday, April 27 – Final Student Presentations

Final Paper and Clemson Thinks Test Due Friday, May 5 by 11:30AM