



RSOC 9: Ways of Understanding Religion
Religious Studies Department
Santa Clara University

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Office: Kenna 317

Office Hours: 10:30-11:30 am Monday and 2:10 - 3:10 pm Wednesday.

Appointments outside office hours can be made as well. Office hours during exam week are by appointment only.

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Class: Kenna 111, M, W, F 1:00 – 2:05

Course Description

Introduces the categories by which religion is formally studied. Explores distinct perspectives or ways of thinking about religion (e.g., psychological, phenomenological, anthropological, theological, and sociological); also considers a variety of religious data (e.g., symbols, myths, rituals, theologies, and modern communities).

Objectives

This course explores various non-religious ways of understanding religion by developing the vocabulary and conceptual tools used in the academic study of religion. The class brings together many fields of study and applies the different approaches to develop an understanding of the basic features of the world's leading religions. Students will gain exposure to the various ways the sacred is expressed (e.g., ritual, scripture, symbol) and methods used to investigate these expressions (e.g., anthropological, psychological, sociological) in different cultures and traditions (e.g., Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism). Students will develop an appreciation for the followers and wisdom of the religious traditions of the world not only through text and video but also through "hands-on" experience with unfamiliar living religious traditions through in-class visitors and out-of-class investigation.

The goal of such examination is the development of respectful, critical, informed and insightful approaches to understanding religion and engaging in comparative analysis. Thus, the primary course objectives are the following:

1. Students will be able to describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from the major religious traditions, and from at least two globally distinct regions;
2. Students will be able to use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence.

Required Text:

Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion (6th Edition), James C. Livingston.

Additional readings posted on ANGEL and on the Thomson Learning Resource Center.

Assessment and Grading:

- ∞ **Class attendance and participation:** This involves on-time attendance, engagement in class activities, cooperative and considerate classroom etiquette, small and large group discussions, and a group project. (15%)
- ∞ **Introductory Essay** (2 pages, double spaced): Write a brief reflection in which you introduce yourself and describe your expectations about becoming a student of the academic study of religion. (5%) Include any information that you think will be helpful for me to know you better, not just what is specifically relevant to this course. In addition, please include any previous experience you have in studying religion. Please describe what you hope to get out of this course (including topics of interest not covered in the readings), what challenges or difficulties you anticipate, what you will need to do to be successful in achieving your goals for the course, and how you will know if you have been successful in achieving your expectations. Be true to yourself in reflecting on the role of this course in your education and in relation to your sense of self and your place in the world.
- ∞ **Quizzes:** These are short, pop quizzes on the assigned readings that encourage and reward keeping up with the assigned readings. (20%) The questions are designed to be very simple for those who have done the reading. Generally given at the start of the class, there are *no makeup* quizzes unless you provide me with a legitimate reason (e.g., medical or family emergency; athletic event, etc.) *prior* to class.
- ∞ **Mid-term Examination:** The format will include short essay and multiple choice questions. A study guide will be distributed one week prior to the mid-term examination. (20%) [The essay questions in particular require the application of *critical thinking* with some *comparison*.]
- ∞ **Group Investigation/Student Teach/ Compare & Reflect:** (20% total) Having gained an understanding of the methodological approaches and themes in the investigation of religions, students will form groups that will put into practice these theories and concepts in the field by visiting a religious site and observing participants in their religious practice and then bringing these findings back to the classroom to share. (5%) [These assignments require the application of the tools learned and encourage *reflection* on the various dimensions of religion. The entire, multi-dimensional assignment culminates in the writing of a short paper (5 pages) (15%). [The writing assignment for this project will comprise three sections: first, a “thick *description*” of

this event/experience with a particular focus on the topic the student has chosen. The second phase of this exercise entails students teaching each other about their area of investigation in a comparative manner. Each religion's group will first practice teaching each other, and then all of those who investigated a particular topic, such as Concepts of God, will teach each other about this idea in the different religions visited. Similarly those who investigate ritual, soteriology, symbols, the human problem, etc. will teach those of the shared topic. The result is a comparative discussion in which distinctions are examined between both *eastern and western forms of religion*, as well as between traditional so-called *world religions and new religious movements*. In the second part of the written assignment, each student will *compare* their chosen tradition with one they learn about in the student teach; and third, a *reflection* and assessment of how this project impacted one's own beliefs. **The Fieldwork Paper** will be a minimum of five pages in length, maximum of six; double spaced].

- ∞ **Final Examination:** The format will include short essay and multiple choice questions. A study guide will be distributed one week prior to the final examination. (20%) [The essay questions in particular require the application of *critical thinking* with some *comparison*.]

Important Information about Course Requirements:

Exam Materials: Students must bring in blue books two classes ahead of the midterm and final exam. You may not take an exam without a blue book handed in before the day of the exam.

Exam Make-ups: Make-ups are at my discretion and will only be given if you have a doctor's note or documentation of an emergency. Make-ups can only be taken during my office hours. If you cannot make up an exam during my office hours, you will not be permitted to make up the exam. I do not give make-ups based on travel plans. If you have travel plans that conflict with any of the exams, you will not be permitted to make up the exam. **Athletes:** if you cannot take an exam because of a game or tournament, then the athletic department must provide a room and proctor for you to take the exam or you will not be allowed to make it up. I will not personally offer make-ups for athletes, nor will I proctor them.

Quiz Make-ups: They do not exist. You must be present, and usually punctual, to take a quiz.

Classroom Etiquette: No tolerance policy for cell phones and PDA's: If you wish to be in this class, you must turn off and put away all cell phones and PDA's. Any use of cell phones or PDA's in this class (in your lap, on the desk, etc.) will lower your participation by one full grade or more regardless of the rest of your participation in class. If your cell phone/PDA is out and on, even if you are not using it, you risk losing credit for class participation that day, in addition to lowering your over-all participation grade. They cannot be in your lap, on the desk, or out in any way. They must be physically turned off and in a bag. The safest measure if you wish to earn a good participation grade is not to bring them to class.

Respect in the Classroom: The atmosphere in the classroom will be one of respect, both for me and for each other. Open discussion is taken for granted, but disruption will not be tolerated. If you are disrupting the class, I will give you a first warning. A second warning might include a request for you to leave the classroom. A third warning will entail your departure from the classroom.

Participation and Preparation for class: Students will be graded on participation and effort in the groups and in regular class lectures. Nothing will harm your success in this class faster than thinking all you need to do is show up. Preparation, attendance and participation are key.

The Index Card: at the beginning of every class for which there is scheduled reading students must bring in an index card with the below questions answered. These are not quizzes. They are simply to show evidence that you have read, to what level you have grasped the information, and to help focus lecture. They will be factored into your participation grade.

1. What was easiest to understand about the reading? One to three sentences.
 2. What was hardest to understand about the reading? One to three sentences.
- * Optional: include any questions about the reading.

Attendance: in this classroom will be closely monitored. This not only helps me learn your name, but alerts me in time to pre-empt avoidable problems with absenteeism. Numerous unexplained absences are not acceptable. Stuff happens, but I want to know about it. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting the notes and hand-outs from a fellow student who is part of your "buddy" group. Only if you have contacted all team members and no one has responded to you should you ask me for the material.

Students receive two grace absences. Persistent tardiness and early departure from class will hurt your grade. Staring out the window, sleeping in class, chattering to neighbors when not in group discussion, and or putting your head down has the consequence of the offending student's receiving no credit for attendance.

Laptops: I do not permit the use of laptops in my classroom unless you have an official form from the Drahmman Center explaining that you have a special need. You must take notes by hand.

Grading Scale:

95%-100%	A	73%-76%	C
90%-94%	A-	70%-72%	C-
87%-89%	B+	67%-69%	D+
83%-86%	B	63%-66%	D
80%-82%	B-	60%-62%	D-
77%-79%	C+	59% & below	F

Other Resources:

The course website on ANGEL will be an important place to find course requirements and procedures, exam study guides, etc. In hopes of reducing the amount of paper, all course materials and communications will be posted on ANGEL.

Students will evaluate the course formally at mid-term by survey and at the end of the quarter by the narrative evaluation provided by the Religious Studies department.

Disability Accommodation Policy:

To receive academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in Benson 216. The phone number is 408-554-4109 or inquiries can be emailed to Robin Cole, Administrative Associate, rcole@scu.edu. Students must register with Disabilities Resources and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic accommodations.

Academic Honesty:

Cheating in any way will not be tolerated. If you are caught cheating on an exam or quiz, you will fail the assignment and possibly the entire course. If you are caught plagiarizing material, you will receive no credit for the assignment and might fail the entire course.

Academic Integrity Policy:

The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of F for the course. In addition, a student found guilty of a dishonest act may be subject to sanctions up to and including dismissal from the University as a result of the student judicial process as described in the *Community Handbook*. A student who violates copyright laws, including those covering the copying of software programs, or who knowingly alters official academic records from this or any other institution is subject to similar disciplinary action.

COURSE SCHEDULE*

	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignment</u>	<u>In Addition</u>
Week 1	<i>Introduction</i>		
Sep 21	Syllabus		
Sep 23	Using "Disorientation"	Posted On Angel: Delaney's "Disorientation"	Field Assignment in class
Sep 25	What is Religion?	Livingston "What is Religion?" Ch. 1	
Week 2	<i>Ways of Studying Religion</i>		
Sep 28	"	Ch. 2 (pp. 15 - 26)	
Sep 30	"	Ch. 2 (pp. 26 – 32)	
Oct 2	Why Religion?	Ch. 10 (pp. 211 – 227)	Due: Introductory Essay
Week 3	<i>The Sacred/ God/ Concepts of the Divine</i>		
Oct 5	The Sacred & Concepts	Ch 3. (pp. 37 – 45) Ch 8. (pp. 153 – 163)	
Oct 7	Concepts of the Divine	Ch 8. (pp. 163 - 171) * Special Mass	Special Mass today: Please Attend/ observe/ participate
Oct 9	"	Ch 8. (pp. 171 – 179)	
Week 4	<i>Soteriology</i>		
Oct 12	The Ways of Salvation & Liberation	Ch. 13 (pp. 287 - 300; 308 – 309; 329 – 333)	
Oct 14	"	Ch. 13 (pp. 300 – 307; 309 - 317)	
Oct 16	The Goals	Ch. 13 (pp. 317 – 329)	

Week 5	<i>Symbol, Myth and Ritual</i>		
Oct 13	Symbol & Myth	Ch 4. (pp. 53 – 58; 63 – 64; 67 – 68)	Bring in Blue Book
Oct 7	Ritual	Ch. 5 (pp. 74 – 89)	
Oct 9	“	Ch. 5 (pp. 89 – 93)	
Week 6	<i>Midterm Preparation for Fieldwork</i>		
Oct 26	MIDTERM		MIDTERM
Oct 28	Field work groups Organized		
Oct 30	Field Research Preparation	Library research on topic and tradition	
[Oct 30 - Nov 2]	Field Research	Out of class fieldwork completed	FIELDWORK OUT OF CLASS
Week 7	<i>In Class Teach</i>		
Nov 2	Religion Groups Prepare		
Nov 4	Topic Groups Teach		
Nov 6	Findings; Reflections; Comparative Consideration		
Week 8	<i>Ethics & Sociology</i>		
Nov 9	“	Ch. Ethics Ch 12 (pp. 259-272 stop first full paragraph on “Amos”)	
Nov 11	“	Ch 12 (pp. 274-283; 278-282)	
Nov 13	Society & the Sacred	Ch. 7 (pp. 124 – 127; 136 – 147)	

Week 9	<i>Religious Experience</i>		
Nov 16	Mystics	TBA/ Posted on Angel	Assignment Due: The Fieldwork Paper
Nov 18	"	TBA/ Posted on Angel	
Nov 20	The Status and Roles of Women	Ch 15 (pp. 361 - 373)	
Week 10	<i>Academic Holiday</i>		
Nov 23	No class		
Nov 25	No class		
Nov 27	No class		
Week 11	<i>Contemporary Challenges</i>		
Nov 30	The Status and Roles of Women	TBA/ Posted on Angel	
Dec 2	Secularization & Fundamentalism Religion and the State	Ch. 14 (pp. 341 – 357) Ch. 15 (pp. 386 – 393)	
Dec 4	What is Religion?	Review	
	<i>Exam Week</i>		
Dec 7	Final Exam		9:10 – 12:10 am
Dec 9			

* changes to schedule may occur