

RSOC 9: Ways of Understanding Religion
Prof. Philip Boo Riley
priley@scu.edu ; 408 554 2199; Office: Kenna 300B

Fall Quarter, 2017
MWF 11:45 a.m., Kenna 304 and 2:15 p.m., Kenna 105
Office Hours: F, 1-2:00 p.m. & by appt.

Preface

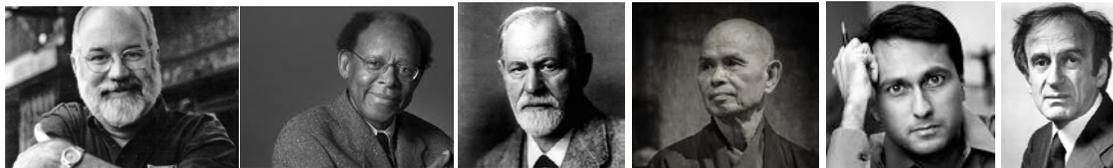
Over one hundred years ago Robert Eastman figured out how to produce and market the Kodak camera and film technology that yielded “snapshots.” That innovation gave rise to a new cultural practice, the family photo album. Families began to think about themselves differently as they made decisions about what, where, and whom to photograph, how to organize the resulting snapshots, and for whom. While its death knell as a physical object is old news, it is still a useful metaphor to invoke for this course: we are together preparing something like a photo album. The schedule, readings and assignments provide structure for the photo album, but you will be filling it in over the next eleven weeks, with annotations and reflections on texts, insights into different faith traditions, class discussions, your field work for the course project, and (yes, sadly) exams.

There is another sense in which the photo album metaphor works for this course: the selections I have made to represent various traditions are like snapshots taken at a particular place and time, and as the quarter progresses we will attend to the narratives we construct when we place them next to each other in our photo album. The character and meaning of our photo album, what holds all this together, will emerge as the course unfolds, each section or day providing another, ideally richer and more grounded, insight into what we are up to.

Overview

This RTC 1 course focuses on ways to think about religion, with a special interest in how religion plays out in public life. We read authors who engage our interest from within different traditions (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Atheism) and we develop categories through which to analyze their engagements and think about issues and questions they may raise.

Texts



- Gregory Boyle, S.J., *Tattoos on the Heart* (Free Press, 2010)
- James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Orbis, 2011)
- Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, tr. J. Strachey (W.W. Norton, 1989)
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Begins Here: Palestinians and Israelis Listening to Each Other* (Parallax Press, 2004)
- Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith* (Beacon Press, 2010)
- Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006)

Because our readings are not textbooks, they require a particular kind of engagement. Indeed, much of our time this quarter will be devoted to discussing ways to engage texts like these and to use them as springboards for discussion and reflection.

Community as Text

The course includes an independent project on religion in Silicon Valley. It will take students off campus several times during the quarter. As with the text for this class, students will expend time

engaging the site chosen for their project, incur expenses (transportation), and ideally will learn something new.

Outcomes

A simple approach to outcomes is to pose a question, What will students get out of this course?

The University answered that question with two “learning objectives” for all RTC 1 courses:

- “Describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions.”
- “Use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence.” (2017-18 Core Curriculum Guide, p. 11)

Although not a perfect match (For reasons we will discuss in the first week, we try not to study religions by isolating their “central ideas...and practices”), this course was designed to help students engage those objectives. For instance, we may compare how James Cone and Thich Nhat Hanh, Christian and Buddhist respectively, drew on their faith traditions to address politically-charged conflicts in their different countries. And the variety of categories and readings (including one that advocates removing religion from public life altogether) help students develop critical tools with which to think about how people—including themselves—live out religious convictions (or not) in various settings.

The outcome I have set in response to that question is simple: students will change the way they think about religion. Examples of what that could look like include:

- Students will replace generalizations about religions with specific questions about particular religious persons.
- Students will practice humility about the extent to which they can understand others’ religious lives.
- Students will come to appreciate ambiguity in the study of religious texts and people.
- Students will become aware of how “religion” is constructed and represented in different settings.
- Students will interpret texts and images with a critical and open mind.
- Students will engage a facet of the rich and complex religious landscape of Silicon Valley.

Engaging Those Outcomes: Requirements and Grade Weighting

Students realize the course outcomes in this class to the extent they engage in activities they have been doing since kindergarten: read, write, and talk. The following “course requirements” are about those activities; they help direct students’ energy and ground the weighted grading system for this course.

- *Class Engagement.* Informed participation in class is expected and highly valued. In addition to showing up and contributing to class discussions, this includes drafting responses to preparation notes and category worksheets, utilizing the online resources (e.g. quizzes to monitor comprehension of readings), meeting outside of class. 10% of final grade
- *Midterm Exams:* (two, weeks 5 and 10). Students demonstrate comprehension of the assigned readings and their mastery of the categories introduced in the preparation notes and in class. Midterms are drawn from preparation notes, quizzes, category worksheets, and class discussions. 40% of final grade
- *Monday Reflections* (eight + one; See handout for full explanation). Students demonstrate they can analyze readings, identify salient issues, think critically and independently about them, and write clearly, succinctly and carefully—in short reflections (target: 350 words) due prior to each Monday class (exception: the “+one” reflection due in the 11^h week). In lieu of a Monday reflection for a week, students may request to prepare a multimodal reflection at the beginning or end of a given week in lieu of the regular Monday reflection. 30% of final grade
- *Course Project* (See handout for full explanation): A community-based independent project related to religion in Silicon Valley begun with field work early in the quarter and concluded with a formal

multimedia Pecha Kucha presentation that will be posted online for the students in this class. 20% of final grade

Grades

One key to this course—and hence to students’ grades— is persistence; the course does not have much in the way of down time or a lull. Students who miss class or slack off in a given week have difficulty catching up; and students who do not attend to the course project throughout the quarter have a hard time producing quality work at the end. Another key to this course—and hence to students’ grades—is engagement with the assigned texts. Think of the engagement as a conversation, and my role as mediating that conversation. My mediation supports your work, but it does not replace it. I mediate in class, online through quizzes and notes, through midterms, and responses to student reflections. Please consult the table below that ties ways I see student engagement with readings to grades on reflections. *Mutatis mutandis*, these criteria apply to grades for class engagement, the course project, and to exams.

Grade Range	%	Bulletin language	Reflections
D	60-69	Barely Passing	Interpretation of text suggests only passing familiarity with reading and/or quality of writing suggests very little time was available for writing.
C	70-79	Adequate	Interpretation of text suggests student is familiar with author’s intent but has not read the text carefully; identified something of interest but analysis tends more towards either generalizations or impressions; application of categories or comparison yield vague results; quality of writing suggests minimal revising or editing.
B	80-89	Good	Interpretation of text through categories and/or comparisons; student demonstrates grasp of entire reading by developing focus on an important element, and providing context for that element in author’s argument; clarity and quality of writing suggests careful preparation and attentive execution.
A	90-100	Excellent	In addition to qualities of a good reflection, these demonstrate a nuanced and creative approach to interpreting the text.

If students judge their work to be of higher quality than the grades I assign, or would like feedback beyond what is provided in comments on their work, they should make an appointment to discuss their concerns with me.

A Note on Interpretation

Much of what we do in this class is interpretation of what religious people have written and done. The terms and frameworks we use to locate and build our interpretations (we will call them categories) are not neutral. The meaning of the Christian cross, for instance, changes with the application of different frameworks: the cross that was burned by high school students in Creston Iowa over the summer meant something different from the 198 foot tall “Cross of the Crossroads” in Effingham, Illinois; both differ from the meanings of the female representation of the Jesus on the cross in a side altar in New York’s Episcopal Cathedral, which in turn is different from the cross typically used in representations of Franciscan priest Junipero Serra. We will deal with the cross in yet another very different framework with one of the books we read, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*.



A good part of interpreting is identifying what we bring to the task—a reflective or critical awareness. But it is not all about us. We also have a text and author, with whom we enter into conversation in the interpretive process—and for that we need an open mind. Indeed, a key to this course is learning how

to be both critical and open as we engage and think about religious questions and claims through the writing of someone who has something to say about them. Proceeding along these lines suggests students will experience our texts not as constraints on their own independent thinking but instead as starting points, pathways, or entirely new approaches that had not occurred to them before a reading.

Camino Course Management System

Use of the University’s course management system, Camino (*aka* Canvas), is integral to this course. Patience and communication are needed as we learn how to best use this system throughout the quarter—so please, send the instructor an e-mail whenever things appear not to be working on Camino. The people who are trying to support faculty in using this system are in Media Services, ITRS (<https://www.scu.edu/is/academic-technology/camino-canvas-lms/>), and can assist students as well: email caminosupport@scu.edu or call 408-551-3572.

The chart below shows how students will access the three main parts of this course’s Camino site: **modules** for notes, worksheets, and assigned and supplemental readings; **quizzes**; and **reflection assignments**. Regular access to these resources will help students to prepare for class discussions, study for midterms, and gauge their understanding of assigned readings.

Saturday/Sunday:	Annotate readings for Monday using preparation notes; draft weekly reflection
Monday:	Revise/submit reflection; attend class, participate by drawing on reflection, annotations, prep notes, other students’ perspectives
Tuesday:	Annotate readings for Wednesday using preparation notes; draft Category worksheets
Wednesday:	Attend class, participate by drawing on and adding to annotations, prep notes, category worksheets
Thursday:	Annotate readings for Friday; make new and review earlier annotations, class notes, take quiz, revise category worksheets
Friday:	Attend class, participate by drawing on prep notes, category worksheets, quiz; revise worksheets, class notes, annotations as necessary

In addition to consultation with the instructor about their writing, students are strongly encouraged to utilize the Hub, SCU’s writing center (www.scu.edu/provost/writingcenter/).

Co-Curriculum

The university and wider community offer an abundance of programs and experiences that could relate to this course. Students are encouraged to consider programs offered by campus programs like: Bannan Institute Programs offered through campus organizations and departments (e.g. the Ignatian Center, Markkula Ethics Center, the Office of Multicultural Learning). As an incentive to engage the class beyond what we have here, students can earn one bonus point per event (up to a maximum of 5 events) that will be added to their final averaged Reflections or Class Engagement scores by writing up a reflection on their participation in such events.

Attendance, Related Class Policies and Expectations

Most students will complete more than 40 classes before they leave SCU. This class is one of yours. Per the photo album metaphor, this class really does not work without the active engagement of students.

Key to that engagement is that students come to each class prepared to

- 1) be present for the full 65 minutes we are together in our classroom, and
- 2) contribute to and support the learning community for which we are all responsible.

There are plenty of things we all want and need to do on a daily basis—study for exams, sleep, use the bathroom, e-mail professors, text family, prepare for other classes, exercise, run errands, catch up with news, pursue romance, watch t.v. —but the two key engagements tell us these things should not happen during our time together in the classroom.

Of late some students' near compulsive attention to personal electronic devices during class time has led me to despair that I can expect students to use them in ways that advance their engagement in the class. I therefore ask students not to use them in this class. Students who find this policy burdensome—e.g. they take notes on laptops or i-pads, or have purchased electronic copies of texts—should make an appointment with me in the first week of classes to discuss their needs and interests.

I encourage students to meet with me outside of class about any manner of things—an idea that interests them, a grade that worries them, a category that confuses them. The one designated office hour posted above is only a placeholder; we can usually find a time to meet that is convenient for both of us after only a couple of e-mails. I am also open to setting up regular meetings with individual (or small groups of) students.

Students receive feedback on the work they submit (quizzes, midterms, weekly reflections, course project) and in observations and suggestions from fellow students and the instructor during class discussions. Again, students are invited to discuss this feedback and solicit more from me at any time during the course.

I expect students to attend all class sessions. While I do not deduct points for classes missed, absences may affect the class engagement portion of a student's grade. The University Bulletin has a long section on Attendance Policy that students can consult—e.g. consideration is given to students who miss class because they are representing the University elsewhere. Students who miss a class might let me know as a courtesy, and should be sure to use the Camino resources to make sure they are on top of the material assigned for that day.

Course Evaluation by Students

Students evaluate the course formally at the end of the quarter by completing surveys. However, I encourage students to give me informal feedback on what is and is not working for them throughout the quarter. Communication is an important responsibility we share; this is our course. I may not be able to make adjustments to meet every students' interests or needs, but a heads up about a problem in the 3rd or 4th week at least creates an opportunity to address it in the remainder of the quarter.

Disability Accommodation Policy

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, <http://www.scu.edu/disabilities> as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me early in the quarter. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.

Academic Integrity Expectations

We should all conduct ourselves in accordance with the academic integrity standards and policies Santa Clara articulates in numerous places, including the 2016-17 Undergraduate Bulletin (pp. 467-469) and the protocol available on the University website: www.scu.edu/media/offices/provost/policy-procedure/Academic-Integrity-Policy-and-Protocol.pdf. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:

I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code

Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class.

Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct (Title IX)

Santa Clara University upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, or stalking, you are encouraged to tell someone promptly. For more information, please consult the University's Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy at <http://bit.ly/2ce1hBb> or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie, at 408-554-3043, bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through <https://www.scu.edu/osl/report/> or anonymously through Ethicspoint <https://www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethicspoint/>.

Schedule

The schedule below is arranged by the weeks in the quarter *and* the sections of the course. For each class session students should have access to the preparation notes, category worksheets, and the assigned readings for the week, along with any notes, questions or reflections they have prepared. Readings are listed on the day they will be discussed and thus should have been read. Assignments (submission via Camino), quizzes (on Camino), and exams are in **Bold Red font**. Monday reflections are typically due on Camino by Monday before class. Quizzes, which cover the reading for the entire week, M-F, are completed on Camino between Thursday, starting at approximately 5:30 p.m., and Friday, before class. Students should be able to access most of the online readings through the links in the schedule; however, Word or pdf versions of those readings, most with annotations, are also posted on Camino. The schedule is subject to change by the instructor; should that happen, students are notified in class and on Camino.

Week One 9, 18-22	Introductions: Approaching Religion in Public Life
M	Course Overview: Syllabus and Course Design, Roster, Survey, Course Project
T 8:00 a.m.	Informal Reflection for Introduction: Location/Background and How I think about Religion (submit on Camino, Assignments, Informal Reflection)
W	<p>Religion and Public Life: Enlightenment and Jesuit Education Considerations</p> <p>Enlightenment Thinking and Religion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" (annotated version on Camino) http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/kant-what-is.asp <p>Jesuit Education with a focus on SCU's Relationship with El Salvador</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Ignacio Ellacuria, 1982 Commencement Address, SCU (Camino) http://www.scu.edu/Jesuits/ellacuria.html o Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "True Solidarity," America, February 5, 2001 (Camino) http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=1906 o Michael Eng, S.J., "The El Salvador Martyrs: Crosses To Liberate the Poor," <i>Mission</i> (Spring 2010), p. 24 https://jesuitswest.org/Assets/Publications/File/mission_2010_spring.pdf <p>Supplement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Thomas Jefferson's Bible (http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/how-thomas-jefferson-created-his-own-bible-5659505/?no-ist) and his January 1, 1802 Letter to Danbury Baptists (introduced by an atheist organization (https://www.au.org/files/images/page_photos/jeffersons-letter-to-the.pdf
TR	Quiz
F	<p>Religion and Public Life: Self-Immolation Case Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCutcheon, Russell, "Case Study: 'Religion' and the Politics of Classification" (excerpts; annotated version on Camino) from <i>Studying Religion: An Introduction</i>, Religious Studies Dept., University of Alabama http://www.as.ua.edu/rel/studyingreligion.html • Dorothy Day, "Suicide or Sacrifice?" (Camino) http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/834.html <p>Supplement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John F. Kennedy, "Speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association," September 12, 1960. (Video and Transcript: http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/ALL6YEBJMEKYGMCntnSCvg.aspx)

Week Two 9, 25-29	Eboo Patel's Identity
M	Monday Reflection Patel, <i>Acts of Faith</i> , Introduction, and Chs 1-2
W	<i>No Class Meeting due to Mass of the Holy Spirit; launch course project online</i>
TR	Quiz
F	Patel, <i>Acts of Faith</i> , Chs. 3-4

Week Three 10, 2-6	Eboo Patel's Identity and Boyle's Tattoos
M	Monday Reflection Patel, <i>Acts of Faith</i> , chs. 5-6
W	Patel, <i>Acts of Faith</i> , chs 7-8
TR	Quiz
F	Boyle, <i>Tattoos</i> , Preface, Introduction, Ch. 1 Course Project Assignment: Confirm Group and Site

Week Four 10, 9-13	Greg Boyle's Tattoos
M	Monday Reflection Boyle, <i>Tattoos</i> , Chs. 2-4
W	Boyle, <i>Tattoos</i> , Chs. 5-7
TR	Quiz
F	Boyle, <i>Tattoos</i> , Chs. 8-9

Week Five 10, 16-20	Elie Wiesel's Night
M	Monday Reflection Elie Wiesel, <i>Night</i> (just the full text; Preface, Foreword, Afterword for Wednesday)
W	<i>Night</i> Supplements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elie Wiesel, <i>Night</i>, Preface • Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, included in <i>Night</i>, pp. 117-120 • Francois Mauriac, <i>Night</i>, Foreword
TR	Quiz
	Study Session, 5:15 p.m., RS Department, Kenna 323
F	MIDTERM EXAM 1

Week Six 10, 23-27	Freud's Future
M	No Monday Reflection this week Freud, <i>Future of an Illusion</i> , Chs. 1-2
W	Freud, <i>Future of an Illusion</i> , Ch. 3
TR	Quiz
F	Freud, <i>Future of an Illusion</i> , Chs. 5-6, and 8

Week Seven 10, 30-11,3	Freud's Future...James Cone's African American Religious Experience
M	Monday Reflection Freud, <i>Future of an Illusion</i> , Chs. 9-10 Supplement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1942) (Camino) (http://dbanach.com/sisyphus.htm)
W	James Cone, <i>The Cross and the Lynching Tree</i> , Chapter One
TR	Quiz
F	James Cone, <i>The Cross and the Lynching Tree</i> , Chapter Three (up to bottom of p. 84)

Course Project Assignment: Progress Report	
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Week Eight 11, 6-10	James Cone's African American Religious Experience
M	Monday Reflection James Cone, <i>The Cross and the Lynching Tree</i> , Chapter Three (to the end of the chapter, p. 92) Assigned MLK text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Luther King, "I've Been to the Mountaintop," Memphis, Tennessee (April 3, 1968) (Camino) http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/ive_been_to_the_mountaintop/
W	James Cone, <i>The Cross and the Lynching Tree</i> , Chapter Five
TR	Quiz
F	James Cone, <i>The Cross and the Lynching Tree</i> , Conclusion

Week Nine 11, 13-17	Thich Nhat Hanh's Peace
M	Monday Reflection Thich Nhat Hanh, <i>Peace Begins Here</i> , Foreword, Introduction, Ch. 1, and Practices: "Mindful Walking" (123-126) and "The Five Mindfulness Trainings" (155-157) Supplement Martin Luther King, Nobel Prize Nomination letter for Thich Nhat Hanh (January 25, 1967) (Camino) http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/025.html
W	Thich Nhat Hanh, <i>Peace Begins Here</i> , Chs. 2-3 and Practices: "Deep Listening & Loving Speech" (133-136)
TR	Quiz
F	Thich Nhat Hanh, <i>Peace Begins Here</i> , 4 and Practices, "Beginning Anew" (141-143)

Week Ten 11, 27-12,1	Thich Nhat Hanh's Peace
M	Monday Reflection (in light of or in dialogue with Week 1 self-immolation readings) Thich Nhat Nanh. "In Search of the Enemy of Man (addressed to (the Rev.) Martin Luther King)." In Nhat Nanh, Ho Huu Tuong, Tam Ich, Bui Giang, Pham Cong Thien. Dialogue. Saigon: La Boi, 1965. P. 11-20. (Camino) http://www.aavv.org/special_features/letters_thich_abstract02.html
W	Thich Nhat Hanh, <i>Peace Begins Here</i> , Chs. 5, 6
TR	Quiz
	Study Session, 5:15 p.m., RS Department, Kenna 323
F	MIDTERM TWO

Week Eleven 12, 4-8	Finals Week https://www.scu.edu/registrar/undergraduate-final-exams-schedule/
T	Reflection on Reflections due
TR	Course Project: Submit final PK presentation and interview via Google Drive; and Project Text on Camino