

Istituto Lorenzo de' Medici

2019 Summer Program

RELG 101 Introduction to Religion

Course Outline

Term: June 17-July 19, 2019

Class Hours: 14:00 - 15:50 (Monday through Friday)

Course Code: RELG 101

Instructor: Dr. Faraz Sheikh

Home Institution: College of William & Mary

Office Hours: 15:00 - 18:00, Friday

Email: fmsheikh@wm.edu

Credit: 4

Class hours

This course will have 72 total class hours, including 40 lecture hours, 12 instructor office hours, 12-hours of TA-led discussion sessions (four sessions of 3 hour each), 8 hours of review sessions (four review sessions, 2 hours each).

Course Description

Why do people consider temples, mosques and churches sacred spaces but do not feel that way about shopping malls, schools and hospitals? Why do people believe in the existence of gods (or God) and other unseen beings and realms? What motivates a person to give up eating and drinking temporarily or to renounce material comforts of life permanently for the sake of some higher, “other-worldly” end or goal? Why do people consider certain texts and persons ‘holy’ and how do they relate themselves to them? What role does desire, fear, society, economy and language play in the creation and practice of religions? In this course, we study various theories of what their proponents (the theorists) call *religion* – its origins, distinctive features and various modes of practical expression in human life at the personal and social levels. We start with considering Hume’s famous discussion of the natural religion of mankind, originating in fear and desire, and end the class with an anthropological perspective on religion as a system of symbols that ritual practices express. Throughout, the term religion itself will be discussed and analyzed

as a non-native, scholarly category and not in the way religious folks themselves might describe the term. The class does not presume any background knowledge of any particular religious tradition.

Assigned Text:

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

Course Grading:

- 1) Attendance and active participation (20%).
- 2) TWO Short Response Papers (1-2- pages): (20%, 10% each)
- 3) Two Quizzes (20%, 10% each)
- 4) Mid-Term Exam: (20%) It will consist of short-answer questions.
- 5) Final Exam: (20%) It will consist of short-answer questions drawn from the readings and lectures.

Detailed Weekly Schedule:

Week 1 What Is Religion? Philosophical Ideas and Scholarly Methods

- Class 1 Introduction to the syllabus, J.Z Smith “Map is not Territory”
- Class 2 Natural Religion, David Hume. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, in *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion*. pp. 124 - 136.
- Class 3 Friedrich Schleiermacher. “Second Speech: The Nature of Religion.” in *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, pp. 18-36.
- Class 4 Friedrich Schleiermacher. “Second Speech: The Nature of Religion.” in *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, pp. 36-54.
- Class 5 TA discussion session 1 (3 hours)
Office hours (3 hours)
Review session 1 (2 hours)

Week 2 Holiness, Science of Religion and Primitive Religion

Class 1 “The Science of Religion”, 1) Max Müller. “First Lecture.” Introduction to the Science of Religion, pp. 1-24.

Class 2 “The Science of Religion”, 1) Max Müller. “First Lecture.” Introduction to the Science of Religion, pp. 24-51.

Class 3 E.B. Tylor. “Animism and the Origin of Religion.” In Daniel Pals’ Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists. pp. 1-17

Class 4 E.B. Tylor. “Animism and the Origin of Religion.” In Daniel Pals’ Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists. pp. 17-35

Class 5 **Short Response Paper ONE DUE**

TA discussion session 2 (3 hours)

Office hours (3 hours)

Review session 2 (2 hours)

Week 3 Religion, Magic and Neurosis

Class 1 Religion and Magic 1) James Frazer. “Magic and the Rise of Religion.” In Daniel Pals’ Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists. pp. 37-50.

Class 2 Religion and Magic 1) James Frazer. “Magic and the Rise of Religion.” In Daniel Pals’ Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists. pp. 50-70.

Class 3 Religion and Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. “Religion as Neurosis.” In Daniel Pals’ Introducing Religion. pp. 71-97.

Class 4 TA discussion session 3 (3 hours)

Office hours (3 hours)

Review session 3 (2 hours)

Class 5 **Mid-Term Exam**

Week 4 Religion, Society and Economy

Class 1 Religion as Society’s Collective Representation, Emile Durkheim. “The Social as Sacred.” In Daniel Pals’ Introducing Religion. pp. 99-120.

Class 2 Religion as Society’s Collective Representation, Emile Durkheim. “The Social as Sacred.” In Daniel Pals’ Introducing Religion. pp. 120-142.

Class 3 Religion and the Bourgeois Society, Karl Marx. “Religion and Economic Oppression” In Daniel Pals’ Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists. pp. 143-153.

Class 4 Religion and the Bourgeois Society, Karl Marx. “Religion and Economic Oppression” In Daniel Pals’ Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists. pp.153-170.

Class 5 Max Weber, pp. 237-270
Short Response Paper TWO DUE in class.
TA discussion session 4 (3 hours)
Office hours (3 hours)
Review session 4 (2 hours)

Week 5 Religion, Experience and Culture

Class 1 William James, “Religious Experience” pp. 171-188

Class 2 William James, “Mysticism and Religion” pp. 188-203

Class 3 Geertz “Religion as a system of symbols” pp. 341-353

Class 4 Geertz, “Religion as system of symbols” pp. 353-372

Class 5 **Take home Final Exam due August 15th**