



RELI 401: Methods and Issues in the Study of Religion CRN 1549

Trimesters 1 and 2, 2012

Religious Studies

School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies

Victoria University

1 Basic Information

- Lecture place: HU 320.
- Time: T1: Thursday 10-12// T2: Thursdays, Fridays, 10-12.
- Start date: March 8, 2012.
- Coordinators:
Dr. Rick Weiss (T1) & Dr. Joseph Bulbulia (T2)
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Weiss tel: 463-5065, office Hunter 215
Bulbulia tel: 463-5043, office Hunter 322.
Office hours: by appointment.
- A website of materials related to RELI 401 is being maintained in Blackboard. You are expected to visit the course site from time to time: <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>.¹
- All readings can be found as pdf documents under *Course Materials* on Blackboard, or by a url link in the seminar outline below.
- There is no course reader for this course.
- All work must be submitted to Blackboard.
- Students are responsible for keeping copies of all submitted work.
- Students are responsible for assuring that their work has been successfully uploaded to Blackboard.
- Reli 401 will be internally assessed by a four essays of about 2,500 words, each worth 25% of the final mark.

¹Your user name is the one issued to you by Student Computing Services. Your password is your Student ID Number. If in doubt, please contact the Student Computing Services Help Desk, 463-5050 (extension 5050 from VUW phones) or by email scs-help@vuw.ac.nz.

Trimester dates

Trimester 1

Trimester dates: 5 March→17 November 2012

Teaching dates: 5 March→19 October 2012

Mid-trimester break 1/3: 6→22 April 2012

Mid-trimester break 2/3: 27 August → 9 September 2012

Study week: 22→26 October 2012

Examination/Assessment Period: 26 October→17 November 2012

Trimester 2

Withdrawing dates

Information about withdrawing from courses and refunds may be found at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawlsrefunds.aspx>.

Course delivery

The delivery component of this course consists of: **Seminar**

Communication of additional information

- Additional information or information on changes will be conveyed to students by Blackboard.
- Because information about the course will change from time-to-time, students are expected to check Blackboard for updates at least once a week.
- Urgent updates will be sent through email.

Content

This course provides and graduate-level introduction to methods in the the scholarly study of religions.

Learning objectives

1. **Knowledge of Discipline:** to review prominent research methodologies in the scholarly study of religions.
2. **General knowledge:** to broaden perspectives on how scholars of religions conduct their work.
3. **Writing and verbal expression:** to promote clear, well-structured, critical and creative writing.

Students passing this course will be able to identify and critically evaluate the theoretical assumptions of scholarship in religious studies.

Readings

Readings are given on Blackboard under 'Course Resources' → 'Readings' .

Response essays

- Students are assigned four response essays.
- Each essay should be no more than 3,000 words and no fewer than 2,000 words.
- Full instructions and templates to help you organise your response essays are available on Blackboard under 'Course Resources'.

Marking criteria

- 33.3% for clarity.
- 33.3% for critical engagement.
- 33.4% for creativity.

Due dates: FINALS

1. Essay 1 and Essay 2: June 29, 2012.
2. Essay 3 and Essay 4: October 26, 2012.

Penalties

1. No essay received after its final due date will be assessed.

Minimal requirements

The minimal requirements to gain a pass in this course:

1. Submit and pass four response essays.
2. Attend at least six seminars in Trimester 1 and least six seminars in Trimester 2.

Withdraw dates

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

2 The Seminar Schedule

Trimester 1

Seminar 1 (March 8): Introduction; Durkheim's sociology of religion

READING

- [Durkheim, 1995] pp.1-39; 207-241

Seminar 2 (March 15): Secularisation

READING

- [Taylor, 2007] pp.505-535.
- [Calhoun et al., 2011], selections

Seminar 3 (March 22): Religion: Liberation or Repression?

READING

- [Horsley, 2003]pp.13-44.
- [Lincoln, 1985]pp.266-292.

Seminar 4 (March 29): Religion and modern media

READING

- [Anderson, 1982]pp.1-36.
- [Eisenstein, 1979]Selections.

2.1 Week 5 (April 5): Essay writing

Mid-Term Break

Seminar 5 (April 26): Karl Marx: Religion and Ideology

READING

- [Marx, 2002]'On the Jewish Question'(1843), 'The German Ideology' (1844-6); 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion'(1844); 'Concerning Feuerbach' (1845); 'Excerpts from Capital'.

Seminar 6 (May 3): Friedrich Nietzsche

READING

- [Nietzsche, 1887] Prologue, First Essay, Second Essay, Third essay.
<http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/genealogytofc.htm>

Seminar 7 (May 10): Michel Foucault: Religion and Power

READING

- [Foucault, 1984a]pp.3-29
- [Foucault, 1984b]pp.76-100

Seminar 8 (May 17): Religion and the Public Sphere

- [Habermas, 2006]
- [Calhoun et al., ress]

Weeks 10-12 Essay writing!

Essay 2 draft due June 1

Essays 1&2 due: June 29

Trimester 2

PART 3: Evolutionary Models of Religion

Seminar 9 (19 July): C. Darwin: Evolution and Religion

READING

- [Darwin, 1981] selections

Seminar 10 (20 July): D.S. Wilson: Cultural Evolution and Religion

READING

- [Wilson et al., 2009]
- [Wilson, 2007]

Seminar 11(July 26): D.P. Johnson: Evolutionary Psychology of Religion

READING

- [Johnson and Kruger, 2004]

Seminar 12(July 27): J.Bulbulia: Cultural Evolutionary Psychology of Religion

READING

- [Bulbulia, 2008]

WEEK OFF: August 2

Draft Essay 3 due:

PART 4: Psychological Models of Religion

Seminar 13(August 9): W. James: Experiential Psychology

READING

- [James, 1928]lectures I, II, XVI and XVII <http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/james/toc.htm>

Seminar 14(August 10): U. Schjoedt: Neuroscience

READING

- [Schjoedt et al., 2009]

Seminar 15(August 16): S. Fried: Social Functionalist Psychology

READING

- [Freud, 1962]

Seminar 16 (August 17): A. Geertz: Biofunctional Cognitive Science

READING

- [Geertz and Markusson, 2010]

WEEK OFF: August 24

Draft Essay 4 due: August 31.

Final Essay 3 & Final Essay 4 Due: October 26.

3 Important Information

Class representative

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, to the Course Coordinator, and to the class. The class representative will provide a communication channel to the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. Someone else's work means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

General university policies and statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC(Academic) website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at: http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcademic/Publications.aspx

More information

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study. Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress. Most statutes and policies are available at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy, except qualification statutes, which are available via the Calendar webpage at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcademic.

References

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