

<p style="text-align: center;">REL 200 <i>Myth, Symbol & Ritual</i> Spring Term 2009 TR 1-2:30 p.m. Draper 308</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Jeffrey L. Richey Berea College x 3186 richeyj@berea.edu Draper 204-C</p>
---	---	---

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Were one asked to characterize the life of religion in the broadest and most general terms possible, one might say that it consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lie in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto.

-- William James (1842-1910)

This course offers an introduction to the academic study of religion. Neither prior study of religion nor personal religious commitment is assumed or necessary for success in the course. Various theories of religion's origin, structure, function, and value from multiple disciplinary perspectives will be explored. Mythological, symbolic, and ritual evidence drawn from the cultural landscape of the contemporary United States will be used as case studies, to which various theoretical approaches to the study of religions will be applied. Our goal is to become careful, critical interpreters of religion as a core element in the human experience.

Prerequisite: GSTR 110

Fulfills: Religion Perspective

COURSE MATERIALS

It is your responsibility to have copies of assigned materials with you in class.

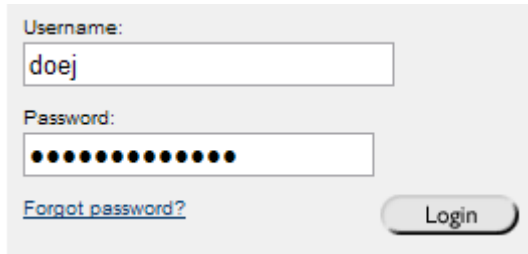
1. Olson, Carl, ed. *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003. (*T&M*) [also on reserve at Hutchins Library: 200.71 T396]
2. Waid, Mark, and Alex Ross. *Kingdom Come*. New York: DC Comics, 2008.
3. Various sources available online through Blackboard (<http://blackboard.berea.edu/>) [Bb]

Blackboard Access

1. To access Blackboard, go to <http://blackboard.berea.edu>.
2. Click the User Login button.

User Login

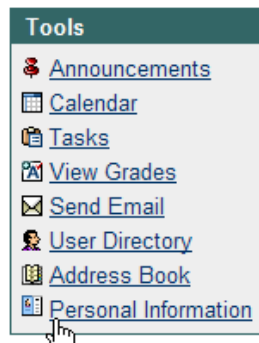
3. Please provide your username. Your Blackboard username is the same as your Windows/network username.
4. Your password is the same as your Blackboard username.
5. After you have completed the required fields, click the Login button. This will log you into Blackboard.



A screenshot of the Blackboard login interface. It features two input fields: 'Username:' with the text 'doej' and 'Password:' with a masked password of 12 dots. Below the password field is a blue link for 'Forgot password?'. To the right of the password field is a rounded 'Login' button.

Password Change

1. Once you have logged into Blackboard for the first time, you change your password.
2. To change your password, click the Personal Information link located under Tools on the My Berea College tab.

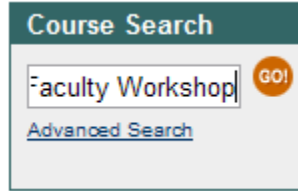


3. Click the Change Password link.
4. Provide a new password. You will also need to verify the password by typing it in the second time.
5. Once you have changed your password, click the Submit button. When prompted click OK twice to return to the My Berea College tab.

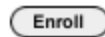
Submit

Blackboard Course Self Enroll

1. Click on the Courses Tab
2. Locate the Course Search field. In the field, perform a search using the course name that was provided by the instructor. To initiate the search, click GO!.



3. Once the course has been located, click the Enroll button.



4. Provide the access code given by your instructor. Click Submit to enroll into the course.
5. Click OK to access the course.
6. To access courses in the future, once you have logged in, click the Courses tab.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Prepared participation in all class sessions.** The instructor reserves the right to reduce the final grade of any student who misses class. Excuses for absences should be sought in advance, but may not necessarily be granted.
2. **Completion of in-class quizzes** (average of all scores = 20% of final grade). Quizzes should be expected on dates for which theoretical material (found in *T&M* as well as on Blackboard) has been assigned and may be given on other dates, as well. An unexcused absence on a quiz day will result in a score of zero being recorded and included in your quiz average. Quizzes may not be made up.
3. **Submission of 3 field samples** (each = 20% of final grade). By the deadlines prescribed in the course calendar below (pp. 4-7), you must submit a sample myth, symbol, or ritual drawn from the cultural landscape of the contemporary United States that has not served as the basis of an assignment in the course. Submissions shall consist of a description of the myth, symbol, or ritual in question accompanied by an explanation of why the sample is worth considering from specific theoretical perspective(s) within the academic study of religion (minimum length: 500 double-spaced, 12-point-font words). All sources quoted or paraphrased should be cited, both in footnotes and in a bibliography, according to the Chicago style (see http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c10_s1.html for guidelines). *Students whose field samples are selected by the instructor for class discussion (i.e., “Myth of the Month”) will receive extra credit equivalent to twice the grade earned by their submissions.*
4. **Completion of 1 final examination** (= 20% of final grade). This examination is written in format and will be administered at 1 p.m. on May 20.

Any student who has a disability that may prevent him/her from fully demonstrating his/her abilities should contact Carol Barnett, PhD, LCSW, the Disability Services Coordinator at (859) 985-3212 to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure his/her full participation in this course.

COURSE CALENDAR

I. DEFINING THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION

T 2/10

Introductory session – no preparation required

R 2/12

Read:

- McCutcheon, Russell T. “What is the Academic Study of Religion?” (Bb)
- Smith, Jonathan Z. “Religion and Religious Studies: No Difference at All.” (*T&M* 25-29)

II. THE STUDY OF MYTH

T 2/17

Read:

- Doniger, Wendy. “The Toolbox of Pluralism.” (*T&M* 192-193)
- Honko, Lauri. “The Problem of Defining Myth.” In *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, ed. Alan Dundes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 41-52. (Bb)

R 2/19

Read:

- Maclean, Iain S. “Millions Now Living Will Never Die.” In *Religions of the United States in Practice, Volume Two*, ed. Colleen MacDannell (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 375-388. (Bb)

T 2/24

Read:

- Campbell, Joseph. “Epilogue: Myth and Society.” In Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2nd ed. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 352-362. (Bb)

R 2/26

FIELD SAMPLE #1 (MYTH) DUE AS EMAILED ATTACHMENT BY 8 A.M.!

Read:

- Prentiss, Craig R. “Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Making of an American Myth.” In *Religions of the United States in Practice, Volume Two*, ed. Colleen MacDannell (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 316-327. (Bb)

T 3/3

Read:

- Wender, Dorothea. "The Myth of Washington." In *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, ed. Alan Dundes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 336-342. (Bb)

R 3/5

Discussion: MYTH OF THE MONTH (to be selected from field sample #1 submissions)

III. THE STUDY OF SYMBOL

T 3/10

Read:

- Durkheim, Émile. "From *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*." (T&M 212-224)

R 3/12

Read:

- *Lynch v. Donnelly* (465 U.S. 668 [1984]) (Bb)

T 3/17

Read:

- Eliade, Mircea. "From *The Sacred and the Profane*." (T&M 161-168)

R 3/19

Read:

- Branham, Joan R. "The Temple That Won't Quit." *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 36/3 (Autumn 2008): 18-31. (Bb)

T 3/24

FIELD SAMPLE #2 (SYMBOL) DUE AS EMAILED ATTACHMENT BY 8 A.M.!

Read:

- Barthes, Roland. "The World of Wrestling." (Bb)

R 3/26

Discussion: SYMBOL OF THE MONTH (to be selected from field sample #2 submissions)

3/28-4/5: SPRING VACATION – NO CLASS SESSIONS

IV. THE STUDY OF RITUAL

T 4/7

Read:

- Malinowski, Bronislaw. "From *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*." (T&M 245-257)

R 4/9

Read:

- Gmelch, George. "Baseball Magic." In *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, 7th ed., eds. Pamela A. Moro, James E. Myers, and Arthur C. Lehmann (Boston: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 2008), 302-308. (Bb)

T 4/14

Read:

- Turner, Victor. "From *The Ritual Process*." (T&M 268-276)

R 4/16

Read:

- McNally, Michael D. "An Apache Girl's Initiation Feast." In *Religions of the United States in Practice, Volume Two*, ed. Colleen MacDannell (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 194-204. (Bb)

T 4/21

LABOR DAY – NO CLASS SESSION

R 4/23

Read:

- Douglas, Mary. "From *Purity and Danger*." (T&M 307-316)

T 4/28

FIELD SAMPLE #3 (RITUAL) DUE AS EMAILED ATTACHMENT BY 8 A.M.!

Read:

- Miner, Horace. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema." *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 503-507. (Bb)

R 4/30

Discussion: RITUAL OF THE MONTH (to be selected from field sample #3 submissions)

V. MYTH, SYMBOL, AND RITUAL IN U.S. POPULAR CULTURE

T 5/5

Read:

- Gordon, Andrew. "The Empire Strikes Back: Monsters from the Id." *Science Fiction Studies* 7/3 (November 1980): 313-318. (Bb)

View (in class):

- *The Empire Strikes Back*. DVD. Directed by Irvin Kershner. 1980; Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment and Lucasfilm, Ltd., 2000. (part 1) [also available on reserve at Hutchins Library: DVD 791.437 S7955 2004]

R 5/7

Read:

- Oppenheim, Irene. "Masscult, Midcult, and Starcult." *The Threepenny Review* 4 (Winter 1981): 20-21. (Bb)

View (in class):

- *The Empire Strikes Back* (part 2)

T 5/12

Read:

- Harrison, Richard. "The Graphic Novel as New Testament: On Narrative Progress, Cultural Change and the Heroic Story." In *The Influence of Imagination: Essays on Science Fiction and Fantasy as Agents of Social Change*, eds. Lee Easton and Randy Schroeder (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008), 99-107. (Bb)
- *Kingdom Come*, chs. 1-2

R 5/14

Read:

- Kripal, Jeffrey J. "Mutant Marvels." In Kripal, *The Serpent's Gifts: Gnostic Reflections on the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 126-161. (Bb)
- *Kingdom Come*, chs. 3-4

W 5/20 (1-2:50 P.M.)

FINAL EXAMINATION

All students will be asked to complete Instructor Evaluation Questionnaires (IEQs) electronically at the end of the term. You are expected to participate in this process.