

<p style="text-align: center;">REL 200 <i>Myth, Symbol, & Ritual</i> Spring Term 2013 MW 10-11:50 a.m. Emery 100</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Jeffrey L. Richey Berea College x 3186 richeyj@berea.edu Draper 204-C</p>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

“Religion is sociologically interesting not because it describes the social order but because it shapes it.”
-- Clifford Geertz¹

This course offers an introduction to the academic study of religion. No prior study of religion is assumed. Reading and discussion of case studies from various traditions as well as popular culture will be accompanied by reading and discussion of selected scholarly analyses of religious material from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (e.g., humanities, natural sciences, social sciences). The goal of the course is to learn how to approach religion as a core element in the human experience in such a way as to see both its unity and its diversity across cultures and eras.

Prerequisite: GSTR 110, waiver, or permission of instructor

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: A Selection of Critical Readings*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003.
2. Waid, Mark, and Alex Ross. *Kingdom Come*. New York: DC Comics, 1997.
3. Various sources available online through Moodle [M]

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Prepared participation in all class sessions** (= ¼ of final grade, letter-graded). The instructor reserves the right to reduce the final grade of any student who misses class, arrives late, leaves early, or fails to bring assigned materials to class. *Excuses for absences should be sought in advance, but may not necessarily be granted.*
2. **Co-facilitation of 1 class discussion** (= ¼ of final grade, graded pass/fail). You and a classmate will be assigned primary responsibility for leading class discussion of a case study (e.g., a myth, a symbol, or a ritual). Successful co-facilitations will entail the preparation and presentation of a sequence of questions that, when considered by your classmates, should enable them to apply analytical perspectives previously introduced by the instructor and assigned materials to the interpretation of material from case studies. The goal is not to become an expert in this material, but rather to demonstrate excellence as a learner helping other learners.

¹ “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 119.

3. **Submission of 5 critical précis** (average = ¼ of final grade, graded pass/fail). A critical précis is a one-paragraph, approximately 150-word explanation of how a particular text develops and supports its major claim (thesis), the intended purpose of the text, and its intended audience. You may submit a critical précis for any asterisked (*) reading assignment listed on the course calendar by emailing it to the instructor as an attached Microsoft Word document by 8 a.m. on the deadline specified for that assignment. It is up to you to decide which five asterisked assignments for which to submit critical précis. Critical précis are deadline-specific and may not be made up or submitted multiply (i.e., more than one per deadline). *See the example of a critical précis provided on the course's Moodle website.*
4. **Completion of 1 final examination** (= ¼ of final grade, letter-graded). This examination will be written in format and given on the date indicated in the calendar.

Students who have a disability that may prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should contact Cindy Reed, LCSW, the Disability Services Coordinator, at (859) 985-3212 or by email at cynthia_reed@berea.edu to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation in this course. Upon request, this syllabus can be made available in alternative forms.

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.

COURSE CALENDAR

W 1/9

Read:

- Beal, Timothy K. "Seeking Out Lives of Faith, in All Their Awesome Absurdity." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 15, 2005, B6-B10. [M]
- Stanley, Brian Jay. "The Communion of Strangers." *The Sun*, April 2012, 13-15. [M]

M 1/14

CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!

Read:

- *McCutcheon, Russell T. "What is the Academic Study of Religion?" Department of Religious Studies, The University of Alabama, 2012, <http://www.as.ua.edu/rel/pdf/rel100introhandout.pdf>. [M]
- *Smith, Jonathan Z. "Religion and Religious Studies: No Difference at All." In *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion [T&M]*, ed. Carl Olson (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003), 25-29.

W 1/16

CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!

Read:

- *Prothero, Stephen. "Belief Unbracketed: A Case for the Religion Scholar to Reveal More of Where He or She Is Coming From." *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 32/2 (Winter/Spring 2004): 10-11.
- *Connor, W. Robert. "The Right Time and Place for Big Questions." *The Chronicle Review* 52/40 (2006), B8. [M]

M 1/21

NO CLASS SESSION – MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

W 1/23 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

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

M 1/28 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

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

W 1/30

Read:

- Excerpts from the *Enuma Elish* [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____

- *Rig Veda* 10:90 [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____

- *Nihongi* 1 [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____

M 2/4

Watch (in class):

- *Jesus Camp*. Dir. Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady. Los Angeles: Magnolia Home Entertainment, 2006. [Hutchins Library reserve DVD 230.046 J586 2006]

W 2/6

Read:

- Dawkins, Richard. "To Live At All Is Miracle Enough." RichardDawkins.net, last modified May 10, 2006, <http://old.richarddawkins.net/articles/91-to-live-at-all-is-miracle-enough>. [M]
- Porco, Carolyn. "Beyond Belief: Carolyn Porco on Science and Religion, Part 3." YouTube, last modified December 4, 2006, <http://youtu.be/iv0qwfeW8GQ>. [M]

M 2/11 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

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

W 2/13 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

- * Goldenberg, Naomi R. "From *Resurrecting the Body: Feminism, Religion, and Psychotherapy*." In *T&M*, 427-434.

M 2/18

Read:

- *Yasna* 30:3-10 and *Bundahishn* 30 [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____

- 1 Corinthians 15:12-28, 35-57 [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____

- *Qur'an* 22:5-10, 23:12-22, 10:2-4, 16-18, 38-41 [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____

W 2/20

Read:

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

M 2/25 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

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

W 2/27 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

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

M 3/4

Read:

- Excerpts from *Manusmṛti* [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____
- "An Apache Girl's Initiation Feast" [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____
- "Origin of Disease and Medicine" [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____

W 3/6

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. [M]

⚙️ SPRING VACATION ⚙️

M 3/18 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

- *Burkert, Walter. "From *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*." In *T&M*, 450-459.

W 3/20 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

- *Bloom, Paul. "Is God an Accident?" *The Atlantic*, December 2005.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/12/is-god-an-accident/4425/>. [M]

M 3/25 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

- *Newberg, Andrew, and Eugene D'Aquili. "Mysticism: The Biology of Transcendence." In Newberg and D'Aquili, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), 98-127. [M]

W 3/27

Watch (in class):

- "Secrets of the Mind," parts 5 and 6. *NOVA*, WGBH-Boston. Last modified March 9, 2010.
<http://youtu.be/epFNydMp03U> and <http://youtu.be/Dulau8oGzyg>. [M]

M 4/1 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

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. [M]

W 4/3 **CRITICAL PRÉCIS ACCEPTED BY 8 A.M.!**

Read:

- *Barthes, Roland. "The World of Wrestling." In Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 15-25. [M]

Watch (in class):

- "Hulk Hogan vs. The Iron Sheik (1/23/84)." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9psdw86uAUg>
- "The Oberammergau Passion Play." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwTSqBAOoTw>

M 4/8

Read:

- “*Wheel of Time Tantra*” [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____
- Excerpts from the *Aeneid* [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____
- Excerpts from *Qur’an* and *hadith* [M] *Co-facilitators:* _____

W 4/10 **REVIEW SESSION (attendance optional – sign up in advance)**

M 4/15

Read:

- Paley, Susan, and Adrian Gibbons Koesters. “A Viewer’s Guide to Contemporary Passion Plays.” http://www.bc.edu/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/education/CreightonViewersGuide.pdf. [M]

Watch (in class):

- *Jésus de Montréal*. Dir. Denys Arcand. Port Washington, NY: Koch Lorber Films, 2004. [part 1]

W 4/17

Read:

- Reinhartz, Adele. “Jesus in Film: Hollywood Perspectives on the Jewishness of Jesus.” *Journal of Religion and Film* 2/2 (October 1998), <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/JesusinFilmRein.htm>. [M]

Watch (in class):

- *Jésus de Montréal* [part 2]

M 4/22

Read:

- Morrison, Grant. “Introduction” and “Lightning’s Child.” In Morrison, *Supergods: What Masked Vigilantes, Miraculous Mutants, and a Sun God from Smallville Can Teach Us about Being Human* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2011), xiii-xvii, 27-36. [M]
- *Kingdom Come*, chs. 1-2

W 4/24

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. [M]
- *Kingdom Come*, chs. 3-4

R 5/2 **FINAL EXAMINATION (10-11:50 A.M.)**