

Junior Seminar

REL 3931.6859, Spring 2017

Tues 4 (10:40-11:30) / Thurs 4-5 (10:40-11:30; 11:45-12:35), Keene-Flint 117

Professor: Robert Kawashima

office hours: Tuesday 12:15-1:15; Thursday 1:15-2:15; or by appointment

email: rsk@ufl.edu

office: 120 Anderson

Department of Religion: 107 Anderson

Course Description:

This seminar will introduce students to several major approaches to the study of religion, using Daniel Pals's textbook as a guide. Since no guide, however knowledgeable, can take the place of the primary thinkers themselves, we will also read excerpts from a number of major theorists, including some not covered by Pals. Theories of religion, in turn, cannot be understood in isolation as so many abstract ideas. We will therefore analyze various passages from the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament) as empirical data with which to test some of these theories. What light (if any) does a given theory or approach shed on the Hebrew Bible and Israelite religion? The study of religion, moreover, presupposes certain critical concepts, which we must reflect on. What is religion? What does it mean to make it an object of knowledge? What is a science, a theory, an approach? What questions can and should a theory of religion seek to answer? Is the study of religion even a discipline — in the way that, say, mathematics and history are disciplines? And what does this imply about the topic taught by our department? Finally, as one of the Religion Department's core major requirements, this seminar will actively seek to cultivate within students the all-important skills of careful reading and thinking. How should one read, think about, and interpret a religious text, a theoretical text, a scholarly text?

Required Textbooks:

Daniel L. Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*

HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition (recommended)

additional secondary readings, course materials, and general information will, as much as possible, be made available through e-Learning: elearning.ufl.edu

Accommodations for students with disabilities: students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Course Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory

Participation – (10%)

2 Written Exercises (3 pages) – (30%)

2 Exams – (60%)

Make-up exams must be approved by instructor beforehand, or justified afterward by providing appropriate documentation (medical, etc.).

Grade scale:

| | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| 87–89 = B+ | 77–79 = C+ | 67–69 = D+ | below 60 = E |
| 93–100 = A | 83–86 = B | 73–76 = C | 63–66 = D |
| 90–92 = A- | 80–82 = B- | 70–72 = C- | 60–62 = D- |

Schedule:

Week 1

1/5 **Introduction:** syllabus

Week 2

1/10 **Introduction:** Pals, Introduction

1/12 **Tylor and Frazer:** Pals, chapter 1; Genesis 30-31

Week 3

1/17 **Tylor and Frazer:** “Epic of Baal,” excerpts; 1 Kings 18

1/19 **Freud:** Pals, chapter 2; Freud selections

Week 4

1/24 **Freud:** Freud selections; Genesis 22, 32-33

1/26 **Durkheim:** Pals, chapter 3; Durkheim selections

Week 5

1/31 **Durkheim:** Durkheim selections; Genesis 15; Exodus 12-20, 23:14-17; 34:18-24; Leviticus 23; Deut 16

2/2 **Marx:** Pals, chapter 4; Marx selections

Week 6

2/7 **Marx:** Marx selections

2/9 **Nietzsche:** Nietzsche selections on the “Death of God” and the “Genealogy of Morals”

Week 7

2/14 **Weber:** Pals, chapter 5; **PAPER 1 due in class**

2/16 **Weber:** Weber selections; Exodus 3-4; Leviticus 8-9; Numbers 11-12

Week 8

2/21 **EXAM 1** (1/10 to 2/16)

2/23 **Victor Turner:** Turner on rites of passage; Numbers 5-6

Week 9

2/28 **Victor Turner:** Turner on pilgrimages; Exodus 12-15; Joshua 3-5

3/2 **James:** Pals, chapter 6

Week 10

3/6-10 **Spring Break**

Week 11

3/14 **James:** Pals, chapter 6; Genesis 12; Exodus 32

3/16 **Rudolf Otto:** Otto selections; Exodus 33-34; Leviticus 10; 2 Samuel 6

Week 12

3/21 **Eliade:** Pals, chapter 7

3/23 **Eliade:** “Sacred Time and Myths”; “Epic of Creation”; Genesis 1

Week 13

3/28 **Mary Douglas:** Douglas, “Abominations of Leviticus”; Genesis 1; Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14; Numbers 1-3

3/30 **Evans-Pritchard:** Pals, chapter 8

Week 14

4/4 **Danger Beliefs:** Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution”; Numbers 5, 13-14, 16

4/6 **Geertz:** Pals, chapter 9; Geertz selections

Week 15

4/11 **PASSOVER (class canceled)**

4/13 **Geertz:** Geertz selections; Genesis 6-9; **PAPER 2 due in class**

Week 16

4/18 **EXAM 2** (2/24 to 4/12)