

**RELS 314 & 414:**

## **Religion and Identity**

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### **Course Overview**

What is religious identity and how does it differ from other types of identity? How is religious identity formed? What role does myth, ritual and belief play in the creation of religious identity? How has religious identity changed with modernity? How is religious identity linked to law, economics, politics and violence? This paper explores these and other questions using case studies from all of the world's major religious traditions.

In the coming weeks, I want to help you understand the nature of religious identity in the world, while also giving you a decent grounding in important thinkers and theories of religious identity. Rest assured that *no experience* in the academic study of religion is required for this class—only an eagerness to learn and a commitment to working hard.

If you get lost and/or need more context or background information about a particular religious tradition, just talk to me. (Odds are that you're not the only one.) As we will be exploring a number of different religions, places and times, extra reading online and in the library, is encouraged. Do this on your own as needed. (Don't underestimate the power of 15 mins spent reading Encyclopaedia Britannica online, if you need more information about a particular issue.)

### **Readings (and Movies)**

The readings for this paper include some of the most influential and important academic texts on religion and religious identity in the last century. I have also added and removed readings based on the feedback of previous students. (Occasionally I also do this during the semester, as the seminar progresses, based on the feedback from you.) So, in general, it's a 'greatest hits' collection of scholarship tailored for y'all.

If you look below, you'll see that there are number of aides to help you read more efficiently. Each week, I've highlighted a general question that we'll be thinking about in class as well as more specific questions, that you should keep in mind when working through the material. Those specific questions *appear in italics* under "helpful info" blurbs that appear below each reading. Use those blurbs! Looking there first will help you read more strategically.

You'll also notice that I list a few optional readings. You do NOT need to do these. But if you're really excited by the material, please do use them!

Please note: the page-length of readings changes from week to week. Some weeks we read as little as 30 pages, other weeks I expect that you will read close to 60 pages. Please plan ahead. If you

can't read everything, you should do what most time-strapped academics do, skim responsibly. This means reading the first sentences of every paragraph and trying to figure out where the "pith" of the article/chapter is. (In some weeks, I've even specified readings you ought to skim.) In all cases, you should **read actively**: look for the main thesis, sub-points, concepts and examples used by the authors; think about how the various texts you're reading for each week relate to each other and the texts from previous weeks. I will expect that students will read and/or skim responsibly all assigned pages *before class* -- unless specified.

Please note that, for some weeks, movies are assigned in addition to the readings. Those will generally appear on the course's Blackboard site.

### **A Quick Word on Class Discussions and Distance Participation**

This is a seminar-style class and we will engage the material by way of discussion. If past experience is any predictor, I think you will really enjoy this part of the class. There's some lecture peppered through the class sessions, but the discussions tend to be especially fun and enriching.

This does present a challenge to the students who have elected to take this course by distance, from places outside of Dunedin.

I have tried to resolve this by giving **Distance Students** the option to participate in one of two ways.

- (1) *For those who are able*, I invite Distance Students to log-in to the class live and participate via videoconference. We have a very slick set-up for this, involving a videoconference-ready room and IT support. (Thank you, Otago.)
- (2) *For those who cannot participate* during class time, video recordings of the lectures/discussions will be made available online, so that students can catch up on the discussions in class.

Further helpful information for distance students can be found on the Religion Programme's webpage, under "courses": <http://www.otago.ac.nz/religion/courses/index.html>

### **Must read: Your responsibilities as a student.**

This is a short list of non-negotiable, minimal responsibilities for students. As a student in this paper, I expect that you will:

1. Make sure that your **read and understand the expectations and assessment policies** in this course outline.
2. **Access course materials through Blackboard and the Otago Library** e-reserve site. (If you have issues, contact the ITS service desk on 0800479888, [its.servicedesk@otago.ac.nz](mailto:its.servicedesk@otago.ac.nz))
3. **Make sure that you are receiving and reading all electronic communication** sent through Blackboard. (This may mean updating your communication preferences so that you receive the emails and announcements sent to the entire class through Blackboard.) "I never read that email" is not viable excuse in this paper.
4. Complete all **assessments** on time. I almost never grant extensions.

## *Assessments*

### RELS 314

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Written Reflections                    | (10%)                  |
| Debate Assignment                      | (20%) May 23, in class |
| 2,000-word Essay on Religious Identity | (30%) May 2, 5pm       |
| 2 hr. open-note Exam (300-level)       | (40%)                  |

### RELS 414

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Written Reflections                    | (10%)                  |
| Debate Assignment                      | (20%) May 23, in class |
| 3,000-word Essay on Religious Identity | (30%) May 2, 5pm       |
| 2 hr. open-note Exam (400-level)       | (40%)                  |

I recognize that you are overworked students, most of you in your third or fourth years. For this reason, I've created assessments that I hope are manageable, achievable and useful for you. These assessments will help you digest the material. They will also help develop precision and creativity in researching, analysing, writing and speaking -- key Humanities skills that you will help you in your jobs after university or post-graduate study.

I discuss each assessment, in order:

#### Written Reflections

Research shows that students who reflect regularly on what they are learning are more likely to retain and use new ideas over the long term. This assignment encourages you to do this.

Roughly every second week, you will write a Written Reflection, for a total of four over the course of the semester. These are **due by Thurs. at 5pm** in the weeks marked with an \* below in the course outline. Reflections must be submitted by **email** using following **subject line**: **"RELS314/414 REFLECTION PIECE"**. (If you do not use this subject-line, I may not get your reflection because I create an automatic rule to direct these to my teaching folder.)

For **300-level** students, the Reflections will be one page (200-250 words). For **400-level** students, they will be two pages (400-500 words). I writing them, I ask you to do two things:

- (1) Reflect on what you have found intriguing, compelling, unusual, surprising, frustrating and/or confusing over the past two weeks. If you do this seriously, you'll be amazed at how much this improves your recall by the end of the year!
- (2) Pose at least *one question* about which you'd like clarification and list at least *one theme* you'd like to discuss further in subsequent classes. The goal here is to hear your opinions and feedback so that I can tailor the class and conversations more closely to your interests.

These WRs are **not marked**. Provided they are the *right length*, show some *seriousness* and are turned-in on-time, they will receive 2.5 points each. Late WRs will not be accepted. Please **read over** your **pieces** before sending to catch major typos. Aside from a good way to consolidate learning, this is a *really* easy way to get 10/10 points.

### Essay on Religious Identity

The first half of this class analyses how and why religion produces a sense of identity among a certain group of people. It gives you theories and case studies. In this assignment, I want you to take some of these theories and apply them to other case studies. That is, I want you to use the ideas from class to analyse the world around you. To do this you will write an essay – **2,000-words for 300-level** and **3,000-words for 400-level** – in which you chose a particular group of people and answer the following question

*What practices, ideas and techniques does this group of people use to generate a sense of collective identity and/or a sense of difference from other groups of people?*

Students can choose any group they like. These groups might describe themselves as religious (e.g. the congregation at a local Jewish temple) or non-religious (e.g. a residential college, a sports team, a collective of some sort). Please bear in mind, though, that some portion of your mark will reflect my perception of whether or not you honestly engaged in some concerted research. So, alas, a detailed analysis of drinking in the pub will not be treated equally to participant observation of a Buddhist meditation session. For that reason, if you plan to investigate a group that is non-religious please make sure you clear it with me ahead of time!

You can also choose from a variety of modes of research. You could read texts produced by that group (online or print). You could attend the rituals or meetings of that group. You could interview members of that group. I am very flexible and want to support you in finding exciting and fun research methods, which fit your interests. Please come and talk to me, if you're having trouble thinking of a topic. This should be a chance for you to indulge your interests, not a burden! The best way is to arrange a phone call or office hours.

No matter what you do, the essay must fulfil three requirements:

1. It must draw upon primary sources. These are sources that you analyse directly. These may be myths, rituals, interviews (that you conduct), field notes (based on your observation of members of group), books, speeches and many other things. They can even be scholarly sources, if you plan to critique the 'collective identity' of scholars. What makes a source a primary source is how you use it: you treat something as a primary source when rather than relying on its authority, you are dissecting it, critiquing it, thinking about who wrote it and why; you examine how the source works to shape or undermine identity; you treat it with an attitude of needing to interpret it, clarify it, critique it, historicize it, contextualize it, or debunk it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> You may use primary sources that are embedded within secondary sources. E.g., if an academic source contains a translation of a religious myth, use it! If there are art historical images in a journal article, analyze those. This may all seem a bit fuzzy now, but please talk to me about finding appropriate sources if you have trouble. I am sure it will become clear

2. In examining these primary sources and analysing the groups, you just make use of academic *secondary sources*. These must be peer-reviewed scholarly sources.<sup>2</sup> If you do not know the difference, or how to locate good secondary sources, please let me know and we can discuss this in class.

3. It must use primary and secondary sources to analyse how and why a particular group is able (or unable) to generate a sense of identity among its adherents. You should do this in a manner similar to the scholars we're reading in class and think about the categories they use: ritual, myth, worldview, bodily practices, etc.

A few more things

*A note on internet sources:* These must be used with EXTREME caution. In some cases, e.g. if you're working on contemporary movements, one might use some internet sources as primary sources. However, websites should almost never be used as secondary sources. Wikipedia can be helpful in the initial stages of research but does NOT count as an academic source!

*Length:* Do not count footnotes or bibliography in this total. You may go over the limit 10% or under the limit 10% without a grade reduction.

*Format:* This matters. Essays must be double-spaced, Times New Roman, include page numbers. At the top must be your name, student ID number, date and word-count. Footnotes and bibliography must follow one of the following styles: Chicago or MLA. All citations for specific ideas, quotes or facts must have page numbers. (Citing a whole book or article is not OK unless you are clearly and obviously referring to the authors' overall argument.) For guides on this see: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/religion/pdfs/styleguide.pdf>

*Submitting:* Essays must be uploaded to the appropriate link on Blackboard (so we can run it through SafeAssign). It is *your* responsibility to make sure that your essay has been submitted properly. If there is a problem you must send me an email *that same day* with a copy of your essay in PDF or MSWord format. Telling me two days later that "Blackboard lost my submission" is not a legitimate excuse. Late papers are marked down 5% per work day. Extensions are almost never given, except in the cases of medical emergencies. We take plagiarism very seriously, so please do review our plagiarism policy (below). Or, better, just don't do it.

So that I'm very clear with you about my expectations, let me tell you at the outset that essays will be marked according to the following **rubrics**:

*Basics and polish:* Did the author follow the prompts listed in the reader and is the piece free from careless errors (grammar, spelling, citation style). The best pieces will carefully provide all things asked for in the course outline (e.g. word count, page numbers, plagiarism declaration, etc.).

*Argument/Structure:* Does the piece make a clear argument and have a clear structure? Does the argument flow logically and draw upon ample and well-analyzed evidence? Is it clear what 'work' the paragraphs are doing and are there strong transitions between paragraphs? (The *first sentences of paragraphs* are especially important in this regard. Make sure these sentences do two things: (1) introduce the content/point of that paragraph and

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<sup>2</sup> Generally speaking, academic sources are articles that appear in peer-reviewed academic journals (e.g. those that are accessed through JSTOR) and books that are published by university presses (e.g. Oxford Univ. Press). If you're confused, please go and ask the librarian. Or, as a last resort, come and see me.

(2) make plain how the content/point of that paragraph relates to the overall argument of the essay.) Does the essay have a clear *introduction* that lays out the argument in a direct and clear way and explains why the argument is important, controversial or otherwise should be of interest to the reader? Does it have a *conclusion* that recaps briefly the key points of the essay and explains the significance of the argument for scholars, policymakers or others?

*Content:* Does the piece show evidence of time spent researching and thinking? Does it build upon, critique and advance ideas presented in lectures, required readings and/or recommended readings (rather than simply summarize)? Does it present original ideas? Does it show sophistication in locating, digesting and engaging with a number of appropriate primary and secondary sources? The best pieces will engage deeply with multiple secondary and primary sources beyond those in the required or recommended readings. (Note: Mere citation of works does not count as ‘engaging’ with them.)

### Debate Assignment

Student evaluations in previous years have called this assignment a highlight of the course. I really hope it will be again!

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, we will have an in-class debate in which members of the seminar will argue about the identity of yoga in the modern world and/or those who practice it. I will split the class into two teams. Each team will conduct research and prepare arguments. However, the main points of the debate are to help you consolidate your learning, prepare for the exam and have a bit of fun. The questions that will be debated are as follows:

*Is yoga Hindu? Is yoga a religious? Are those who practice yoga Hindus and/or religious adherents?*

One side will argue the affirmative (e.g. ‘Yes, yoga *is* religious). The other side will argue the negative. The debate will be run in a manner similar to a courtroom trial (or formal debating teams). One side will go first, introducing and defending a single line of argumentation. The other side will then have a chance to challenge that line of argument, followed by a brief response or ‘Third Word’ from the first team. More details about the format will follow in class.

All members of the group will be expected to present their ideas—although, if students are not on-campus *or are* particularly anxious about public speaking, alternative arrangements can be made (e.g. having others read a statement, or present their ideas). I do not expect students to deliver memorised, polished speeches—a la Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Students are welcome to present however they feel most comfortable: from reading off a page, to using cue cards, to simply riffing on a few points they’ve written down, to asking someone else to read for them. I do *not* want the debate to be a source of anxiety!

In preparing for the debate, students (in their teams) will be provided with a list of primary and secondary source readings. This list will be distributed in class later in the semester. From this list, each student will choose *at least two sources* (you can, of course, choose more!), which they will read and use to argue their case. By ‘source,’ I mean a single article or chapter in a book or legal document or other primary source—as with your essays, a primary source could also be an interview or participant observation of a yoga class. Closer to the debate, teams will hold *at least one meeting* to discuss strategy and prepare arguments. Those arguments will bring together the yoga research with the theories and themes we’ve discussed in class to make a persuasive case.

Each team will also be given the opportunity to *meet with me for up to an hour* so that I can answer questions and help in honing strategies. I anticipate that much of the work preparing for the debate will happen in the three weeks before debate occurs, so this is something to think about after you've handed in your essays. And, most importantly, it's not something to stress about: a key goal of this exercise is to have fun!

As some students will be participating by Distance, teams will have to find technologies and strategies to maximize their involvement (e.g. Skype or Zoom). Technical help is available for those who cannot find a suitable technology. (It bears saying here that working in global teams and via internet is something you will be doing a lot in your post-university lives!)

I realise that students will have various backgrounds in Hinduism and Indian religions. Some will have no background. For this reason, participants in the debate will be expected to explain and defend their positions *to someone who has little or no background knowledge of Hinduism*. (Imagine that I'm a judge in a NZ court.) This doesn't require giving an entire history of Hinduism, nor does it require dumbing things down. It means presenting your ideas in a way that is accessible to any audience. This may mean summarizing the key points and evidence of the article you read. It may also mean presenting any relevant background information that a non-specialist would need to know. (Explaining religion to those without prior knowledge is an important skill to cultivate, and it's a role that you –as scholars of religion –will be called upon to play in the world.)

Marks will be allocated in two ways for this assessment. I will allocate half the marks (10 pts.) based on the overall performance of the team on the day of debate. These will reflect my perception of how effective the team was in offering a range of clear, reasoned, well-coordinated and well-supported arguments. (By the way, teams are not competing for a limited set of marks; I am quite happy to give both teams 10s, and have in the past.) The other half of the marks (10 pts.) will be allocated by the individual students him/herself, based on the student's own perception of his or her contributions to the group. Students will submit their self-marks along with a short statement (1-2 pages) explaining why they give themselves that mark. This statement will describe their personal contributions to the team, specify the research they did and reflect briefly on how one could improve the debate exercise and/or the group collaboration process in the future. A more detailed set of instructions will be distributed in class after the mid-semester break.

Please know that I am aware of your potential anxieties about 'group marks' and will be sensitive to this. However, I am assigning marks for this assessment because I know it will take some of your time and I want to make sure that time is recognised and rewarded. (You should know that I am very happy to have a class discussion about a better marking scheme, if we can come up with one collectively in the first three weeks. So, if you have a better idea, email it to me and I will introduce the idea to the class and then hold anonymous online voting.)

### Exam (Open-Note)

So that I don't have too many assessments during the semester, when you're already overworked, 40% of your marks will be assessed during exam week in the form of a final exam administered by the examinations office. However, this is not your usual exam. The exam will consist of two parts:

- (1) a series of short answer questions which will examine your success in completing the readings, attending/viewing the seminars and digesting the key ideas and examples.
- (2) An essay question which I will give you ahead of time, and will ask you to build upon and further analyse the group of people that you analysed for your essay, drawing upon theorists and ideas that we explore in the second half of the class. That is, if your first essay asks you to examine how those groups generate a sense of sameness among

adherents, your exam essay will ask you to examine how other/external influences such as law, politics or capitalism have altered the way that group's identity is formed or perceived or displayed or mobilised. I know that sounds arcane right now. But, don't worry it'll seem like second nature to you by the time the exams role around!

Exams will differ for **300-** and **400-level**. The 400 exams will have more short answer questions and I will expect a higher level of mastery over the materials as well as a higher level of sophistication on the part of the essay.

The exam is **open book** in the Otago sense. This means that you will be able to take a **single double-sided sheet of notes into the exam**. If you want to write out your entire essay on that sheet and copy it into the exam book, that's fine with me. If you want to take comprehensive notes on the class and use that for the short-answer section, that's also fine with me.

You learn by studying for exams and that's all I care about. I'm *not* trying to test how well you perform under pressure!!!

### *Other Information*

#### **Plagiarism**

Students should make sure that all work submitted is their own and should fill in and attach a signed coversheet to their essay. Plagiarism is a form of dishonest practice. Plagiarism is defined as 'copying or paraphrasing another's work whether intentionally or not and presenting it as one's own' (*University of Otago Calendar*, 2006, p.193). In practice this means that plagiarism includes *any* attempt in any piece of submitted work (e.g. an assignment or test) to present as one's own work the work of another (whether of another student or a published authority) including work from the Internet.

Any student found responsible for plagiarism in any piece of work submitted for assessment shall be subject to the University's dishonest practice regulations which may result in various penalties, including forfeiture of marks for the piece of work submitted, a zero grade for the paper, or in extreme cases exclusion from the University. For more advice on this policy see "Academic Integrity: A Brief Guide for Studies" at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/study/academicintegrity/> and the 'Study skills' section in Blackboard.

## **OUTLINE OF LECTURES**

\* = reflection pieces due that Thursday by 5pm via email with RELS314/414 REFLECTION PIECE in subject line

### **What is religious identity? (Feb 28<sup>th</sup>)**

**Reading Questions:** What is Jewish 'identity' and who decides?

Galanter, M. "A Dissent on Brother Daniel," *Commentary* Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 10-17 (July, 1963).

Helpful info: This is one of my favourite short essays on religious identity ever. It really helps give you a living, breathing sense of just how complex religious identities can turn out to be! If you can, please read it ahead of time. If you cannot read ahead of time, you're welcome to read it after class. We'll be working through the first part of it, together, in class, as a group.

**Optional:**

Sen, Amartya. *Identity and Violence: the illusion of destiny*. Norton, 2006. Pp. 18-39.

### **Ritual and the enacting of identity (Mar 7<sup>th</sup>)\*** **Reflection piece due Mar 9<sup>th</sup> at 5pm**

**General Questions:** What is ritual and how does it work on society? How would Durkheim and Turner interpret a graduation ceremony? What would each look for?

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Karen E. Fields. New York: Free Press, 1995 [1912]. Pp 216-225.

Helpful info: These sections are taken from what is (for many people) one of the most important books written about religion, ever. These are not, however, the sections that are normally assigned by lecturers. To cut a long story short, *The Elementary Forms* is a book about how religion operates in societies and why it is important. Most people consider Durkheim to be one of the first, if not the first, sociologist. (Durkheim felt this way himself). Over his career, Durkheim wrote about topics as diverse as economic production, suicide and many other things. Yet he was always concerned with why and how societies hold together. In this book, he asks that question with respect to religion: what role does religion play in holding society together? *Pay attention to the details of the ritual he describes and ask yourself what parts does he consider important and why.*

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968. Pp. 94-107.

Helpful info: Victor Turner is a well-known anthropologist who worked and wrote mostly from the 1960s to the 1980s. This text comes from his most famous work on ritual, cited widely, called the Ritual Process. In it, he tries to take his ethnographic research from Africa and piece together a total theory of ritual and how it works. This theory has tantalising similarities to Durkheim. But it's also different in many ways. When reading, ask yourself several things: (1) *What ritual does Turner choose as emblematic of 'the ritual process'?* (2) *How does that ritual work?* (3) *What do you think this reveals about the different approaches that Durkheim and Turner take to ritual and its work on society?*

**Myth, discourse and the narration of identity (Mar 14<sup>th</sup>)**

**General Questions:** What is myth and how does it generate or consolidate identity?

Malinowski, Bronislaw. "Myth in Primitive Psychology." In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Edited by Michael Lambek. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002 [1922]. Pp. 176-84.

Helpful info: In the same way that some sociologists consider Durkheim to be the 'father of sociology,' some anthropologists consider Malinowski to be the 'progenitor of modern anthropology.' His formative work, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, laid the foundation for what has become the modern ethnographic method. In this reading, Malinowski explores the importance of certain myths in Melanesian society. In short, he sees myths as functioning like law or, in his words, serving as a 'social charter' for societies. *What does he mean by this? How does his example prove that point?*

Lincoln, Bruce. *Discourse and the Construction of Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. Pp. 15-26.

Helpful info: Bruce Lincoln is a scholar of religion from the University of Chicago, and a former professor of mine. His work is synthetic, drawing from a wide variety of sources and languages. However, he does have a central concern: he is interested in how religion justifies and rationalises the social order in particular times and places. His theories are similar to Malinowski, but he gives us much more detail on what, exactly, makes a myth a myth. When reading, ask yourself, *can any story be a myth? Under what conditions does narrative become myth?*

*Holy Bible, The New Revised Standard Version. Genesis 1-12, 15-18:15.*

Reading note: I want you to have a general look at this. Do NOT feel like you need to absorb all the details exactly. *Ask yourself, could you read this as social charter (as Malinowski might), or as a particular type of authorised narrative (as Lincoln might)?*

**Symbols and beliefs and 'religious' violence: identity as worldview (Mar 21<sup>st</sup>)\***

**Reflection Piece due Mar 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5pm**

**General questions:** What is the relationship between belief, symbol and religion? What might make violence 'religious'?

Geertz, Clifford. "Religion as a Cultural System" *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Edited by Michael Lambek. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. Pp. 205-216

Helpful info: Clifford Geertz could be, and probably is, the most well-known anthropologist of our generation. And, when it comes to the anthropological study of religion, this essay probably is the best-known treatise on what religion is and why we should study it. When reading, *think about how Geertz's approach to the study of religion—and, especially, his approach to symbols—differs from that of Durkheim or Turner or Malinowski, etc. Also ask yourself how Geertz might think about the corroboree or a graduation ceremony?*

Juergensmeyer, Mark *Terror in the Mind of God*. LA: University of California. 1-15

Helpful info: If you've studied anything about the relationship between religion and violence or religion and terrorism in the last two decades, chances are you've read the work of Mark Juergensmeyer. He was trained as a political scientist and sociologist initially, but has turned his attention to religion for most of his academic career. This book came into print shortly after the 9/11 attacks in the US. And many people consider Mark to be the scholar who first made the study of violence and religion a viable academic field, now populated by numerous authors. When reading this, I suggest that you *think about how Juergensmeyer draws from and/or builds upon the work of Geertz*.

"Final Instructions to the Hijackers on September 11," *In Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion After September 11*. Bruce Lincoln. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: pp. 93-98.

Reading note: When reading this, think about *how G and J might interpret the final instructions?*

### Optional:

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger*. New York: Routledge, 1966.

### Religious identity beyond belief: power, discipline and practices (Mar 28<sup>th</sup>)

**General questions:** How is the body important in forming religious identity? How does this change the way we think about the identity-making work of religion?

Asad, Talal. "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category" in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Edited by Michael Lambek. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002 [1993]. Pp. 116-26; 128-9.

Helpful info: these excerpts are taken from one of the most important articles in Religious Studies in the last four decades. It's a long article and Asad's writing can be rather opaque. Take a broad approach and think about what his main, overarching critiques of G are. *Generally speaking, what seems to be bugging him about Geertz's article on "Religion as a Cultural System"?*

Samuels, Jeffrey. "Toward an Action-oriented Pedagogy: Buddhist Texts and Monastic Education in Contemporary Sri Lanka." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72, no. 4 (2004), Pp. 962-968. (You may read the whole article if you like, it's not THAT long)

Helpful info: I've only assigned six pages of reading here, but you're welcome to read the whole thing. It's a fun article and written extremely clearly. Samuels is writing about Buddhist monks in the highlands of Sri Lanka. He's also writing *against* a particular view of how monastic education works in Buddhism. *How does he think it works, and how is this different from the standard view?*

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press, 2005. 118-139, 144-8, 155-161

Helpful info: I love this book, and I love these sections. Mahmood is writing about *da'wa*, or religious revivalist movements in Egypt, particular among urban, middle class Egyptians. The examples she refers to in this section are taken from her anthropological work with that group. *When reading, think about what it means to approach religion (or any other social phenomenon) with an eye towards bodily practices?*

Please skim: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/vinaya/bhikkhu-pati.html>

Helpful info: This is the list of 227 rules that Buddhist monks in Theravada Buddhist countries are supposed to follow. It is called the "The Bhikkhu Patimokkha." You don't need to memorize any of it. Just get a sense for what the rules say. *What jumps out at you??*

### Optional:

Griffith, R Marie. *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 160-205.

Stark, R. and Iannaccone. "[Why the Jehovah's Witnesses grow so rapidly: A theoretical application](#) *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12(2) (1997), see esp. pages 144-46.

**The Religious Other: anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and Multiculturalism (Apr 4<sup>th</sup>)\***  
**Reflection piece due on Apr 6<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.**

**General questions:** How do caricatures of other (religious) identities help to shape one's own (religious) identities?

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Anti-semitic and Jew*. Trans by George J. Becker. New York: Schocken Books, 2006 [1944]. 4-20, 39-41.

Helpful info: This essay was written by Jean-Paul Sartre, the famous French existentialist philosopher, at the very end of WWII, after France had been occupied by Germany. In it, he tries to account for the persistence of anti-Semitism in the wake of the war and offers a speculative psychology/philosophical account of what motivates four 'ideal types' of people: the anti-Semite, democrat, the inauthentic Jew and the authentic Jew. You're reading about the first two for this week. The essay is impressionistic and based on his own insights, but nonetheless makes a dramatic impression on readers! When reading ask yourself: *What is Sartre's main message about the nature of anti-Semitism? Why are people anti-semitic?*

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. "The Demands of Identity." In his *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. 62-71, 110-113.

Helpful info: Appiah is one of the most well-known and insightful theorists of identity. He's not a specialist on religion per se. When reading, ask yourself: *What kinds of lessons about identity does Appiah take from the Robbers Cave experiment? How does Appiah understand the difference between: identification vs. identity, recognition vs. imposition, parameters vs. limits?*

Gottschlak and "From Mohammad to Obama" in *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century*. Edited by John L Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 191-209

Helpful info: The topic of Islamophobia is vast and important in the modern world. This chapter offers one viewpoint. When reading, ask yourself: *do Sartre's comments on anti-Semitism also apply to Islamophobia?*

### Optional:

**Watch:** Documentary: The Muslim Experience in America (a 2007 documentary created by the US Public Broadcasting Corporation about what it's like to be Muslim in the US after Sept 11, 2001.)

Kalin, Ibrahim. "Islamophobia and the Limits of Multiculturalism" in *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century*. Edited by John L Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 3-20.

David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 1-28, 209-26 (chs. 1-2 & 14).

### Rationalization and Hinduism in Bali (Apr 11<sup>th</sup>)

**General questions:** What is rationalization and how does it affect 'religion'?

Weber, Max. *Economy and Society*. Translated and Edited by Guenther Roth and C. Wittich. San Francisco: University of California Press, 1978. Vol I, Pp. 422-439.

Helpful info: Max Weber is an early-20<sup>th</sup>-century German Sociologist and one of the most important 'classical' theorists of religion. These sections are taken from his *magnum opus*, *Economy and Society*, which he worked on feverishly in his later years, but never finished. (The pages were only put together after his death.) In these sections, Weber traces a historical and categorical shift from "magic" to "religion," involving shifts in the key persons, key methods and key aims of (for lack of a better term) worship. He describes this process as one of 'rationalization.' Magic and religion are, for Weber, "ideal types," sociological abstractions that, while not accurate to all realities, function as useful caricatures or stereotypes for understanding the world. See if you can come up with a fully stereotyped portrait of "magic" and "religion" for Weber. When reading, ask yourself *what's the difference between magic and religion for Weber?*

Geertz, Clifford. "Internal Conversion in Bali" in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, 1973. Pp. 170-190.

Helpful info: In this lively chapter, Geertz uses Weber's idea of rationalization to explain changes in worship practices in Bali. He summarizes Weber nicely. His description will help you digest the sections from *Economy and Society*. Keep in mind that this article was published in the early 1960s, based on fieldwork from the 1950s. If you're interested, it might help to read a bit about Indonesian history on Encyclopedia Britannica online!

Picard, Michel. "What is in a Name: Agama Hindu Bali" in *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia*. Edited by Martin Ramstedt. London: Routledge, 2003. Pp. 56-72.

Helpful info: Picard is a long-time observer and analyzer of changes to Balinese life. In this essay, he complicates Geertz's portrait of religious change in Bali, by attending to the colonial origins of Balinese religious reform and 'rationalization.' He mentions a lot of Balinese/Indonesian-language journal names here, so don't be put off. To help you keep track: Following a split in Bali's intellectual elite between Balinese nobility (*truwangsa*) and commoners (*jaba*), some members of the nobility started the magazine Bali Adnjana, while commoners started a magazine called *Surya Kanta*. Do your best to keep track of the differences between how the two journals understood and named Balinese 'religion.' That

is, to quote from his title, *what's the important of the name Agama Hindu Bali?* Moreover, ask yourself, when reading, *what causes rationalization in Bali?*

### **April 18 – Mid Semester Break**

**April 25 – ANZAC Day – no class**

**May 2 – Ben Away – no class but essays due!**

*-Essays due at 5pm on Tue, May 2nd-*

**Syncretism, Hybridity and Religious Change (May 9th) \***  
**Reflection Piece due May 11<sup>th</sup> at pm**

**Reading questions:** What are the different models of religious complexity examined in these readings (e.g. hybridity, syncretism, etc.)? In what ways do they challenge the understandings of religious identity we've examined so far?

Kristin Bloomer, "Rosalind" in "Possessed by a Goddess: Hinduism, Christianity, and the Virgin Mary in South India," Ph.D. Dissertation in History of Religions for the University of Chicago. Pp. 73-101.

Helpful info: Kristin is a scholar of religion in Tamil-speaking India. She did ethnographic work in and around Chennai, Tamil Nadu. In this piece, she describes her experiences at a Pentecostal Christian worship service in Chennai. *Try to think about the ways Christianity and/or Hinduism have changed in this context.*

Kinnard, Jacob N. "Preface" *Places in Motion: The Fluid Identities of Temples, Images and Pilgrims*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. x-xx

Walters, Jonathan "Multireligion on the Bus: Beyond 'Influence' and 'Syncretism' in the Study of Religious Meetings." In *Unmaking the Nation*. Edited by Pradeep Jeganathan and Qadri Ismail. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 1995. Pp. 24-54

Watch: Documentary on Shared Religious Spaces (on Blackboard)

Helpful info: The first two of these two readings (Kinnard and the documentary film on Blackboard) examine the phenomenon of shared religious sites, where a single place of worship is considered sacred to multiple communities. It provides an interesting counterpoint to the types of religious mixing described above. Walters' piece provides an interesting theoretical counterpoint, in which he critiques the ideas syncretism presented. When reading and watching these, ask yourself, *is there a certain model of religious complexity that you prefer? Why?*

**Capitalism, Commodification and Spirituality (May 16<sup>th</sup>)**

**Readings questions:** How has modern consumer capitalism changed religious life and religiosity? Has it diminished the effects of ritual, myth, etc., which we discussed in the first part of the class?

King, R. And J. Carrette *Selling Spirituality*. New York: Routledge, 1-29, 114-120.

Helpful info: *Selling Spirituality* has become something of a standard for thinking about changes of religion in the modern world, and the rise of “spirituality.” This is the introduction to book, plus a couple of sections that deal with yoga. When reading this, *try to figure out the nitty gritty of King and Carrette’s arguments. What exactly is ‘spirituality’ (in their definition) and how does it change religion?*

Lofton, Kathryn “Practicing Oprah; or, the Prescriptive Compulsion of a Spiritual Capitalism” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 39, No. 4 (2006): 599-621.

Helpful info: Kathy Lofton is one of the most exciting scholars of religion in the academy right now. Her area of expertise is American religion, and in this piece she thinks about Oprah as an American religious icon. What’s interesting about this piece, vis-à-vis, the others is that Lofton is showing how, under the conditions of modern capitalism, an ostensibly non-religious thing can *become* religious. When going through it, think *about how Lofton’s approaches to Oprah differ from King and Carrette’s approaches to yoga.*

Sanger, Annette. “Blessing or Blight: The Effects of Tourist Dance Drama on Village Life in Bali” in *Come Mek Me Hol Yu Han*. Edited by Lewin and Kaeppler. Kingston: Jamaica Memory Bank, 1988. Pp. 89-102.

Helpful info: When reading this, think about how capitalist incentives changed Balinese ritual. *Compare Sanger’s piece with our discussions in Week 7: how does tourism complicate the picture of ‘religious’ change in Bali? How does Sanger’s perspective differ from Carrette and King or Lofton?*

Watch: “Who Owns Yoga?”

Helpful info: This is a documentary put together by *Al Jazeera Media* that looks at the ‘Yoga business’ in the US and UK. It is reasonably balanced, but certainly lacks something in scholarly analysis. I introduce it here for two reasons: (1) to help us think about commodification in a more grounded way; (2) to get our juices flowing for the debate next week on yoga!

### Optional:

Picard, Michel, “Cultural Tourism in Bali: Cultural Performances as Tourist Attractions” *Indonesia* 49: 37-74.

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| <b>Class Debate: Is Yoga Hindu? Is Yoga Religion? (May 19<sup>th</sup>)*</b> |
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**Reading questions** (for the debate): Is yoga Hindu? Is yoga a religion? Are those who practice yoga Hindu and/or religious?

Helpful info: Modern postural, asana-based yoga (the Lululemon-type of yoga) owes its origins largely to the influence and activities of a small number of early-twentieth-century Indian “gurus,”

all of whom had as their main teacher the southern Indian brahmin T. Krishnamachariya (1888-1989[that's right, 101 years old!!]). These gurus—which include BKS Iyengar and K. Pattabhi Jois (who are 'cult figures' in the yoga scene)—have a complex relationship with Hindu traditions and innovation. The issue of modern yoga, therefore, provides an interesting topic for investigating and debating what Hindu/religious identity is and how it works. The question isn't merely one of academic interest. In recent years, the question of 'Hinduness' of yoga has been at the centre of very acrimonious and important legal disputes in the US and India. There is information on these on the Bb site, and we'll talk a bit about them pre-debate. The complexity of this question along with its growing salience make it an ideal debate topic. For a general introduction to the 'modern yoga scene' see the following article written by a well-respected scholar of yoga, and practitioner himself, Dr. Mark Singleton: <http://www.yogajournal.com/article/philosophy/yoga-s-greater-truth/>

Please bear a few of things in mind:

(1) *It doesn't matter whether you have taken any classes on Hinduism*; you will be expected to present your arguments the class in a way that doesn't assume or expect any background knowledge of the tradition. That is, I expect that you will both *summarize* your reading and *mobilize* it as part of your argument (this is, after all, what one does as an academic, lawyer, business person, etc.)

(2) *If you DO have some background in Hinduism, please consider* making use of that background and working with arguments and sources that explain and analyse the pre-modern Hindu ideals and texts: e.g. the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Vedic sources, the Bhagavad Gita, etc. That would be very helpful for the class.

(3) Have fun! *The goal here is to use everything you've learned so far* in this class to make a public argument. Think about ritual, myth, techniques of the body, worldview, othering, syncretism and capitalism and commodification. If done responsibly and with vim, this will be an excellent way to review and synthesize the main themes and ideas of this class.

### Optional viewing:

*"Yoga Unveiled"*

I have not viewed this documentary in its entirety, but I include it because it gives a counter-perspective (I am hoping[!]) to the movie you viewed for last week. There is one copy of this film in the library on close reserve, but I will look for an online version for you to view in the comfort of your computers. Although a bit cheesy (oh, you'll see), this documentary does summarize somewhat nicely some arguments for the continuity of modern postural yoga with older Indian traditions. The filmmaker interviews some important academics here and introduces some important texts, ideas and historical events and persons.

### Summary and Recap: Religious 'Nones' and the end of identity (May 30<sup>th</sup>)

**Reading Questions:** Use the NONEs article to come up with a theory for the lack of religious identity in America. Is this the absence of identity? If so, why??

Pew Forum on Religious Life, "Nones" on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation" Pp. 1-80. (You can read this quickly!)