

The Religious Quest

Wheeling Jesuit University
Department of Theology
THEO 115-01/ 02
Spring 2019

MWF 9:00-9:50/ 10:00-10:50
Donahue 128

Daniel M. O'Hare, Ph.D.

Professor's Office # 127-D Donahue

Professor's Contact information: 2310 (on campus); dohare@wju.edu

Office Hours: Office Hours: MWF 8:00-8:50 AM; R 12:00-1:00 PM; or by appointment

Catalog Course Description:

An introduction to how people address such "religious" issues as faith, doubt, deity, good, evil, community, salvation, and worship. Particular attention is given to ways of interpreting the Bible, and how this sacred literature addresses the lives of its many readers.

Textbook(s):

Required Textbooks

All required readings for the course will be made available on the Course Documents section of Blackboard in the Course Documents folder, or at the web links provided in the Course Schedule. We will be reading major portions of the following works.

1. There are two editions of Bradley Herling's *A Beginner's Guide to the Study of Religion*. We will use the first edition, which is the one made available on Blackboard. Either is appropriate for use in this class. **If you purchase the second edition, the numbers will be different from those in the course outline below.**

Edition 1: Herling, Bradley. *A Beginner's Guide to the Study of Religion*. New York/ London: Continuum, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-8264-9531-0

Edition 2: Herling, Bradley. *A Beginner's Guide to the Study of Religion*. London/ New York: Bloomsbury, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-4725-1277-2

2. The Bible. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and the New American Bible (NAB) are the preferred versions. All of the biblical texts for this class will be provided on Blackboard. If you would like to find alternative translations, you can check the following web resources.

NRSV: <http://www.devotions.net/bible/00old.htm>

NAB: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm>

3. The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>). Links to the required compositions will be provided in the Course Schedule below.

Student Learning Objectives:

Upon their successful completion of this course, students will have met the following goals competently, orally and in writing.

1. Understand how critical theories of religion apply to selected religious texts and rituals and demonstrate this understanding through careful attention to the primary texts/enactments and their “thick description” (Critical Thinking, low). This measured by the exams and quizzes.
2. Creatively apply ideas about myths and rituals discussed over the course of the semester to the invention of a new myth or ritual that exemplifies ideas discussed in class (Creativity, medium). This is measured by the Myth/ Ritual Project.
3. Understand a foreign religious outlook empathetically and begin to see their own assumptions through the eyes of someone from another culture. The primary mechanism for this will be a comparison of an unfamiliar +civilization’s beliefs to the student’s core values (Global Perspectives, low; Ethics, low). This is measured through the final paper.

Evaluation Methods

I prefer that all written assignments (the Myth/ Ritual Project and the final paper) be handed in to me in hard copy. If this is impractical, assignments may be e-mailed to me at dohare@wju.edu or submitted to Blackboard. **All written assignments are due at the beginning of class** (i.e. by 9 or 10 AM or earlier) or they will be counted as late.

Quizzes. Four quizzes will be held in class according to the schedule below. The quizzes will be held over both your reading and the material discussed in class.

Two *Exams* will be given according to the schedule of the class below. They include all aspects of the course, including lectures, discussions, media presentations, and reading. Review periods will be held before each exam to allow students to prepare properly.

The Myth or Ritual Project is an opportunity to creatively synthesize material covered in class with your own personal interests and perspective. For this project, you should invent a **fictional myth or ritual** (one or the other, not both), and provide both of the following elements.

- A complete description of exactly what occurs in the ritual, or the text of the myth itself. This should be about 3-5 double-spaced pages.
- An analysis of the potential significance of the myth or ritual using ideas from theorists discussed in class. The more intensively you engage with the ideas and theorists presented in class, the better you will do. This should comprise 3-4 double-spaced pages as well.

These projects will be graded on the creativity of their myth or ritual, its coherence, and how deeply it engages ideas from critical theorists discussed in class. Independent research

outside of Herling’s book is permitted but not required for this project. This is due by the beginning of class on **Monday 4-15**.

The Final Paper is intended to be a thoughtful, critical summary of the theories, myths, and rituals encountered in class, as well as how these will affect the respondent going forward. Using both theories and specific myths and rituals encountered in class, address the following questions in your essay.

- 1) How does religion serve both to justify and critique the predominant values of society?
- 2) Is religion “true”? What does it mean to qualify religion as “true” or “false”?
- 3) How do the myths, rituals, and theories encountered in class help me to clarify my own core values?

While there is no required length, the more extensively and persuasively you address the above questions, the better you will do. The final paper will be due during the normally scheduled exam period (see course outline below for details).

The grading scale and weight of grades are below.

		B+	88-90	C+	78-80	D+	68-70
A	93-100	B	83-87	C	73-77	D	61-67
A-	91-92	B-	81-82	C-	71-72	F	0-60

Quizzes (4)	28%	Myth/ Ritual Project	22%
Final Essay	20%	Exams (2)	30%

Attendance Policy:

Attendance at each class session is recommended. For first-year students and those on academic probation, six hours of class (i.e. **six classes**) may be missed without penalty. No distinction is made between unexcused and excused absences for the purpose of this class. Absences beyond this point without a valid excuse (death in the family; serious injury) will result in a grade of FA at the sole discretion of the instructor. All late work will lose five points per day late, including weekends.

Last Date to Drop the Course: The last day of the Add/Drop Period for this semester is Friday, January 11, 2019. The last day to withdraw from this course with a grade of a W is Tuesday, March 26, 2019.

Disability Statement:

Wheeling Jesuit University offers students with documented disabilities individual accommodations on a case-by case basis with confidentiality in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

In order to receive academic or physical accommodations, students with disabilities must provide current (within three years) and comprehensive documentation concerning the nature and extent of the disability and communicate their needs to the Disability Services Director, located in

Ignatius Hall Room G 24 or call 304-243-4484. Students are required to meet with the director to develop accommodation plans that they will present to their course instructors at the beginning of each semester. Students with disabilities that require specific housing accommodations must contact both the Director of Residence Life and the Disability Services Director.

Ultimately, all students with disabilities are responsible for their own academic achievement. They must attend classes, complete course assignments, and fulfill all university requirements for their chosen field of study. It is up to students with disabilities to seek out available assistance on campus and to utilize individualized accommodations that promote academic success.

Academic Integrity Statement:

Students are advised that WJU's Academic Integrity Policy will strictly be enforced in this course (see www.wju.edu/studenthandbook). Questions regarding the policy may be directed to the Office of the Academic Vice-President

Official E-mail: An official WJU e-mail is established for each registered student, each faculty member, and each staff member. All university communications sent via e-mail will be sent to this WJU e-mail address.

The Academic Resource Center:

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) is a totally free academic-support service available to all enrolled Wheeling Jesuit University students and staffed almost exclusively by WJU students recommended for employment by WJU faculty. The ARC is located in Bishop Hodges Library and is open five days a week:

Sundays 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Mondays-Thursdays 1:00-9:00 p.m.

Please visit the ARC's website (readily accessible on the Cardinal homepage under "Quick Links" or as the first listing under "Student Services") to learn about the ARC's services (emphasizing writing, math, and the sciences) and to schedule appointments.

Title IX Statement:

Wheeling Jesuit University seeks to provide an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have been the victim of sexual harassment, misconduct, or assault we encourage you to report this. If you report this to a faculty member, she or he must notify our college's Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may choose whether you or anyone involved is identified by name). For more information about your options at WJU, please go to <http://wju.edu/titleix/>.

Class Etiquette. You may use electronic devices for accessing assigned or recommended texts in this class. If you distract yourself or others, you may be asked to put the device away. Repeated distraction will cause you to forfeit the right to use any electronics in class.

Course Outline

- 1-7 Introduction to the Class
Why Study Religion?

Beginnings in Religion

- 1-9 Methods in Studying Religion (self-consciousness, comparison, defamiliarization, empathy)
Read: Herling 6-13, 19-20
- 1-11 Theories in Religion (definition and description)
Read: Herling, 23-32
ADD/ DROP PERIOD ENDS
- 1-14 Theories in Religion (explanation and prediction)
Read: Herling 32-37
- 1-16 Insider/ Outsider Problem in Religion; Orders of Meaning
Read: Herling 37-42
- 1-18 Theology and Religious Studies; review for Quiz 1
Read: Herling, 42-45
- 1-21 **Quiz 1**

Individual Experience and Mysticism

- 1-23 Religion and Rationality (Schleiermacher, Otto)
Read: Herling 47-53
- 1-25 William James
Read: Herling 53-55 and James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 279-281, 317-319
- 1-28 1 Enoch 12-16
Read: 1 Enoch 12-16; (esp. chapter 14)
- 1-30 2 Corinthians 10-13
Read: 2 Corinthians 10-13 (especially 12.1-10)

Social Reality and Consuming the Deity

- 2-1 Émile Durkheim
Read: Herling 55-59; *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 35-46
- 2-4 Hainuwele; review for Quiz 2
Read: Hainuwele
- 2-6 **Quiz 2**

2-8 The Lord's Supper
Read: synopsis of New Testament institution accounts

2-11 Review for Exam 1

2-13 **Exam 1**

Institutions and Charisma

2-15 Max Weber
Read: Herling 59-63; Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, 60-71

2-18 Charismatic Missionaries in the Early Church
Read: Matthew 10-16 and parallels; Mark 13.9-13 and parallels; *Didache* chapters 11-13

2-20 Institutionalization in the Early Church
Read: 1 Timothy chapter 3; Titus chapter 1; Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Ephesians*

Society and Renewal

2-22 Victor Turner
Read: Herling 63-67, *Ritual Processes* (selections)

2-25 The Community Rule (1)
Read: The Community Rule (BB)

2-28 The Community Rule (2); review for Quiz 3
Read: The Community Rule (BB)

3-1 **Quiz 3**

SPRING BREAK; NO CLASS

3-11 NO CLASS

Suspicion of Religion

3-13 Karl Marx
Read: Herling 73-78; *Marx-Engels Reader* 53-54

3-15 Sigmund Freud
Read: Herling 78-81; *Future of an Illusion*, 37-42, 48-53

3-18 Enki and the World Order
Read: Enki and the World Order
<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr113.htm>

- 3-20 Inana and Enki
Read: Inana and Enki
<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.3.1#>
- 3-22 Inana's Descent to the Netherworld
Read: Inana's Descent to the Netherworld
<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr141.htm>
- 3-25 Inana and Dumuzi/ Inana and Išme-Dagan
Read: Inana and Dumuzi/ Inana and Išme-Dagan
<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr40823.htm>
<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.5.4.11#>
- 3-26 LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH A GRADE OF "W"
- 3-27 Review for Exam 2
- 3-29 **Exam 2**

Biblical Accounts of Origins

- 4-1 Yahwistic Story of Creation
Read: The Yahwistic Story of Origins: Creation
- 4-3 Cain and Abel
Read: The Yahwistic Story of Origins: Cain and Abel
- 4-5 Yahwistic Flood Story (Genesis 6-9); Genesis 11.1-9
Read: The Yahwistic Story of Origins: The Flood and the Tower of Babel
- 4-8 Priestly Story of Creation
Read: The Priestly story of origins: creation
- 4-10 Priestly Flood Story and its aftermath
Read: The Priestly Story of Origins: the flood and its aftermath
- 4-12 NO CLASS; WORK ON MYTH/ RITUAL PROJECT
- 4-15 Review for Quiz 4
Myth/ Ritual Projects Due in Class
- 4-17 **Quiz 4**
- EASTER BREAK
- 4-24 J. Z. Smith, Narratives into Problems
Read: J. Z. Smith, "Narratives into Problems"

4-26 Thinking Through the Final Paper

Section 1 (9:00-9:50 AM): **Final Paper Due Wednesday 5-1, 10:30 AM**

Section 2 (10:00-10:50 AM): **Final Paper Due Monday 4-29, 1:30 PM**