RELIGION 395: ENGAGING OTHERS: ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION
Spring 2016

Also ANTH 395
M/W/F 10:00 – 10:50 am
Allbritton 304

Instructor: Justine Quijada
iquijada@wesleyan.edu
Department of Religion, Room 209
office hours: Wednesday 1 – 3, Thursday 1 – 3pm

“If you go to the field and find what you were looking for, then you weren’t paying attention.”
– Raymond Fogelson

What do we study when we study religion? We can observe practices, record speech, examine
objects and actions, but what do these things tell us? If religion is about belief, what can we
say about belief from documenting actions? Perhaps we must conclude that religion is not
about belief, but if so, are in danger of ‘explaining away’ the very phenomena we seek to
understand? This course will introduce students to a cross-cultural, comparative perspective
on religious practice and belief, in order to provoke critical reflection on the role of
methodology and research design in the study of religion. How do we know what we know?
How do we plan research in order to find out what we want to know? The course has a
significant methods component. Students will be expected to do field research exercises in a
local religious community, and prepare a methodology research proposal as a final project.
Methodological exercises will be interspersed with ethnographic texts that allow us to reflect
on how religion is studied, experienced and explained.

Course Requirements:
All assignments are due in class in both a paper and email copy. Please be sure to include
your name, page numbers and appropriate citations with a bibliography of all works cited in
the assignment, even if these are already on the syllabus. Points will be deducted for these
and all other forms of authorial sloppiness. Late assignments will automatically drop one
grade per day late. More than two unexcused absences may result in a grade penalty or being
asked to withdraw.

1. Class Participation and reading responses 10% of final grade. You are expected to
complete all readings, and contribute constructively to class discussion.

2. Methodology Exercises:
Each student must select a religious or possibly organization, either on campus or in
Middletown, where they will attend rituals on a regular basis. It is highly recommended that
you do all assignments at the same organization. For those students who are using the course
to plan senior thesis research, it is advisable to plan these exercises so that they contribute to
this research.
1. Describe a ritual 10%
2. Describe an object and its use in a religious context 10%
3. Discuss your description of a ritual using Geertz and Asad 20%
4. Prepare an informed consent statement and guiding questions 5%
5. Conduct and transcribe an Interview 15% of course grade

4. Final assignment: Methodology proposal 10-12 pages (30% of course grade)
First draft due April 25st. In class presentations in the last week of class. Final due May 10th

For the final assignment students will prepare a research proposal, with a full methodology section. This proposal may be for a research project the student is actually planning (such as a senior thesis project) or may be a fictional one. The proposal must contain a brief outline of the research to be conducted, a description of the methods to be used, and an explanation of why the proposed methods will answer the research question. While I recommend that students propose research at the fieldsite they have been researching for the semester this is not always the best option for all students. We will be discussing these projects in class, but please also see me in office hours if you have questions about designing a project.

Required readings:
All required books are available at Broad St. Books. All other readings are available on Moodle and in a course packet through the print shop (order through your portfolio).

- Zigon, Jarrett 2010 HIV is God’s Blessing: Rehabilitating Morality in Neoliberal Russia, University of California Press
- Rosaldo, Renato, 1993 Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis, Beacon Press
- Chau, Adam Yuet 2006 Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China, Stanford University Press (this was ordered late and will probably not be in stock until later in the semester).

Fair Warnings

1. NO LAPTOPS IN CLASS: Laptops and other electronic devices are very distracting and thus are not allowed. I will allow e-readers as long as they lie flat on the table and do not appear to interfere with participation.

2. You are responsible for knowing and adhering to the University’s Honor Code.

3. PLEASE REMAIN IN THE CLASSROOM. Class is only 50 minutes. Please come on time and remain in the classroom for the duration of class. Getting up and leaving to get water, to go to the bathroom, etc. is disruptive and disrespectful of your classmates. If this represents a hardship to anyone please see me.

Students with Disabilities:

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as
possible. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Class Schedule: Students should read the assigned reading before the class for which it is assigned, and be prepared to discuss it in class. All required books are available at Broad St. Books. All articles are available on Moodle and in the packet.

Part 1 - What is Fieldwork and what is religion?
1. Friday 1/22 Introduction and discussion of assignments

2. Monday 1/25
- Clifford Geertz, Thick Description, in The Interpretation of Cultures, 1973 Basic Books
- Morten Klass, Chapter 1 At Play in the Sacred Grove (p. 1-7) and Chapter 4 The Problem with the Supernatural (p.25 – 33) in Ordered Universes: Approaches to the Anthropology of Religion. Boulder: Westview Press 1995

3. Wednesday 1/27 Fieldwork Ethics
- American Anthropological Association and British Association for the Study of Religion Ethics statements

4. Friday 1/29 – Fieldwork Ethics

5. Monday 2/1 –
- Clifford Geertz, Religion as a Cultural System

6. Wednesday 2/3 Structuralism
- Clifford Geertz, Religion as a Cultural System

7. Friday 2/5 Group B

8. Monday 2/8
Assignment 1 Due 2/10 in class: 1. Attend a Religious Ritual and Describe it. 3-4 pages.

9. Wednesday 2/10
- Janice Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits, Prologue, Chap. 1 & 2

10. Friday 2/12
- Janice Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits, Chap. 3 & 4

11. Monday 2/15 SURVEYS
- Janice Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits, Chap. 5 (p. 166 - 194)
Assignment #2 Due – Describe an object, 2 – 3 pages
12. Wednesday 2/17 - Genealogy
- Janice Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits, Chapter 6
- Constance deRoche, Exploring Genealogy in Angrosino, Doing Cultural Anthropology
  2007, Waveland Press

13. Friday 2/19 –
Janice Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits Chapter 7 & 8

14. Monday 2/22
- Janice Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits, Chapter 9 & 10

15. Wednesday 2/24
- Renato Rosaldo, Culture and Truth, Introduction and Chapter 1

16. Friday 2/26
- Renato Rosaldo, Culture and Truth, Chapters 2 & 3

17. Monday 2/29
Assignment #3 Due – Midterm – Using your description of a ritual, attempt to explain it using at least 2 of the authors we have read in class so far. 4-5 pages 20% of course grade
- Renato Rosaldo, Culture and Truth, Chapter 4 & 5

18. Wednesday 3/2
- Renato Rosaldo, Culture and Truth, Chapter 8
- read about the Institutional Review Board at
  http://www.wesleyan.edu/acaf/support/reviewboard.html and download a Description of Research Form

19. Friday 3/4
IRB’s and Interviews

Spring Break

20. Monday 3/21
- Zigon, HIV is God’s Blessing, Introduction, Chapter 1 and 2
PRACTICAL EXERCISE #4 DUE: Guiding Questions and Informed Consent Statement for your interview

21. Wednesday 3/23
- Zigon, HIV is God’s Blessing, Chapter 3 & 4

22. Friday 3/25
- Zigon, HIV is God’s Blessing, Chapter 5

23. Monday 3/28
- Zigon, HIV is God’s Blessing, Chapter 6 & 7
24. Wednesday 3/30  Group B
- Zigon, HIV is God’s Blessing, Chapter 8 & 9

25. Friday 4/1 NO CLASS DUE TO CONFERENCE - work on your interviews!!!

26. Monday 4/4 Discussion of Interview Assignment No forum posts
Practical Assignment #3 Due: Interview

27. Wednesday 4/6
Zigon, HIV is God’s Blessing, Chapter 10 and closing words

28. Friday 4/8 - Research Proposals
- A selection of research proposals (available on Moodle)

29. Monday 4/11 – Discussion of individual projects
No reading assignment – Please come in with a plan to discuss your planned project.

30. Wednesday 4/13
- Adam Chau, Miraculous Response Chaps 1-2

31. Friday 4/15
-Adam Chau, Miraculous Response, Chaps 3-4

32. Monday 4/18 ARCHIVES AND ORAL HISTORY
Adam Chau, Miraculous Response Chaps 5-6

33. Wednesday 4/20
-Adam Chau, Miraculous Response, Chaps 7-8

34. Friday 4/22
- Adam Chau, Miraculous Response, Chaps 9-10

35. Monday 4/25
– Adam Chau, Miraculous Response Chaps. 11-12
First Draft of the Research Proposal Due in Class

36. Wednesday 4/27 – Student presentations?

37. Friday 4/29 – Student presentations

38. Monday 5/2 – Student presentations

39. Wednesday 5/4 – Student presentations

FINAL PROJECTS DUE MAY 10th, 2014