Course Description
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the academic study of religion. We offer neither an overview of religious history nor a survey of global religious diversity. Rather, we will use a series of empirical case studies to explore theoretical issues and methodological approaches in the study of religion. Among other topics, we will examine: the construction of “religion” as a conceptual category; anthropological approaches to the study of religious belief and practice; religion as a philosophical resource; and the place of religion in American law. Together, these discussions will offer a set of descriptive, analytical, and explanatory tools for understanding the role of religion in contemporary social and political life.

Course Requirements
1. Punctual attendance at every meeting of the class. You will be held responsible for everything said and done in class.
2. Careful preparation of the assigned readings prior to their discussion in class. This is a reading-intensive course. You will therefore need to keep up with the scheduled readings and come to class with your books, a solid grasp of the readings and any questions that you may have.
3. Two in-class tests, each worth 20% of your grade.
4. Two short essays, due 10/6 and 11/10, worth 15% of your grade each.
5. A comprehensive (Registrar-scheduled) final exam on Saturday, Dec. 17, 9 am – 12 pm, worth 30% of your grade.

There are opportunities for earning extra credit by attending Religion Department lectures and writing responses over the course of the semester.

Fair Warnings
1. Laptops and other electronic devices are very distracting and thus are not allowed.
2. You are responsible for knowing and adhering to the University’s Honor Code.
3. Please remain in class for the duration of the class period. Getting up and leaving to get coffee, go to the bathroom, etc. is extremely disruptive and should be reserved for emergencies ONLY.

Students with Disabilities:
It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. Disability Services are very helpful and I encourage you to contact them if you
have any questions about whether or not you qualify for accommodations. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

**Required Textbooks**


**Required Course Packet** available through the print shop (order through your portfolio) or as individual files on moodle.

**SYLLABUS**

1. Tues. Sept. 6   **INTRODUCING AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION**

2. Thurs. Sept. 8  **DEFINITIONS**

3. Tues. Sept. 13  **DEFINITIONS**
Reading: William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, Lecture 2 (pp. 26-52), Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (pp. 1-8, 33-44) (packet/moodle)

**Jim Jones, The People’s Temple and Jonestown: History, Belonging, and Violence**

4. Thurs. Sept. 15 **DEAD BODY POLITICS**

5. Tues. Sept. 20 **JIM JONES’ THEOLOGY**
Readings: Chidester: Chaps. 2-3 (pp. 51-104, 177-80), Marx: “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” , 171 (packet/moodle)

6. Thurs. Sept. 22  **In-class movie: Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple**
2006, (be on time, we must begin promptly!)
Reading: Chidester, Chaps 3 – 4.
7. Tues. Sept. 27  SO WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE PEOPLE’S TEMPLE?  
Reading: Chidester: Chap. 5, Epilogue (pp. 105-69, 180-85)

The Book of Jerry Falwell: Ethnography, Language and Belief

8. Thurs. Sept. 29  STANDING IN THE GAP: ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD  
Harding: Preface, Introduction, Chaps. 1-2 (pp. ix-xvi, 3-82)

9. Tues. Oct. 4  Harding: Chaps. 3-4 (pp. 85-124)

10. Thurs. Oct. 6  Harding: Chaps. 5-8 (pp. 125-227)  First written assignment due

11. Tues. Oct. 11  Harding: Chaps. 9-10, Postscript, Appendix A (pp. 228-79)

12. Thurs. Oct. 13  In-Class EXAM

Tragic Spirits: Ethnography, Ritual and Disbelief

13. Tues. Oct. 18  INTRODUCTION TO MONGOLIAN SHAMANISM  
Readings: Manduhai Buyandelger, Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Memory and Gender in Contemporary Mongolia, Introduction and Chapter 1


Fall Break Oct. 22 – 25th

15. Thurs. Oct. 27  Readings: Tragic spirits, Chaps. 4 & 5,

16. Tues. Nov. 1  Readings: Tragic spirits, Chaps. 6 & 7

Eco-theology and Indigenous Critique: Religion as Philosophy

17. Thurs. Nov. 3  IN CLASS MOVIE – STANDING ON SACRED GROUND – FIRE AND ICE.  
Reading: http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/51cbeecf7896bb431f69a6f4/

18. Tues. Nov. 8  THE CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIANITY  
19. Thurs. Nov. 10  INDIGENOUS ALTERNATIVES

Second written assignment due

20. Tues. Nov. 15  TRANSFORMATIVE RITUAL?

21. Thurs. Nov. 17  CHRISTIAN ECO-THEOLOGIES

22. Tues. Nov. 22  In class mid-term EXAM

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Warner v. Boca Raton: Legal Definitions of Religion and Lived Practice

23. Tues. Nov. 29  WARNER V. BOCA RATON
Reading: Sullivan: Introduction, Chaps. 1-2, Appendix A (pp. 1-53, 161-78)

24. Thurs. Dec. 1  WARNER V. BOCA RATON
Reading: Sullivan: Chap. 3, Appendix B (pp. 54-88, 179-218)

25. Tues. Dec. 6  WARNER V. BOCA RATON Reading: Sullivan: Chaps. 4-5, Appendix C (pp. 89-159, 219-44)

26. Thurs. Dec. 8  Wrap up / Review session – PLEASE COME WITH QUESTIONS

Comprehensive (Registrar-scheduled) Final Exam Saturday Dec. 17, 9 am – 12 pm.