Religion 151: WHAT IS RELIGION?
SHAMANS, KOOL-AID AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT
Wesleyan University (Spring 2019)
(Sec. 1: T/Th 1:20-2:40 pm/ Sec 2: T/Th 2:50-4:10)

Professor Justine Quijada
Office Hours: Mon 12:30 – 3:30 pm or by appt.
Please note: My office hours this semester will be held on the third floor of my temporary office in the College of the Environment, Rm 301
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Course Description
Were the people who drank the Kool-Aid at Jonestown brainwashed or did they die for a noble cause? How do evangelical Christians read the Bible and does it have anything to do with their support for Trump? Can theology help us be better environmentalists? What's the relationship between gender, shamans, and Stalin? What exactly does the First Amendment protect? This class will introduce you to the ways in which we study religions by reading critical case studies about the Peoples Temple, Mongolian shamanism, Jerry Falwell, eco-spirituality and freedom of religion court cases. This is not a survey of world religions, and once you've taken What is Religion?, you'll know why we don't teach that at Wes. You will also have a critical set of intellectual tools for understanding the role of religion in the contemporary world.

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. Please prepare a question or comment that you have about that class’s readings for each class.
3. Two in-class tests, each worth 20% of your grade.
4. Two short essays, due and, worth 15% of your grade each.
5. A comprehensive (Registrar-scheduled) final exam on from 9 am – 12 pm, worth 30% of your grade.
6. There are two evening film screenings on Feb 11 and on March 25. If this produces a schedule conflict for you, you may watch the films on your own but you are responsible for their content.

Extra Credit:
There are opportunities for earning extra credit by attending Religion Department lectures and writing responses over the course of the semester. A list of events will be circulated (some are on the syllabus already) or you may attend any of the films in the Israeli film festival (Wednesday nights). You must write a 1 page response to the event and you may write up to 2 extra credits per semester. Each extra credit will replace the lowest 5% of your grade (up to 10%).
Fair Warnings
1. Laptops and other electronic devices are very distracting and thus are not allowed. If you have an exemption from the disability office please let me know.
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 them 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. Thurs. Jan. 24  INTRODUCING AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION

2. Tues. Jan. 29  DEFINITIONS
First written assignment due: Please write 1 page reflecting on your definition of religion (see prompt) – this is credit/no credit but is required.

3. Thurs. Jan 31  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. Tues. Feb 5  DEAD BODY POLITICS

5. Thurs. Feb. 7  JIM JONES’ THEOLOGY
Readings: Chidester: Chaps. 2-3 (pp. 51-104, 177-80), Marx: “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, 171 (packet/moodle)

Monday Feb. 11 - Movie screening, 7:10 – ca. 9 pm: location to be announced
Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple
Please note – the movie will be screened so that we can all watch it together. If you cannot attend the screening you can get the movie on reserve at Olin reserve desk or you may be able to find it online BUT you must have watched it in time for class discussion on Tuesday. Please plan accordingly.

6. Tues. Feb 12  HOW DOES OUR METHODOLOGY CHANGE OUR PERSPECTIVE?
Discussion of the movie/Chidester
Reading: Chidester, Chaps 3 – 4.

Extra Credit opportunity: Biological Gods: UFOs, Science (Fiction), and Some Emergent Mythologies  Jeffrey Kripal  Wednesday, February 13, 4:30 PM, PAC 002

7. Thurs. Feb 14  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. Tues. Feb. 19  STANDING IN THE GAP: ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD
Harding: Preface, Introduction, Chaps. 1-2 (pp. ix-xvi, 3-82)

9. Thurs. Feb. 21  Harding: Chaps. 3-4 (pp. 85-124)

10. Tues. Feb 26  Harding: Chaps. 5-8 (pp. 125-227)
First written assignment due

Extra Credit opportunity: “Heritage Dispossessed: Haunting, Theft, and the Making of Monumental History in Oaxaca, Mexico”  Hilary Morgan Leatham, Feb 26 4:20-6 pm, Room TBA

11. Thurs. Feb 28  Harding: Chaps. 9-10, Postscript, Appendix A (pp. 228-79)

12. Tues. March 5  In-Class EXAM
Eco-theology and Indigenous Critique: Religion as Philosophy

13. Thursday March 7  THE CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIANITY

SPRING BREAK March 8 – 25th

MONDAY BREAK March 25, 7-9 PM FILM SCREENING In the Light of Reverence location tba
Please note – the movie will be screened so that we can all watch it together. If you cannot attend the screening you can get the movie on reserve at Olin reserve desk. As far as I know it is NOT available online. You must have watched it in time for class discussion on Tuesday. Please plan accordingly.

14. Tues. March 26  IN THE LIGHT OF REVERENCE
in-class discussion of the movie. Please also read: Newspaper articles in the packet/moodle and the following online article:
https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/102741097/meet-the-river-people-who-speaks-for-the-rivers (link also available through moodle). Please read the article online because there are links to other resources, including the text of the legislation that granted the Whanganui River legal personhood.

15. Thurs. March 28  INDIGENOUS ALTERNATIVES/CRTIQUES

Extra Credit Opportunity: Religion and the National News Media (this is only a working title) Liz Kineke (CBS News) Thursday, March 28, 4:30 PM, PAC 002

16. Tues. April 2  TRANSFORMATIVE RITUAL?

17. Thurs. April 4  CHRISTIAN ECO-THEOLOGIES

Tragic Spirits: Ethnography, Ritual and Disbelief

18. Tues. April 9  INTRODUCTION TO MONGOLIAN SHAMANISM
Readings: Manduhai Buyandelger, Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Memory and Gender in Contemporary Mongolia, Introduction and Chapter 1

Second Written Assignment Due

Extra Credit Opportunity: **Annual Jeremy Zwelling Lecture, Manliness and Its Opposites: A Brief History of American Jewish Gender**, Sarah Imhoff, Monday, April 15, 8:00 PM  Russell House

20. Tues. April 16  Readings: Tragic spirits, Chaps. 4 & 5,

21. Thurs. April 18  Readings: Tragic spirits, Chaps. 6 & 7

22. Tues. April 23  In class mid-term EXAM

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

23. Thurs. April 25  **WARNER v. BOCA RATON**  
Reading: Sullivan: Introduction, Chaps. 1-2, Appendix A (pp. 1-53, 161-78)

24. Tues. April 30  **WARNER v. BOCA RATON**  
Reading: Sullivan: Chap. 3, Appendix B (pp. 54-88, 179-218)

25. Thurs. May 2  **WARNER v. BOCA RATON**  
Reading: Sullivan: Chaps. 4-5, Appendix C (pp. 89-159, 219-44)

26. Tues. May 7  Wrap up / Review session – PLEASE COME WITH QUESTIONS  
this is your chance to review before the final exam

Last Extra Credit Opportunity: **Holy Communion Condoms! The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence as a Case for Religion in Queer Studies**, Melissa Wilcox, Tuesday, May 7, 4:30 PM, CAAS Lounge (Vanguard Lounge)

**Comprehensive (Registrar-scheduled) Final Exam, Friday May 17th  9 am – 12 pm.**  
(I am hoping that I can have both sections take the final exam at the same time, I will keep you posted on this)