

## **REL490 Capstone Senior Seminar, Spring 2004**

Spring 2004: Mondays, 2-4:40pm, 101f SSC

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Office hour Thursday 3:15-4:00

### **The Course**

Inspired by Jonathan Z. Smith's recent visit to the University in September of 2003, we will read his works together in the Spring 2004 meeting of the Capstone Senior Seminar. The work of Jonathan Z. Smith has exerted a profound influence on the study of religion since the 1970s. Smith has stated boldly that "for the self-conscious student of religion, no datum possesses intrinsic interest. It is of value only insofar as it can serve as an exemplum of some fundamental issue in the study of religion." Smith's work endeavors to model this self-consciousness, while at the same time highlighting what he takes to be fundamental issues in both the study of religion and the college education more broadly. The goal of this class is to understand how Smith has exemplified methodological self-consciousness in his writing.

### **Writing and Class Work**

This is a student driven seminar, and each of you will make a substantial contribution to our meetings. For each group of readings listed in the schedule, you will write an abstract. Abstracts are descriptive summaries of both an article's bibliographic information and its essential features. Accordingly, abstracts provide an important service to your colleagues by communicating basic information. Abstracts must get to the point quickly and avoid commentary and analysis. An abstract should communicate an argument's key aspects to any reader not familiar with the original article. Generally, a good abstract should not exceed 150-200 words and should include an accurate description of the author's thesis, theory, methods of analysis, data, and conclusions. Specifically, you will address three points:

1. State the research problem:
  - \*The central problem posed
  - \*The argument for a solution to that problem
2. State the proposed solution to the problem
3. Describe sources and methods
  - \*What types of sources are used
  - \*How that argument is supported (i.e., how are those sources deployed)

In doing this, pay attention to both content (what he says) and style (how he says it). The purpose of these abstracts is to prepare you for our class discussions, and to build toward your final essay. There will often be more than one abstract per class session (see schedule).

### **Class Presentations**

In addition to the abstracts for which everyone is responsible, for each meeting two of you will be responsible for a more substantial presentation on 1) the day's reading and 2) entries from two major reference works, the *HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* edited by Smith, and the *Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Mircea Eliade. Working together, two of you will create an outline and presentation of the assigned readings as well as three to five major entries from the *Dictionary* and two to three entries from the *Encyclopedia*. The entries you choose should contribute significantly to our discussion of Smith's work by both deepening our knowledge of the data he uses in his essays and books and elucidating thematic issues raised by him. Your teamwork should occur as follows:

1. Carefully reading the assigned essays, both of you should make your own lists of key terms that you either want to know more about yourself or think that your classmates will benefit from knowing more about. These terms might relate to historical or ethnographic data, important theorists, or concepts used by Smith.
2. Working together, compare your lists and decide on a handful of terms that you think the class should know more about in order to profitably read Smith.
3. Find substantial entries in the two reference works on the key terms you have selected.
4. Write summary outlines of these entries for presentation in class.

### **Final Project**

Your final project will be to rewrite the abstracts and notes you have compiled throughout the semester into a ten-page intellectual portrait of Smith's work as a whole. This will be due Wednesday, May 5, 2pm.

### **Readings**

Smith, Jonathan Z. *Map is not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: 1978 [reprint Chicago: 1993]).

*Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: 1982).

*To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: 1987).

*Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: 1990).

*The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* (San Francisco: 1995).

Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: 1959).

### **Articles by J. Z. Smith**

"Close Encounters of Diverse Kinds." In Susan L. Mizruchi (ed.), *Religions and Cultural Studies*, 3-21. (Princeton: 2001).

"The 'End' of Comparison: Redescription and Rectification." In *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*. Edited by Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray. (Berkeley: 2000). Pp. 237-241.

"The Necessary Lie: Duplicity in the Disciplines." <http://teaching.uchicago.edu/handbook/tac12.html>. 2000.

"Religion, Religions, Religious." In Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* 269-284. (Chicago: 1998).

"A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion." *Harvard Theological Review* 82/4: 387-403. 1996.

"'Religion' and 'Religious Studies': No Difference at All." *Soundings* 71/2-3: 231-244. 1988.

"Playful Acts of Imagination." *Liberal Education* 73/5: 14-20. 1978.

### **Other Articles**

Kitigawa, Joseph M. "The History of Religions at Chicago." *The History of Religions: Understanding Human Experience*. (Atlanta: 1987). Pp. 133-144.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The History of Religions in America." *The History of Religions: Understanding Human Experience*. (Atlanta: 1987). Pp. 3-26.

### **Reference Work**

*The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Mircea Eliade, Editor-in-Chief. (New York: 1987). 16 volumes. Copies located in the reference section of the Gorgas Library, as well as in the Department Library (Manly 200), which is generally open in the mornings.

**Introduction: What is College Education?**

(1) 1/12:

“The Necessary Lie.”

1/19: No Class: MLK Day Holiday

**I. “History of Religions” as an academic discipline**

(2) 1/26:

Kitigawa, “The History of Religions in America.”

Kitigawa, “The History of Religions at Chicago.”

One abstract

Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, Introduction, chapters 1, 2, 4.

Three abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Defining Religion and Religious Studies**

(3) 2/2:

“A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion;”

“Religion, Religions, Religious;”

“‘Religion’ and ‘Religious Studies’: No Difference at All;”

Three abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

(4) 2/9:

*Imagining Religion*, Introduction, chapter 7.

*Map is Not Territory*, Introduction, chapter 13.

Four abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

**III. From Sacred Space to Place and Ritual**

(5) 2/16:

*To Take Place*, chapters 1-3

Three abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

(6) 2/23:

*To Take Place*, chapters 4-5, footnotes

Three abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

(7) 3/1:

*Map is not Territory*, chapters 4, 8.

Two abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

(8) 3/8:

*Imagining Religion*, chapters, 4, 5, 6

Three abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV. Comparison

(9) 3/15:

*Imagining Religion*, chapters 1, 2, 3

“The “End” of Comparison;”

*Map is Not Territory*, chapters 11, 12

Five abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

3/22: No Class

3/29: Spring Break

(10) 4/5: *Drudgery Divine*, chapters 1-3

Three abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

(11) 4/12: *Drudgery Divine*, chapters 4-5

Three abstracts

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

(12) 4/19: “Close Encounters of Diverse Kinds;”

“Playful Acts of Imagination.” *Liberal Education* 73/5: 14-20. 1978

\*Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

4/26: No Class

Final Papers Due: Wednesday, May 5, 2pm.