

RELG 490: Senior Seminar in Religion

Mormonism and the Critical Study of Religion

Instructor:

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Office hours: Wed 9-11

HH 109

Summary:

This course considers important methodological issues that influence the study of religion. Using a variety of theoretical approaches, and addressing some of the most pressing issues in the field, this course examines one religious tradition: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Looking at this single tradition from different lenses, we will consider the role that theory plays in analysis, consider the on-going influence of classical theories of religion, and discuss major topics in the field today.

Required Texts:

- David Walker, *Railroading Religion*
- Peter Coviello, *Make Yourselves Gods*
- Taylor Petrey, *Tabernacles of Clay*
- Joanna Brooks, *Mormonism and White Supremacy*

Course Goals:

Successful students in this course will learn to:

- Be familiar with different methodologies scholars use to study religion
- Be able to identify the major theorists that influence contemporary approaches to the study of religion
- Understand the reasons that scholars have come to different conclusions on the topic
- Be able to articulate verbally and in writing the positions that scholars have advocated
- Reflect on one's own intellectual frameworks for evaluating religion

Course Evaluation and Requirements:

- Eight Short Critical Reading Summaries. (20%) These should be one page, single spaced. Pick any eight weeks throughout the course of the quarter to fulfill these assignments.
- Attendance and Participation: (20%) This includes one visit to the Career Services office and attendance at Religion department events.
- Critical Review Essay (30%) (see attachment)
- Intellectual Autobiography (30%) (see attachment)

Honor Code:

This course operates under the College Honor System. That means we treat each other with respect, we nurture independent thought, we take responsibility for personal behavior, and we accept environmental responsibility. Academic honesty is a critical part of our honor code. In this class, you are free to collaborate on any assignment, but the final draft of your papers should be your own work. What this means is that you can consult your peers, the professor,

the Writing Center, friends, or anyone else as you work on papers or your daily questions. But when you sit down to revise your paper that you will turn in during class--that should be your own work. Any plagiarized work turned in as your own will receive a failing grade, and may be grounds for failing the course.

Challenges:

Any student with a challenge/disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible.

Schedule:

Week 1	Introductions
	Jan Shipps, "An Interpretive Framework for Studying the History of Mormonism," <i>Oxford Handbook on Mormonism</i>
	J.Z. Smith, "When the Chips Are Down" [For Intellectual Autobiography]
	Elizabeth A. Clark, "Women, Gender, and Christian History" [For Critical Review Essay]
Week 2	Abundant Events
	Robert Orsi, "2+2 = 5, Can We Begin to Think about Unexplained Religious Experiences in Ways That Acknowledge Their Existence?" <i>The American Scholar</i> , Spring 2007, available online at http://www.theamericanscholar.org/when-2-2-5/
	Stephen Taysom, "Abundant Events or Narrative Abundance: Robert Orsi and the Academic Study of Mormonism" <i>Dialogue</i>
	Ann Taves, "History and the Claims of Revelation: Joseph Smith and the Materialization of the Golden Plates," <i>NVMEN</i> 61 (2014): 182-207.
Week 3	Secularization I
	David Walker, <i>Railroading Religion</i> , 1-46, 185-248.
Week 4	Secularization II
	Peter Coviello, <i>Make Yourselves Gods</i> , 1-88, 215-40.
Week 5	Mormonism and Racialization

	Joanna Brooks, <i>Mormonism and White Supremacy</i> (selections) Chapters 1-3
Week 6	Post- and de-colonial Approaches
	Hokulani K. Aikau, <i>A Chosen People, A Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawaii</i> , 1-53
	Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks, eds. <i>Decolonizing Mormonism</i> (selections)
	Farina King, "Indigenizing Mormonisms" <i>Mormon Studies Review</i> (2019): 1-16
Week 7	Gender Studies and History of Sexuality
	Taylor Petrey, <i>Tabernacles of Clay</i> , 1-103, 211-24.
Week 8	Lived Religion
	Tona Hangen, "Lived Religion Among Mormons" <i>Oxford Handbook of Mormonism</i> , 209-26.
	Megan Stanton, "Structure of Home and Family: North America" <i>Routledge Handbook of Mormonism and Gender</i>
	Josh Probert, "The Materiality of Lived Mormonism," <i>Mormon Studies Review</i> 3 (2016): 19-29
Week 9	Media Studies
	John Durham Peters, "Mormonism as a Media Religion" <i>Oxford Handbook of Mormonism</i> ,
	Jake Johnson, <i>Mormonism and Musical Theater</i> , 9-31, 142-68.
	Brenda Weber, <i>Latter-day Screens: Gender, Sexuality, and Mediated Mormonism</i> , 13-48.
Week 10	Sociological Approaches
	Jana Riess, <i>The Next Mormons</i> , 1-12, 149-36.