

CPRL 400: Religion, Media, and Contemporary Culture



CPRL 400

Dr. Jeanette Reedy Solano

Fall 2013

Course Hours: Tuesday/ Thursday 11:30-12:45

Location: H224

Course website on TITANIUM (Moodle) be sure to check often

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursdays: 1:00-2:15 pm and Tuesday 3:50-4:50 pm **Office Location:** UH 311

Phone: 657-278-7554

Email: jsolano@fullerton.edu (best way to reach me--M-Fr only)

Burning Questions behind the course:

What types of dynamics exist between religion and media: reflexive, reactionary, creative? How are religious groups and spiritual seekers using social media and the internet to recreate spiritual community? How does the media shape our image of the religious "Other" or minority? Are most TV news anchors and journalists qualified to report on religion? How does religion inform and inspire television dramas and filmic narratives? If these, or similar questions, keep you up at night, then CPRL 400 is the perfect discussion-based course for you!

Course Aims/Objectives:

As the forms of media rapidly expand in the 21st century this course is evolving beyond our CSUF catalog description: "Religion reporting in the secular media, the religious press in America; the influence of the media, both secular and religious, on the shaping of society's values; ethical dilemmas faced by reporters." Many methods will be employed in our analysis: media studies, sociology, and religious studies. Thematic sections include: Religion, Media, and Culture, Religion and TV, Digital Religion (internet and social media), Journalism: Print, Radio, Religious Press, and finally, Religion and Film (documentary & feature narrative).

Learning Outcomes i.e. you can expect to exit the course with ...

1. Enhanced Media and Religious Literacy;
2. Better oral communication skills from weekly articulating your thoughts in a classroom discussion;
3. Improved writing skills: the ability to read more critically and write a paper with a critical edge;
4. Greater familiarity with online resources related to religion and religion and media studies;
5. Increased knowledge of the intersection between religion and creative entertainment and expression;

Required Course Texts (3)

1. **Gordon Lynch & Jolyon Mitchell, eds. *Religion, Media, and Culture: A Reader***
isbn: 978—0-415-54955-4 (Routledge, 2012)
2. **Heidi A. Campbell, ed. *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds***
isbn: 978-0-415-676113 (Routledge, 2012)

Books available at Little Professor Bookstore (725 Placentia Blvd; Ph. 996-3133). Maps will be provided on the first day of class—it is minutes from campus. You may also buy online—new or used.

3. 400 Course Reader Packet: articles & original documents compiled by Dr. Solano. I will provide one pack of articles at library reserve and bring one to class for students to copy. Since all readings are usable under “fair use” guidelines for education you may copy them without paying copyright. Approx. 200 p./8 weeks of readings. You need to have this collection of readings copied by Week 5.

Learning Assessment: Elements of your Final Grade

- 15%: Prepared Participation & Attendance**
- 10%: In-class Reading reaction papers (5 @ 2 pts each)**
- 25%: Critical Discussion Paper dialogue facilitation**
- 10%: 1 Short Reading Reflection Paper**
- 10%: Religion-in-the-News In-class Report**
- 30%: Final Research Paper**

- 100% / 100 pts.**

Explanation of Assessment and Grading:

- A+:** 98-100 Superb scholarship all-around
- A:** 93-97 Outstanding (participation and work consistently distinguished itself)
- A-:** 90-92 Excellent work across the board
- B+:** 87-89 Distinguished work
- B:** 83-86 Above average (high quality work in most areas)
- B-:** 80-82 Solid performance
- C+:** 77-79 Good work, but may have performed poorly in one area
- C:** 73-76 Average (you did all the work adequately and attended class)
- C-:** 70-72 Still a solid passing grade, may have performed poorly in several areas
- D+:** 69-67 Still a passing grade in GE, but not for majors
- D:** 63-66 Below average performance in many areas; may have failed to complete some work
- D-:** 60-62 Student did some work but probably did not complete a major assignment
- F:** below 60...well you don't want to go there! This score results in failure of the course.

This scale is firm. A few points can make a big difference.

Prepared Participation & Attendance (15%)

You are expected to have read materials thoroughly prior to each class meeting, bring this reading to class and to be prepared to engage in *every* discussion. Not only should you have read all of the assigned reading, but you should also be able to *initiate discussion* with questions and insights, not solely respond to questions. Express your opinion and ideas! The *quality* of your comments is always more important than *quantity*. You may earn up to one participation point each week, for a total of 15 pts. ***You earn these points—they are not granted just by mere attendance.*** You may miss one class and still earn 15, but any more absences will negatively impact your total points in this area—simply if you are not there you cannot earn a point that week.

VIP NOTE: All detailed guidelines for the options/assignments listed below are posted on TITANIUM under “Course Docs” -please print these out.

In-class-Reading Reaction Papers (10%-5 x 2% each)

Since **there is no midterm or final exam** to measure your reading comprehension, on 5 occasions throughout our 15 weeks we will pause and write a short 1 pg response to a prompt related to the day's reading. Each of these short reading-based reaction papers will be worth up to 2 pts. I will be looking for general comprehension of the material and encouraging the development of your critical voice in these short papers written in class.

1 Short Reading Reflection Paper (10%)

Once throughout the term you will write (prior to class) a short (2 page, double spaced) reflection on that day's reading. At the close of this reflection paper list **4 critical questions** which arose for you while reading. Your reading reflection paper is worth up to 10 points/10% of your grade. These papers will be graded according to the following scale: 6-7 pts-clear summary, but surface treatment-missed several key points; 8 pts-thoughtful analysis with good quality questions; 9-10 pts-excellent critical analyses with thought-provoking questions. Your paper is a written response to *all of that day's reading*-however you may focus or critique one particular section in more detail. This exercise helps us have better, more in-depth discussions since it guarantees at least of few students have prepared in depth! Week 2 you may choose the day you want-*it cannot be the same day you do your oral presentation*. Turn in papers at the end of our class session. Don't forget to write your short paper on your specific date. See handout for details.

Religion in the News In-Class Report (10%)

Once during the semester you will help us kick off class by reporting on 1 current news story related to religion. You should send Dr. Solano a link from 2 distinct media sources that represent 2 sides of the same news story. There is no written component, but you will introduce the story & critically reflect on the coverage.

Critical Discussion Paper & Discussion Facilitation (25%)

On one occasion during the term students are required to write a reaction paper that summarizes the day's reading and *critically reacts* to it. Beyond engaging the author and ideas raised in the reading, you should raise critical discussion questions and provide us with at least **8-10 thought-provoking discussion questions**. This 3-4 page double-spaced paper will be read aloud and peer-reviewed in class. See handout for details.

Term Research Paper (30%)

In place of a final exam you will turn in a 8-9 pg term paper (15 pages for grad students). You will be researching this topic and writing the paper in stages. Week 7 your thesis statement is due. This will be returned by Week 9. Week 10 your revised, improved Thesis statement and annotated bibliography of 5 books, 5 peer-reviewed articles, and 5 websites is due. This will be returned with comments by week 12, which leaves you a month to write and complete your paper, due Week 16 in place of your final exam. See handout for details.

CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND PROTOCOL

Since this is a discussion seminar each person's accountability and preparedness is very important to ensuring a fruitful experience. You are responsible for doing your part to ensure that happens. This means arriving to class **on-time, with your materials**. Tardiness disrupts the class and disrespects your peers. *Please* also no cell phones **out or even visible** in class...this is our sacred space. And finally, deadlines are **FIRM**, no late papers will be accepted.

Department of Comparative Religion Student Learning Goals & Outcomes:

A. Skills

Learning Goal: Students possess the ability to perform research and interpret materials related to the study of religion.

Outcome 1: Students can analyze written materials related to the study of religion.

Outcome 2: Students have acquired information literacy in the study of religion.

Learning Goal: Students can effectively communicate in written and spoken mediums.

Outcome 3: Students are able to write well-organized critical and analytical research papers related to the study of religion.

Outcome 4: Students are able to speak clearly and effectively using relevant and adequate supporting evidence.

B. Knowledge

Learning Goal: Students can demonstrate an understanding of the beliefs, rituals, texts, and figures related to a variety of religious traditions.

Outcome 5: Students can describe the basic teachings and practices of major religious traditions and can compare and contrast the principal similarities and differences between them.

Outcome 6: Students are able to identify the history and development of specific religions and their contemporary relevance.

Outcome 7: Students can compare key theories and theorists in the study of religion.

Outcome 8: Students can interpret key thinkers and figures within religious traditions.

Academic Honesty & Integrity

Students are to be held to the highest level of integrity. You are expected to be honest in your pursuit of learning. For a further explanation of what constitutes academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, please see UPS 300.021. The penalty for academic dishonesty will include a 0 on that assignment and possible failure of the course. All incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students Office, Judicial Affairs.

Learning Special Needs...If You Need Assistance...

Many of us have special challenges when it comes to learning. I want you to know I understand and will try to help you with your needs, but you must get it cleared through: **The Disabled Student Service Office**, UH 101, (714) 278-3117 or as documented at www.fullerton.edu/disabledservices/. The campus policy is to document the need and then the instructor can work to accommodate your need, whatever that may be: taking the exam in a quiet place with more time, taping lectures, etc. **Do not be afraid to seek the help you need to do your best in college!**

Considerations when Discussing Religion

At university we are all learning how to engage in intellectual discussions in a lively and respectful manner. Discussing religion, spirituality, beliefs, other people's faiths etc. can get extremely sticky. I hope that, soon enough, you will have made some new friends and feel comfortable sharing your opinion. I do not want you to be silenced by the PC Police, neither should the classroom be a place of evangelism. Being able to include (at appropriate times) your experiences is important. While I want to encourage passionate discussion, I strongly encourage you to be aware of the feelings of those around you. This classroom will have insiders and outsiders when it comes to religion and both perspectives are interesting and valuable. A cordial classroom is wonderful atmosphere in which to learn and we are all responsible for creating this milieu. Also, Type A Extroverts, *for whom I have much sympathy*, please be conscious of not dominating discussion time. A note to COM students: please ask for clarification re: religious issues/groups/beliefs that seem opaque or unfamiliar & I will do my best to synthesize & clarify ideas.

COURSE READING SCHEDULE

CR: Course Reading Packet; **TPD:** article posted on course website-please print and bring to class
RMC: *Religion, Media and Culture: A Reader* Ed. by Gordon Lynch and Jolyon Mitchell

I. Foundations of Studying Religion and the Media

Week 1: Introduction to the Course, Each other & Key Concepts

(8/27) Overview of the semester & Introductions

(8/29) **TPD: Diane Winston:** *Mapping the Royal Road*

(Intro to *Oxford Handbook of Religion and the American News Media*)

Week 2: Media and the Transformation of Religion

(9/3) **Readings for weeks 2-5 are from *Religion, Media and Culture: A Reader* (“RMC”)**

Ed. by Gordon Lynch and Jolyon Mitchell

Gordon Lynch: *Introduction*

RMC: Part II Intro (p. 71-74)

7: Stewart Hoover: *Religion, the Media, and 9/11*

8: David Herbert: *Why has religion gone public again?: Towards a theory of Media and religious re-publicization*

(9/5) **RMC: 9: Marie Gillespie:** *The Role of Media in Religious Transnationalism*

10: Diane Winston: *The Angel of Broadway: The transformative dynamics of Religion, media, gender, and commodification*

Week 3: Religion and the Ethics of Media and Culture

(9/10) **RMC:** Section IV Intro: pp. 203-206

18: Nick Couldry: *Unraveling the Myth of the Mediated Center*

19: Jolyon Mitchell: *Remembering news about violence*

(9/12) **20: Elaine Graham:** *Religious Literacy and public service broadcasting a research agenda*

22: Gordon Lynch: *Public Media and the Sacred: A critical perspective*

Week 4: The Sacred Senses: Part III

(9/17) **RMC:** Intro (pp. 131-134)

12: Colleen McDannell: *Scrambling the Sacred and the Profane*

13: Robert Orsi: *Material Children: Making God's Presence real through Catholic boys & girls*

14: Birgit Meyer: *Religious sensations: media, aesthetics, and the study of contemporary religion*

(9/19) **RMC: 15: David Morgan:** *Finding Fabiola: visual piety in religious life*

16: Finding Fabiola: visual piety in Religious Life

17: Christopher Partridge: *Popular music, affective space, and meaning*

Week 5: Religion, Spirituality, and Consumer Culture: RMC: Part 1

(9/24) **RMC:** Intro, pp.7-10

2: Pete Ward: *The Economies of Charismatic Evangelical worship*

3: Nabil Echaibi: *Mecca Cola and burqinis: Muslim consumption and religious identities*

CR: Lynn Schofield Clark: *Identity, Belonging & Religious Lifestyle Branding (Fashion Bibles, Bhangra parties, and Muslim Pop)*

(9/26) **4: Monica M. Emerich:** *The Spirit of Living Slowly in the LOHAS marketplace*

5: Lee Gilmore: *Burn-a-lujah! DIY spiritualities, Reverend Billy, and Burning Man*

6: Jeremy Carrette & Richard King: *Spirituality and the re-branding of religion*

II. Religion and Television

Week 6: Religion and TV: Islamic Representations

(10/1) **Research Day**

Work independently on Thesis (due 10/8) & gathering sources for your annotated Bibliography

(10/3) **CR:** Collection of Islam and TV articles, essays

Clips from *Homeland, American Muslim, and Little Mosque on the Prairie*

Week 7: Religion and Comedy? An Oxymoron or a Natural Entertainment Coupling?

(10/8) **CR: Mark Pinsky:** Excerpts from *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*

Clips: *The Simpsons & South Park*

(10/10) **RMC: ch. 10: Lynn Schofield Clark:** *Religion & Authority in a Remix Culture*

Clips from *The Colbert Report* and *The Daily Show*

III. Digital Religion: Religious Practice in a Digital Age

(readings from. *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* Heidi Cambell, ed.)

Week 8: Theory and Methods

(10/15) **Heidi Cambell:** *Introduction*

Part III: Reflections on Studying Religion and the New Media

20: Knut Lundry: *Theoretical frameworks for approaching religion and new media*

21: Mark D. Johns: *Ethical issues in the study of religion and new media*

(10/17) **22: Stephan Garner:** *Theology and the New Media*

23: Stewart M. Hoover: *Concluding Thoughts: Imagining the religious in & through the digital*

CR: Debra Mason: *Religion News Online*

Week 9: Themes and Thematic Case Studies

(10/22) **2: Christopher Helland:** *Ritual*

8: Heinz Scheffinger: *Hindu worship online and offline*

9: Louise Connelly: *Virtual Buddhism: Buddhist ritual in Second Life*

(10/24) **7: Gregory Price Grieve:** *Religion*

18: Erica Baffelli: *Japanese new religions online: Hikari no Wa and "net religion"*

5: Pauline Hope Cheong: *Authority*

14: Tsuriel Rashi: *The kosher cell phone in Ultra-Orthodox society: A Technological ghetto within the Global village?*

Week 10:

(10/29) **3: Mia Lovheim:** *Identity*

10: Vit Sisler: *Playing Muslim Hero: Construction of identity in video games*

6: Kerstin Radde-Antweiler: *Authenticity*

16: Nabil Echchaibi: *Alt-Muslim: Muslims and Modernity's Discontents*

(10/31) **4: Heidi Campbell:** *Community*

13: Tim Hutchins: *Considering religious community through online churches*

CR: Regina M. Marchi: *Day of the Dead as A New U.S. Holiday: Ritual, Media, and Material Culture in the Quest for Connection*

V. Journalism and Religion: A Complicated Relationship

Week 11: Religion and Broadcast news: Journalistic Issues & Coverage of Minority Religions

(11/5) **CR: Doug Underwood:** *Religion in Print Media*

CR: Michele Rosenthal: *Commercial Television News, Crisis, and Collective Memory*

CR: Adam Phillips: *The Reporter as Participant-Observer*

(11/7) **CR: Jane Naomi Iwamura:** *News Coverage and the Popular Press Reports of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the 1960's*

CR: Nick Street: *American Press Coverage of Buddhism from the 1870s to the Present*

Week 12: Religion on the Radio Waves and The Religious Press

(11/12) **CR: Peter Manseau:** *Religion News on the Radio*

Homework: Listen to and critique **one podcast** from Krista Tippett's NPR show: ON BEING
<http://www.onbeing.org/about> (archives of weekly 1 hour podcasts: from atheism to Modern Judaism)

CR: Interview by **Katelyn Beaty:** *The Public Listener: A Conversation w/ Radio Host Krista Tippett*

(11/14) **CR: Fajia Hirji:** *One Nation, Many Voices: The Muslim Press in the United States*

CR: select Readings from *The American Muslim*

CR: Ken Waters: *The Evangelical Press*

CR: Brett McCracken: *Hipster Faith* cover story of recent *Christianity Today* Magazine

Week 13: Journalism and Religion

(11/19) Students report on research topics

(11/21) Guest Speaker-TBA

*****Thanksgiving Break: November 25th-29th

VI. Religion and Film

Week 14: Religion and Narrative Film:

(12/3) **CR: Religion and Film Readings:** Assorted authors: **Dorsky, Lyden, Plate, Wright, Blizek**
Clips from *The Passion of Joan of Arc* & *Fight Club*

(12/5) **Religion, Community and Film**

CR: Craig Detweiler: chpt 7 "Crashing into the Ensemble Drama: Communities in Crisis"
From *Into the Dark: Seeing the Sacred in the Top Films of the 21st Century*

Clips from either *Little Miss Sunshine* or *Crash* or *Mystic River*

Week 15: Religion and Film: Focus on Religion and Documentary Film

(12/10) **CR: Jeanette Reedy Solano:** *From The Divine Flame to Kids on Fire: Documentary Filmic Explorations of Religion in the 21st Century*

Clips from 2 documentaries: *Jihad* and *Short Cut to Nirvana*

(12/12) **CR:** Various review, interviews, articles on *Jesus Camp*

Clips from *Jesus Camp*

Wk 16: No Final Exam!

Turn in final paper to my office UH 311 on Thursday, Dec. 19th, noon-1:50

Note: You may turn it in at our last meeting as well if it is ready (week 15, 12/12)