SCHOOL OF DIVINITY, HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

ACADEMIC SESSION 2017-2018

DR2575 – THEORIES OF RELIGION

15 credits, 11 weeks

PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:

The full set of school regulations and procedures is contained in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which is available online at your MyAberdeen page. Students are expected to familiarise themselves not only with the contents of this leaflet but also with the contents of the Handbook. Therefore, ignorance of the contents of the Handbook will not excuse the breach of any School regulation or procedure.

You must familiarise yourself with this important information at the earliest opportunity.

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR/COURSE TEAM

Dr Callum Pearce
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Old Brewery, G08
Office hours by arrangement.

Discipline Administration:
Mrs Lisa Evans
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TIMETABLE
Lectures: Mondays 1300-1500, CB202 (50-52 College Bounds)
Seminars: Thursdays 1600-1700, KCG10 (King’s College)
Revision Session- Monday (Week 12) 1300-1500, KCG10 (King’s College)

Students can view their university timetable at
http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/timetables-550.php

COURSE DESCRIPTION
A survey of leading theories of religion from the fields of economics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The main issues to be considered will be: what aspects of religion is each theory trying to explain; what aspects does the theory succeed in explaining; and how does the theory reflect the discipline from which it comes?

INTENDED AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES
To introduce students to the range of modern economic, psychological, sociological, and anthropological theories of religion and to enable students to apply theories to actual religions. By the end of the course, students should have become familiar with the range of modern social scientific theories of religion, with ways of comparing theories, with ways of applying theories to specific religions, and with ways of evaluating theories.

LECTURE/SEMINAR PROGRAMME
The first hour of each lecture slot will be given over to a conventional lecture, while the second hour will consist of discussion of topics raised by the lecture. Seminars will be based around the discussion of theoretical texts or case studies, listed with the seminar dates below. Additional readings are given for some of the lecture topics below; these are for background information or further study, and are not required for the seminars.

1 – Introduction: Defining religion, and E. B. Tylor (15 January)


No seminar
2 – Psychology I: Sigmund Freud (22 January)

Seminar (25 January)

3 – Psychology II: C. G. Jung (29 January)

Seminar (1 February)

4 – Émile Durkheim (5 February)

Seminar (8 February)

5 – Structural Functionalism (12 February)

Seminar (15 February)

6 – Max Weber (19 February)

Seminar (22 February)

7 – Marxism I (26 February)

Seminar (1 March)

8 – Marxism II: other interpretations (5 March)
Seminar (8 March)

9 – E. E. Evans-Pritchard (12 March)

Seminar (15 March)

10 – Symbolic anthropology and Victor Turner (19 March)

Seminar (22 March)

11 – Interpretive anthropology and Clifford Geertz (26 March)

Seminar (29 March)

ASSESSMENT

PLEASE NOTE: In order to pass a course on the first attempt, a student must attain a Common Grading Scale (CGS) mark of at least E3 on each element of course assessment. Failure to do so will result in a grade of no greater than CGS E1 for the course as a whole.

If you submit your work on time, you can expect that feedback will normally be provided within three working weeks (excluding vacation periods) of the submission deadline.
First attempt:
One 2,500-word essay (40%);
One two-hour written exam (40%);
One 1000-word book review (10%);
Participation (10%).

Resit:
One two-hour written exam (100%).

To view the CGS Descriptors please go to MyAberdeen- Organisations- Divinity, History, & Philosophy Student Information for Undergraduates. The link to the CGS Descriptors is on the left hand menu.

**ESSAYS**
Essays should be around 2,500 words long, give or take 10%. This word count does not include the bibliography. A good essay will demonstrate a working understanding of the theory illustrated with reference to a specific example, with some critical analysis or commentary on the theory itself. In each case, you should think about the advantages and limitations of the theoretical approach under discussion.

The following are suggestions for essay topics. You are welcome to develop your own essay title, or adapt one of the titles listed below by choosing a different illustrative example; in either case, please make sure you check with the course co-ordinator before you start writing.

1. Critically consider Freud’s theory of religion with reference to the Christian rite of the Eucharist and the story of the Last Supper.
2. Apply Jung’s understanding of religion to the vision of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1) OR the Buddha’s defeat of Mara (Buddhacarita XIII).
3. Would Durkheim view the behaviour of football fans as an expression of religious behaviour?
4. How would a structural functionalist interpret accusations of witchcraft?
5. How would a Marxist understand the role of Christianity among African-American communities in the USA?
6. Analyse the Muslim Hajj from a symbolic OR interpretive perspective.

ASSESSMENT DEADLINES
Book review: 3pm, Friday 23 February
Essay: 3pm, Friday 23 March

SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS
Submit a .doc or .docx and include the word count.

Submit by the due date, no hard copy will be required unless directly requested by the course coordinator through MyAberdeen.

In advance of uploading, please save the assignment with your student id number listed in the filename, i.e. 59999999 DRXXXX Essay 1.

When asked to enter a title for the assignment, please enter a title identical to the name of your saved assignment, i.e. 59999999 DRXXXX Essay 1.

Please note: failure to submit by the due date (unless a prior arrangement has been made) will result in a deduction of marks. Where no submission is received, this will result in a mark of zero.

Please note: Safeassign text matching software will be used, however the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy reserves the right to also submit material to TurnitinUK when deemed necessary.
EXAMINATION
The exam will be two hours long. Students will need to answer two questions from a list of six options. These questions will follow the basic format used for the coursework essays in this course.

General exam guidance will be given in the Student Handbook.

RESIT INFORMATION
One two-hour written exam (100%).

Access to the resit which is provisional on:

- All submitted coursework having been submitted and graded at CGS E3 or higher.
- Student having a valid Class Certificate. Students with C7s are not eligible for resits.

Past exam papers can be viewed at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/learning-and-teaching/for-students/exam-papers/.

Please Note: Candidates whose first language is not English may refer to English/native tongue dictionaries, when permitted by their Schools to do so. Electronic dictionaries are not permitted in the examination venue. Invigilators are entitled to request inspection of dictionaries prior to the examination, thumbing through them to check that there is no extra written material present.