

RELS 101 Approaches to Religion

(11:00 MWF, ECTR 103, Spring 2009)

Dr. Lee Irwin

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Office Hours: Mon & Weds 3:00-5:00 (or by appointment)

Course Description:

This course is about the concept of the "holy person" or the person who represents the spiritual ideals of a tradition. To better understand this concept, as a comparative theme in many religions, we will study four representative types of holy persons: a Crow Indian medicine man; several Hindu women saints of India; a Christian esoteric Master from Cyprus; and a Japanese woman Zen and Shinto practitioner. In each area we will discuss the ideal of the holy person and his or her relationship to both the history and philosophy of each religious tradition. We will also read one theoretical article for each religion in order to explore various theoretical approaches to the study of religion. The task is to understand how each holy person is located in his or her cultural and religious worldview and how that worldview might be interpreted by non-participant scholars in the study of religion. We will also explore the question of how each person helps to shape and develop their religious worldview as a creative leader and not just as an example of an ideal.

Books:

Fitzgerald, Michael. *Yellowtail, Crow Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief: An Autobiography*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.

Markides, Kyriacos. *The Magus of Strovolos: The Extraordinary World of a Spiritual Healer*. Penguin Books, 1989.

Myodo, Satomi and Sallie King. *Journey in Search of the Way: The Spiritual Autobiography of Satomi Myōdō*. SUNY Press, 1993.

Johnsen, Linda. *Daughters of the Goddess: The Women Saints of India*. YES International Publishers, 1994.

E-Reserve articles, on-line at: Library Homepage (click on) ➤ E-reserves ➤ Electronic Reserves and Reserve Pages ➤ Pages by Department, Religious Studies ➤ Irwin ➤ RELS 101 (see handout for password).

Requirements:

Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions. The assignments in this course include the following: five quizzes (15 minute each, 4% = 20%), two response papers (2-3 pages each, 15% each = 30%), a Mid-Term (25%), and Final (during final exams, 25%). No excuses will be accepted for missed assignments, such as oversleeping, lost books, or being stuck out of town. Assignments and tests are due on the day they are assigned. If you have a legitimate excuse, please talk to me before the scheduled assignment. Students must make up any missed assignments (or receive an F).

Honor Code: Lying, cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the Honor Code and are not permitted at the College. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students. A student responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure based on dishonesty. Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating.

Disabilities: If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter to me from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information regarding accommodation and the SNAP program, see: <http://www.cofc.edu/~cde/index.htm>.

Reading Assignments: Readings should be done before the class for which they are assigned. Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

- I. Week One: January 12, 14 16 Introduction to Religious Studies
 - A. Reading Assignment: E-Reserves, Tobin Hart, "Deep Empathy;" Fitzgerald, pp. xi-28, 203-210
- II. Week Two: January 21, 22, No Class January 19
 - A. Reading Assignment: Fitzgerald, pp. 29-97
- III. Week Three: January 26, 28, 30
 - A. Reading Assignment: Fitzgerald, pp. 101-157
 - B. Quiz One: Monday, January 26**
- IV. Week Four: February 2, 4, 6
 - A. Reading Assignment: Fitzgerald, pp. 158-200; E-Reserves, Fred Voget , "A Shoshone Innovator."
 - B. Writing Assignment: Paper One, due February 6, Fitzgerald & Voget**
- V. Week Five: February 9, 11, 13
 - A. Reading Assignment: Johnsen, pp. 1-57
- VI. Week Six: February 16, 18, 20
 - A. Reading Assignment: Johnsen, pp. 58-110
 - B. Quiz Two: Monday, February 16**
- VII. Week Seven: February 23, 25, 27
 - A. Reading Assignment: Johnsen, pp. 111-121
 - B. Midterm Exam: February 25**
 - C. Film: Sri Maa, Hindu Saint, February 27
 - D. SPRING BREAK: MARCH 2-6

VIII. Week Eight: March 9, 11, 13

A. Reading Assignment: Markides, pp. 1-73

IX. Week Nine: March 16, 18, 20

A. Reading Assignment: Markides, pp. 74-158

B. Quiz Three: Friday, March 20

X. Week Ten: March 23, 25, 27

A. Reading Assignment: Markides, pp. 159-209; E-Reserves, Vassos Argyrou, "Under a Spell: The Strategic Use of Magic in Greek Cypriot Society."

B. Writing Assignment: **Paper Two, due March 27, Markides & Argyrou**

XI. Week Eleven: March 30, April 1, 3

A. Reading Assignment: Myodo, pp. 3-34, 135-155

XII. Week Twelve: April 6, 8, 10

A. Reading Assignment: Myodo, pp. 35-70, 156-174.

B. Quiz Four: Wednesday, April 8

XIII. Week Thirteen: April 13, 15, 17

A. Reading Assignment: Myodo, pp. 71-111; 175-206

XIV. Week Fourteen: April 20, 22, 24

A. Reading Assignment: E-Reserves, Sallie B. King, "Egalitarian Philosophies in Sexist Institutions: The Life of Satomi-San, Shinto Miko and Zen Buddhist Nun."

B. Quiz Five: Wednesday, April 22

XV. Week Fifteen: April 27

A. Final Exam: April 29, Wednesday, 12:00-3:00