Course Justification:
I developed this course to negotiate a growing methodological tension between the study of religion and the anthropology of religion. As someone with a PhD in cultural and social anthropology but who teaches in a department for the study of religion, it is obvious that anthropological approaches inform the study of religion. My concern of late has been that students of religion too often try to be anthropologists, whatever that might mean. This course, in response, attempts to spark a conversation about the study of religion and the insights that anthropology can provide the study of religion.

Method and Theory in the Study of Religion:
An Anthropological Approach

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Course Abstract:
The anthropology of religion is a discipline-specific endeavor. British Functionalism, French Structuralism, American cultural anthropology—the history of anthropological thought can be taught through the very category of religion. But what of the study of religion’s continued rapprochement with the anthropology of religion? How might the study of religion, a discipline in its own right, draw upon anthropological approaches to religion without succumbing to discipline-specific debates? This graduate course addresses this methodological question through a reading intensive course. While its success will turn on the entire class keeping up with the readings for each week, its lasting effect will depend on the student’s ability to appreciate not so much the history of anthropological thought or the anthropology of religion but rather what this course ultimately calls “anthropological approaches to the study of religion.”

Course Requirements:

- Response paper for each week (500 words maximum) (20%)
- Class participation (10%)
- A 4-page paper proposal (15%) to be discussed in class in the penultimate week of term
- An annotated bibliography of 20 items (25%)
- A 4000-word semester paper (30%). This may comprise a piece of ethnographic fieldwork, a documentary, or cultural analysis from an anthropological perspective

Week 1: Religion


• Catherine Bell. “Paradigms Behind (and Before) the Modern Concept of Religion.” *History and Theory* 45, no. 4 (December 2006):27–46.


**Week 2: Magic, Religion, Science**


**Week 3: World Religions**


**Week 4: Power/Knowledge**


**Week 5: Embodiment**


**Week 6: Ritual**


**Week 7: Performance**

**Week 8: Postcolonialism**


**Week 9: Words**


**Week 10: Secularism**


**Week 11: Affect**


**Week 12: Diaspora**

Week 13: Neoliberalism