Syllabus

RELIGION IN MODERN SOCIETY

COMPARATIVE RELIGION 3340

By

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A. Course Description

Whereas a major focus of our systematic study of religion is upon religious traditions, or aspects of them, it is important that attention also be paid to the questions raised by the various contexts in which religion occurs as well as to questions raised by the methods developed in studying religion in such contexts. The specific context of religion to be studied is that of modern liberal, socialist, fascist, industrial, or late capitalist society. For religion to be understood in more than historical terms it is important that attention be paid to this kind of modern or post-modern context. As a consequence of such a focus questions also are raised about the methods developed to specify and delineate such contexts and the role that religion plays in them. This provides an occasion for raising questions about the assumptions underlying such methods and about their relationship to the systematic study of religion. Our course will consist of as many lectures as necessary and of as much discourse as possible in the framework of the critical theory of society and religion of the Frankfurt School, characterized by the dialectical method (See Road Map A and B, under “Web Publications,” on my website: www.rudolfjsiebert.org).

Context and Methods

For religion to be understood in more than historical terms, it is important for the critical theorist of religion, that attention be paid to the economic, social, political, and cultural environments of the present transition period from the modern to the post-modern paradigm, including the possibility of global alternative Future I - the totally administered society, of global alternative Future II - the completely militarized society, and of global alternative Future III – the reconciled society. As a consequence of such a focus the dialectical religiologist raises questions about the traditional and dialectical methods, developed to specify and delineate these environments, and the conformist or non-conformist, conservative or progressive role, that positive wisdom -mystical - or prophetic – religions play in them. This provides the critical theorist of religion with an occasion for raising questions about the assumptions underlying such traditional and dialectical methods, and about their relationship to the dialectical religiology in its totality. In this course, we shall, of course, not only be concerned with religious texts and their double propositional and performative structures, and with their economic, social, political, and cultural contexts, but also with religious individuals and groups, and their intentions and goals: in short, with the totality of their communicative actions. For the dialectical religiologist the content of religion is as important as its functions - non-functions, eufunctions, or dysfunctions - for modern antagonistic civil, socialist, or fascist societies.

Paradigm Change

Our critical, comparative, religiological discourse shall be concerned with the role of religion in a double historical paradigm change: in the transition from traditional to modern civil society, and in the possible transformation of the modern into a post-modern society (See Road Map A, B, D). We shall define our dialectical-comparative- religiological discourse on these paradigm changes as future-oriented remembrance of human happiness and suffering, with the practical intent to increase the former, and to decrease the latter. We shall understand critical in terms of differentiation, clarification and emancipation. We shall understand comparative in terms of the comparison of collective representations from different world religions, without uncritical equalization. We shall understand religion as longing and hope for the totally Other, as the determinate negation of the fundamental perils of human existence: finitude, evil, injustice, abandonment, alienation, guilt, meaningfulness, and loneliness, fear of sickness, ageing, and death. We shall explore, how differently traditional, religious and modern, secular men and women have been looking at:

a. The world of nature, their own inner world, the social world, the cultural world, and the world of language.

We shall trace the rationalization of traditional religious worldviews, which finally led to modernity, to our own position in history, and possibly beyond us into a postmodern age: alternative Future I, Future II, or alternative Future III. We shall study the structure and function of religious systems of interpretation of reality and orientation of action in traditional, modern, and possible postmodern systems of human condition.
and action systems. (See Road Map A).

b. The fundamental human potentials or evolutionary universals of language and memory, work and tool, sexual and erotic love, the struggle for recognition, and nationhood.

**Modern Scholars**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, outstanding modern scholars - like Immanuel Kant, Georg W. F. Hegel, Ludvig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Arthur Schopenhauer, Sören Kierkegaard, Johann Jakob Bachofen, Emil Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Max Weber, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Theodor, W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, Leo Löwenthal, Jürgen Habermas, Ernst Bloch, Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, R. Döbert, L. Kohlberg, Nicholas Luhman, Georg Lukacs, J. H. Mead, Talcott Parsons and others - shall help us, to understand and comprehend the transition from the pre-modern to the modern world, and the position of religious worldviews in modernity, and possibly also in post-modernity. They shall enlighten us about the difference between myth on one hand, and enlightenment on the other: between mythological and religious-metaphysical systems of interpretation and orientation on one hand, and modern scientific worldviews, on the other, between faith and knowledge, between revelation and autonomous reason or enlightenment. We shall differentiate sharply between system and life world, and we shall see how religion is situated and functions in one or the other, or in both of them.

**Theodicy Problem**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall concentrate on the core problem of all world religions: the theodicy (theos - God; dikae - justice ) problem: the problem of finitude, evil, suffering, guilt, meaninglessness, illness and death. A religion rises in history, when it is able to offer a new, more plausible theodicy answer on a certain level of evolution, as learning process. A religion falls into a crisis, and renews itself or possibly declines and dies, when it is no longer able to give an adequate theodicy answer in terms of the present level of evolution. Religions can die like languages. Magic and fetishism are dead. Zoroastrianism, the Syrian Religion of Pain, the Egyptian Religion of Riddle, the Greek Religion of Fate and Beauty, the Roman Religion of Utility, etc. are dead. The notion of theodicy has gone through different developmental stages: the primitive, monistic, dualistic, and dialectical phase. Thus, we shall find in the different religious worldviews as many different answers to the theodicy problem: the monstrous dichotomy between the religious assertions about rational, providential, wise, loving, powerful authors, or Author, of the universe, on one hand, and the slaughter bench, or Golgatha of nature, and even more so of society and history, on the other: where most organisms can survive only, by continually tearing to pieces other organisms.

**Theodicy Answers**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall explore and compare the different theodicy answers, which have been given by the world religions through the centuries: suffering is the result of secret sins; it is a test; it is fate; it is necessary, in order to preserve man's freedom; it is a means of liberation, salvation, atonement, etc. We shall test these answers against the background of modern history: World War I, World War II, fascism, Auschwitz and Treblinka, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador, the wars in the Near East, the civil wars in Ex-Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, etc. and all the immeasurable human suffering connected with those events. Are those theodicy answers of the world religions still valid for us in the face of modern history and experience, or have they become untrue, as the historical situations and contexts have changed? Can we still believe in God's reason or providence in the midst of so much irrationality and non-providentiality and contingency in nature, personal life, marriage and family, civil society, political state, culture, and history?

**Obsolescence of Religion**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall try to prove true or untrue the assertion of modern critical philosophers and sociologists, that the world religions have become obsolete. The world
religions have allegedly become obsolete, because they can no longer support the personal and social identity of people living in highly differentiated systems of human condition and action systems, characterized by increased contingency experiences, and the greater emphasis on future - orientation. The religious worldviews can supposedly no longer support those identities, because they can no longer solve the theodicy problem: shortly, the problem of meaning and values. They can allegedly no longer show, how it is possible to pray, or for that matter, to write poetry or music, or to sing or to dance, after Auschwitz or after Hiroshima, and all the terror of history those names stand for. They can allegedly no longer console. They can no longer offer a plausible promise of rescue to the hopeless. It is doubtful, if the postulates of God, immortality, or freedom in Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy or in Ludwig van Beethoven's IX. Symphony can really still convince late-modern or postmodern people. It is also doubtful, if the positivistic assertion, that the question for meaning may itself be meaningless, shall really settle the theodicy issue. It is rather so, that to deliver religion or science to the positivistic attitude and interpretation, shall distort both of them beyond recognition. Certainly, the positivistic or scientistic attitude cannot help to liberate the repressed revolutionary semantic and semiotic potentials not only in the Abrahamic religions, but also in all still living world religions.

**Global Ethos**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall be aware of the fact, that the more in history religious worldviews were rationalized, the more arose from them a more and more universalistic communicative ethics: a more and more global ethos. Has the time finally come for this communicative or discourse ethics, to shed its religious form? Or does even the most universal communicative ethics still need a religious or theological grounding? We shall explore possibilities in late modern society, either to secure newly a religious basis for personal and social morality, or to develop new modern humanistic forms of ethics, which do no longer need any religious foundation. We think of humanism as religion in inheritance.

**The Religious and the Secular**

Our critical, comparative, religiological discourse shall be concerned with the relationship between the religious and the secular: the modern antagonism between religion, as a dimension in the cultural world besides art, philosophy and science, on the one hand, and the demythologized and disenchanted modern social world and the equally secularized inner subjective world of the modern individual, on the other. How are religion and the modern secular social world mediated with each other through the inner world of the individual, if at all? We shall be aware of the fact, that there was enlightenment present already in the mythos, and that mythical elements will have to be preserved in enlightenment, if it is not to regress again into total myth, and even into utter barbarism: the dialectics of enlightenment. To be sure, there has been reason in faith and there is faith in reason.

**Descriptive and Discursive**

Our critical, comparative, religiological discourse is intended and planned as a challenge to, and a clarification of the philosophical presuppositions and assumptions of the positivistically oriented social sciences' claim, to be merely descriptive, disinterested, value-free and ideologically neutral in their exploration of the socio-economic basis, the individual and social character, and the cultural, particularly religious superstructure of modern society. Certainly, we shall not only be descriptive, but also discursive. We want to learn to think and give good reasons for whatever we state about religion and modernity. We shall be very much interested in the future emancipation of men and women, and in the role religion as well as enlightenment can possibly play in this process. We shall stress the value of human freedom understood negatively as absence of alienation, and positively, as man's coming home to himself in solidarity with others and in his longing for the totally Other than the slaughter bench of nature, personal biography, society, and history. We shall be concerned with the depletion of the resources of meaning and freedom in industrial society, and their possible renewal.
**Dialectic**

Our critical, comparative, religiological discourse shall be dialectical: we shall engage in determinate negation. We shall not only negate obsolete life forms, but also preserve and elevate some of the negated material in a qualitatively new form. Our discourse shall be built on the ideal speech situation. It shall take place in a power-free zone. It shall aim at an unlimited communication community. It shall be ideology - and mythology - critique. It shall be driven by objections. It shall aim at mutual understanding in mutual respect. It shall allow for innovative speech acts. It shall make use of negative as well as of positive hermeneutics. While we shall critique sharply mythological and ideological religious traditions, that hold people captive, we shall also try to retrieve traditional values, which may still help them to enlighten and emancipate themselves. We shall discover the ambiguity of the world religions as systems of domination as well as of liberation. There is after all a criminology and pathology of religion. We shall stress the liberating aspects of religious worldviews, particularly in modern society. We shall stress the connections between nature, and the reflection and reinforcement of its compulsive rhythms in mythology and rituals as well as in positivism on one hand, and the religious hope of rescue, delivery, redemption, on the other: the resurrection of the flesh.

**Alternative Futures**

We shall discuss in our critical, comparative, religiological discourse a variety of special problems, which are of high actuality in the present developmental stage of civil and socialist societies: religious and humanist attitudes toward the arrival of global, post-modern alternative Future I - the totally administered, bureaucratic, automated, computerized, cyberneticized, wired, and robotized signal society, without meaning and love; toward global, post-modern, alternative Future II - conventional national and civil wars, NBC wars, and/or ecological destruction, the modern business and war cycles, the liberal, democratic society as well as its "enemies"- militant Islam, socialism, nationalism, or fascism; toward the preparation of global, post-modern alternative Future III - the liberated and reconciled society, the autonomous and solidary society, the victimless society( See Road Map D). We shall explore, how religion relates itself to the acute or latent class struggle in modern, liberal, democratic societies. We shall try to find out, which contributions religion is still making to modern protest movements, which try to resist the colonization of the life world by the system, particularly the economic and political subsystem: the civil rights movement; the ecology movement; the anti-nuclear movement; the peace movement; the democracy movement; the feminist movement, etc.

**Good and Evil Religion**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall differentiate between good and evil religion; between progressive and regressive religion; between religion, which is emancipatory, and religion which merely serves as an agent of social control and of conformity to the social and historical power-structure and – continuum; a revolutionary and a counterrevolutionary religion; a humanistic and an authoritarian religion. Once more we live in - what Karl Jaspers has called - an axis - time, in which we must decide between alternative Future III - the free and reconciled society, on one hand, and alternative Future I - the totally administered society, or even Future II - thermonuclear holocaust and/or ecological devastation, on the other; between truly human progress, and utter barbarism. Certainly, the Leninist Michail Gorbatchev's Perestroika and Glasnost movement and revolution from above and from below, has somewhat diminished the possibility and probability of Future II - a thermonuclear holocaust, but the historical trend toward Future I - the entirely administered society - continues unbroken, and in full strength, and with great speed.

**Religious Right and Left**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall observe intensely the neo-conservative Religious Right, and we shall listen to the questions it poses, and the answers it gives in the face of late modernity, and its problems. Often the Religious Right asks the right questions, but unfortunately gives the wrong answers. We shall also study intensely the Religious Left, as it identifies itself with the poor and the victims of the modern history of freedom and suffering. We shall point out the difference between feudal and
bourgeois religion, on one hand, and prophetic and messianic religion, on the other. We shall explore the mythological and ideological as well as the utopian role of religion in Antiquity, Middle Ages, and Modernity. Our main question is: do different religious forces and trends in modern society point to alternative Future I, II, or III? In our exploration it does not matter to us, if these religious forces are at work in traditional, or advanced capitalist, or socialist societies.

Progress

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall explore, to what extent religion does promote or hinder scientific and technological progress. Is religion indeed "opium" of the people? Today religion sometimes seems to be more protest against injustices than false consolation: e.g. Martin Luther King, the Berrigan Brothers, the Latin American liberation theologians, Helder Camara, Archbishop Romero of San Salvador, etc. Is this impression correct? There are certainly also the very conservative Billy Graham and the other television evangelists with similar establishment orientation and conformity. We shall try to find out, to what extent religion produces hysterical fanaticism, intolerance, ignorance, superstition, obscurantism. Sometimes it appears, as if religion was a bulwark of anti-modernist tendencies, e.g. in the Near Eastern Islam, or in Eastern and Western Catholicism. Is this so, or not? Or can we say, that religion is the real source of meaning and freedom, and, therefore, also of energy for all progressive people, societies, and cultures? Does religion contain, indeed, as some say, the most sublime human aspirations for truth, autonomy, solidarity, goodness, fulfillment, happiness, personal and world peace? We shall look at a democratic-religious-humanistic mysticism, and its possible capacity to bring about a metanoia, an anthropological revolution, in the modern personality, and qualitative change in family, society, state, history, and culture. The main emphasis of our course will be on the effectiveness of prophetic and Messianic religion in strengthening the autonomy and solidarity of modern people against alternative Future I - the totally monetarized, bureaucratized, and legalized society, and against Future II - ABC wars and/or ecological destruction. We shall combine in our discourse on religion in modern society the critical theory and the system theory. Our emphasis is on the critical theory.

Prophetic Religion

In terms of our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, for prophetic religion in modernity to be understood and even comprehended in more than merely historical terms, it is important, that attention be paid to the highly industrialized modern society as its immediate social context and basis. As a consequence of such a contemporary rather than historical focus, questions shall be raised about the methods to be developed, in order to specify and to delineate the context of modern society and the role a prophetic and messianic religion plays or should play in it. We shall engage particularly in the causal, functional, and dialectical methods. This approach provides an occasion for raising questions about the assumptions underlying those methods, and about their relationship to the systematic and comparative study of religion. We shall emphasize the dialectical method, because it allows us, to see clearly the inner contradictions of modernity, and to understand and comprehend religious phenomena - concepts of God or gods, religious relationship, cult, man, sin, repentance, redemption, salvation, resurrection, immortality, judgment day, etc. - in relation to the totality of modern society, which reproduces itself antagonistically.

Theory and Praxis

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall be interested in the dialectic of religious theory and praxis in modern civil society. We shall ask, e.g., why the practice of Taoists, Hindus or Buddhists, Jews, Moslems or Christians, does so often in modernity contradict their very theories, and thus does not heal the world, and sometimes makes it even sicker (See Road Map A, B). Sometimes it seems, that the Christians are badly christened and do not look at all redeemed, and that the Jews and the Muslims are badly circumcised. Must this contradiction prevail in the future? Can it be corrected? What are the causes for this inner contradiction in religion? How can these causes be removed, in order to achieve a dialectical unity between religious theory and praxis? Often religions in modernity split up in themselves between a Right - and Left -
wing political theology. How is it possible, that on one hand there were so many Christians following Adolf Hitler, and that on the other hand there were also many Christians, who resisted fascism, and who even died in concentration camps as martyrs of the truth? How can people, who read the same sacred texts, come to so completely contradictory conclusions concerning their political praxis in a particular environment? Are the sacred texts ideologically split in themselves already? Could they have survived so long, if they had indeed been so contradictory in themselves? Here, indeed, are many riddles. We do not want to shy away from those riddles, from the negative, but rather want to face them, and try to resolve them. This is a task of enlightenment! Our core interest is indeed the dialectical unity of religious theory and praxis in modernity, and post-modernity. It shall certainly make a difference for either the further humanization or barbarization of modern capitalist and socialist society, if the dichotomy between religious theory and practice will prevail, or if it can at least be narrowed down. This shall decide the vital question, if at least the Abrahamic, prophetic-messianic religions shall be able, to help modern men and women, to at least mitigate Future I, to resist Future II, and to promote passionately Future III. This shall also decide the future of religion, its end, or its reconstruction in modern and post-modern society.

**Future of Religion**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall concentrate on the possible futures of religion, in and beyond modernity. We shall discuss religious and humanistic attitudes toward the three post-modern alternative Futures of religion: 1. Fundamentalism; 2. Secularism; 3. Reconciliation of faith and knowledge, revelation and enlightenment. We shall anticipate these futures in terms of the dialectic between the religious and the secular, the dialectic of the secular enlightenment, and the dialectic of religion. In the context of the modern dichotomy between the religious and the secular some people are so disappointed by the dialectic of modern enlightenment, that they would like to cancel it prematurely, and to return again to the religion of their fathers: the fundamentalists. Other people are so frustrated by the dialectic of religion that they opt for a totally secularized, enlightened society. Finally, there is a group of religious and humanistic people, who after having conquered the dialectic of religion and the dialectic of enlightenment, come together in a practical discourse, in order to resolve the contradiction between the religious and the secular through a new conjugation between faith and reason, revelation and enlightenment, redemption and happiness, grace and liberation. We shall look at the possibility, probability, and desirability of all three futures of religion and enlightenment in modern or post-modern society.

**Crisis of Religion**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall deal specifically with the present crisis of all living world religions. In each of the faith communities some believers want to adjust to modernity more than others. Thus e. g. the most orthodox people in Judaism are most distant from modernity. The conservatives come closer to modernity. The reform or liberal group allows itself to be assimilated to modernity. The Zionists are almost completely or completely secular. A similar division we find in other world religions as well. There is, therefore, in all faith communities the danger that they split up in themselves. One does not need to be alarmist. Religions can endure a lot of contradictoriness in themselves. But the divisions in the faith communities cannot be taken lightly neither. We certainly shall take them seriously.

**Neo-Conservativism**

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall be concerned with the three main theories of modernity, dominating at present the intellectual life of the West. There is first of all the neo-conservativism on the Right of the philosophical and political spectrum. It has achieved political and cultural, and even religious hegemony in Western Europe and North America, since the neo-conservative trend turn at the end of the 1970’s. Since that time, many former liberals have turned into neo-conservatives. Neo-conservativism has its roots in Georg, W. F. Hegel's work and in the Rightwing Hegelianism, and is carried out today by people like Michael Novak, Allan Bloom, Francis Fukuyama, etc. Neo-conservativism wants to continue the capitalist
modernization, but cancel the cultural modernization, including the Voltairian, Marxian, and Freudian enlightenment. It certainly wants to prevent a fourth enlightenment. It rather wants to replace the modern culture by premodern religious worldviews, which are to legitimate the modern power structure and - continuum, and to motivate the masses, to produce surplus value for the few without conflict. The neo-conservatives want to preserve religion because of its functionality for the survival of civil society. They define religion as contingency - experience - management subsystem of modern civil society. We can hardly study religion in modernity, without paying attention to neo-conservativism, particularly neo-conservative religion and politics. The neo-conservatives want to preserve religion because of its functionality for the survival of civil society. They define religion as contingency - experience - management subsystem of modern civil society.

Deconstructionism

There is, secondly, on the Right of the philosophical and political spectrum the philosophy of departure from modernity, de-constructionism, or post-modernism. It is rooted in Georg, W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger, and has been carried out by Georges Bataille, J. Derrida, Michael Foucault, C. Castoriadis, J. Baudrillard, St. G. Mestrovic, and others. The post-modernists intend to de-construct not only the whole system of fundamental concepts, in which modernity has understood itself since the 18th century, but also the fundamental categories of the premodern world religions. We cannot have a successful discourse on religion in modernity, without taking into consideration de-constructionism.

Praxis Philosophy

There is, thirdly, on the Left of the philosophical and political spectrum the praxis philosophy. It arose from the work of Georg W. F. Hegel, Leftwing Hegelianism, Western Marxism, American pragmatism, French existentialism, the psychoanalytical theory, and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. It holds on to the claim of occidental rationalism. It tries to continue - if also in a dialectically broken form - the project of modernity, particularly of the modern enlightenment movements, without neglecting in any way the religious question. The praxis philosophy does not instrumentalize religion like neo-conservativism, nor does it negate or distort it like de-constructionism. It rather tries to preserve and elevate religion's most enlightening aspects in a secular modern form, toward the horizon of the totally Other as the determinate negation of man's existential perils. We shall certainly be able, to learn much from the praxis philosophy, not only methodologically, but also content wise.

Time Diagnosis

In our critical, comparative, religiological discourse, we shall practice time diagnosis and time prognosis concerning particular contemporary events of religious significance. Through our time-diagnoses and time-prognoses we shall be in continual contact with the everyday problems in modern civil society, which have some religious-ethical dimension to them: dysfunctional families, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, corruption in government, crime, death penalty, war, peace-keeping and peace making missions, neo-racism, neo-nationalism, neo-fascism, the authoritarian personality, democratic dictatorships, presidential dictatorships, etc. We shall introduce each discourse session with a time-diagnosis and time - prognosis, focusing on a particular problem of the day or the week.
B. Major Topics

Here are the major topics of our course. We shall discuss one or two of those topics in each lecture- and discourse session.

1. The critical theory as practical discourse about religion and modernity: myth and enlightenment.
2. The critical theory of religion and the five human potentials or evolutionary universals.
3. The critical theory of religion and the five-world model.
4. Modern definitions of religion.
5. Modern concepts of the deep structure of religion.
6. Modern models of the history of religions.
7. The critical theory of religion on modernity and post-modernity.
8. The critical theory of religion versus the system theory of religion.
10. The modern discrepancy between religious and the secular.
11. The modern antagonism between personal autonomy and universal solidarity.
12. The critical theory of religion: Buddhism as the religion of inwardness.
13. The critical theory of religion: Judaism as the religion of sublimity.
14. The critical theory of religion: Christianity as religion of freedom - the absolute religion?
15. Christianity as origin of modernity.
16. The two forms of modernization.
17. The modern idealistic discovery of human subjectivity: spirit, self, ego.
18. Civil religion and the resource of meaning.
19. Civil religion and the resource of freedom.
21. Lifeworld and system.
22. Modern private right, and its problems.
23. Modern personal morality, and its present crisis.
24. Modern marriage and family, and their problems.
25. Modern civil society: antagonistic reproduction; the evolutionary primacy of money, and the loss of solidarity, and its human consequences and costs.
26. Modern political state: the evolutionary primacy of power, and the lack of solidarity, and its human consequences and costs.
27. Modern historical perspective: synchronical or diachronical approach to modernity.
28. Rationality and irrationality of modern history.
29. Teleology of modern history.
30. Causes of quantitative and qualitative change in modern society and history.
31. Traditional, modern, and post-modern stages of history: from the African to the American and Slavic World.
32. Philosophy and theology of history as theodicy: history, as slaughter bench and Golgatha, moving toward the realm of freedom and reconciliation.
33. Bertholt Brecht on religion in modern society.
34. Heinrich Böll on religion in modern society.
35. Solzhenitsyn on religion in the modern world.
38. Talcott Parsons' theory of religion.
40. Walter Benjamin's critical theory of religion.
41. Max Horkheimer's critical theory of religion.
42. Theodor, W. Adorno's critical theory of religion.
43. Herbert Marcuse's critical theory of religion.
44. Erich Fromm's critical theory of religion.
45. Alfred Sohn-Rethel's critical theory of religion
46. Jürgen Habermas's critical theory of religion.
47. Hans Küng's liberal theology and science of religion
49. Religion and forms of integration in post-liberal societies.
50. Religion, familial socialization and ego-development.
51. Religion, mass media and mass culture.
52. Religion, and protest potentials.
53. Religion, and the resolution of the problem of reification.
54. Religion as resistance against colonization of the life world by the economic and the political subsystems, by monetarization, bureaucratization, and over-regulation.
55. Alternative futures of modern society.
56. Alternative futures of religion.

C. Background Reading

We shall choose four out of the following fourteen books for your general background reading: one book a month. The four books shall introduce you into the critical theory of religion, and its dialectical methodology. The four books can help you, to participate in our class-discourse, to write your three tests, and to produce a final, voluntary, extra-credit paper.

Required
Siebert, “World Religions in the Global Public Sphere”. New Delhi.

Recommended
D. Depth Study

Each student shall enter his own depth study of four books in the critical and traditional theory of religion. You shall become a specialist in the four books, that you have chosen. You can use the four books for your participation in the class discourse. They shall also be highly useful for your three tests. You can choose your four books from the following list of books. You can also choose your four books from outside this list, as long as they are concerned with our general theme: religion in modern society.

A. Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind
A. Edgar. The Philosophy of Habermas
A. Honneth, Pathologies of Reason. On the Legacy of Critical Theory
A. Schopenhauer, Early Manuscripts
A. Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation
Alfred Huxley, Brave New World
Arnold Toynbee, Surviving the Future
B. Malinowski, Myth, Science, and Religion
B. Malinowski, The Father in Primitive Psychology
Bertholt Brecht, Galileo
Bertholt Brecht, Saint Joan of the Stockyards
C. G. Jung, Man and his Symbols
D. Claussen, (ed), Traces of Liberation – Herbert Marcuse
D. Claussen. Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Gebnius
D. Jeffreys. Hell’s Cartel. IG Fraben and the Making of Hitler’s War Machine
D. Jenemann. Adorno in America
D. Sherman. Sartre and Adorno. The Dialectics of Subjectivity
Daniel Bell, The Cultural Contradiction of Capitalism
Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology
David Riesmann, The Lonely Mass
Dorothy Soelle, Political Theology
E. Bahr. Weimar on the Pacific. German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism
E. Hammer. Adorno and the Political
E. Mendieta, Frankfurt School on Religion. Key Writings by Major Thinkers
Emil Durkheim, The Elementary Form of Religious Life
Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom
Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man
Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man
Erich Fromm, Revolution of Hope
Erich Fromm, Shall Man Prevail?
Erich Fromm, Socialist Humanism
Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness
Erich Fromm, The Dogma of Christ
Erich Fromm, The Heart of Man
Erich Fromm, The Sane Society
Erich Fromm, To Have Or To Be?
Erich Fromm, You shall be as Gods
Ernst Bloch, On Karl Marx
F. Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man
F. Jameson, Aesthetics and Politics
F. Jameson. Late Marxism. Adorno or the Persistence of the Dialectic
G. H. Mull, On Social Psychology
G. Winter, Liberating Creation
Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness
Georg, W. F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind
Gregory Baum, Religion and Alienation
Gregory, Baum, Sociology and Human Destiny
Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition
Hans Küng, Christianity and the World Religions: Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.
Harvey Cox, The Secular Society
Harvey Cox, The Seduction of the Spirit
Herbert Marcuse, Counter - Revolution and Revolt
Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization
Herbert Marcuse, Negations
Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution
Herbert Marcuse, Soviet Marxism
Herbert Marcuse, The Esthetical Dimension
Herbert Marcuse, The One-Dimensional Man
I. A. T. Robinson, Honest to God
J. Habermas, Religion and Rationality. Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity
J. Holloway, et al. Negativity and Revolution. Adorno and Political Activism
Joachim Wach, Sociology of Religion
Johann, B. Metz, Beyond Bourgeois Religion
Johann, B. Metz, Faith in Society and History
John Paul II, On Human Work
John Paul II, Redeemer of Man
John Paul II, Rich in Mercy
Josef Pieper, Hope and History
Jürgen Habermas, Autonomy and Solidarity
Jürgen Habermas, Legitimation Crisis
Jürgen Habermas, Theory and Practice
Jürgen Habermas, Theory of Communicative Practice
Karl Marx, Capital. Critique of Political Economy
L. Jäger. Adorno. A Political Biography
L. Levy-Brühl, Primitive Mentality
M. Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries
M. Pensky, The Actuality of Adorno. Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern
Max Horkheimer, Critical Theory
Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason
Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason
Max Weber, Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism
Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion
Max, Horkheimer /Theodor, W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment.
N. Baldwein, Henry Ford and the Jews
P. Apostolidis, Stations of the Cross. Adorno and Christian Right Radio
P. Ricoeur, The Interpretation
Paul Tillich, Courage to Be
Paul Tillich, Morality and Beyond
Paul Tillich, Religious Socialism
Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology
Paul Tillich, The Socialist Decision
Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy
Peter L. Berger / Thomas Luckmannn, The Social Construction of Reality
Peter, L. Berger / B. Berger / H. Kellner, The Discontent in Modernity
Peter, L. Berger, Dialectic of Religion and Society
Peter, L. Berger, The Rumor of Angels
Polyany, The Tacit Dimension
R. Fernandez, The Future as a Social Problem
R. Funk, etc. Erich Fromm today. On the Actuality of his Thinking
R. H. Stone/ M. L. Weaver. Against the Third Reich, Paul Tillich’s Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany
R. N. Bellah and P. E. Hammond, Varieties of Civil Religion
R. N. Bellah, Beyond Grief
R. N. Bellah, Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society
R. Theobald, The Guaranteed Income
R. Wolin. The Frankfurt School Revisited
Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and Politics
Reinhold Niebuhr, Marx and Engel’s on Religion
Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man, Immoral Society
Rosa Luxemburg, The Industrial Development of Poland
S. Buck-Morss. Dreamworld and Catastrophe
S. Lundgren, Fight Against Idols. Erich Fromm on Religion, Judaism and the Bible.
St. Müller-Doohm. Adorno. A Biography
Stjepan G. Mestrovic, Durkheim and Postmodern Culture
T. F. Driver, Christ in a Changing World
T. Odea, The Sociology of Religion
T. Parsons, The Culture of Unbelief
Tacott Parsons, Belief, Unbelief, and Disbelief
Talcott Parsons, Durkheim on Religion. Revisited
Talcott Parsons, Religion in Post-Industrial America
Th. Wheatland. The Frankfurt School in Exile
Theodor, W. , Adorno, The Authoritarian Personality
Theodor, W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music
Theodor, W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics
Thomas Luckmannn, On the Boundaries of the Social World
W. Benjamin. Archive. Images. Texts, Signs
W. Benjamin, Illuminations
W. Benjamin, Reflections
W. Dirks, The Answers of the Monks
Walter Jensen, Sociology of Religion: A critical primer. (See chapter 3 for an overview of my work)
E. Grading

Grading is based on a 200-point scale, divided as:

a. In accordance with contemporary discourse philosophy, we shall have as much lecture in each class session as necessary and as much discourse as possible. At the end of each class, when I take attendance, I will evaluate your oral participation and assign it a value. In other words, being late and/or leaving early will cause your oral participation grade to suffer. The total oral participation points a student can earn during the semester is 80.

b. Three times this semester, I will test your knowledge on the background reading, depth-study, in class time diagnosis discussions, audiovisual material, and the information learned during the excursion(s). You will be given at least one weeks notice of the next exam. Don't worry, those with strong oral participation grades seem to do well on the exams. Each test is worth a maximum of 40 points, making for a maximum of 120 points for the semester.

c. A week before the end of the semester, you may turn in a voluntary extra-credit paper. This paper will give a brief summary of one of your background readings and a critique of its content, in the spirit and nature of this class. The exact particularities of the paper (page length, format style, method of citation, etc.) will be discussed closer to the end of the semester. The extra credit paper will be worth 10 points.

d. Exam make-up policy: In the case of illness, exams can only be made up with a written note from a doctor, or in the case of family emergencies, with a note from the Dean of Students.

The grading scale is as follows: A (200 - 185), BA (184 - 173), B (172-159), CB (158-145), C (144 - 131), DC (130-119), D (118-105), and E (104 and below).

F. Main Objectives of the Course.

Our main objectives in this course are:

1. To introduce the student into the problematic of religion in both types of modern, highly secularized societies - civil and socialist societies - in terms of the critical theory of religion and its dialectical methodology - determinate negation.
2. To teach the student, to think dialectically about religion and modernity in the framework of the critical theory, and thus about himself as a modern person: self-knowledge.
3. To help the student, to break out of his or her myopic perspective of religion and modernity, and to understand both on the foundation of the five human potentials and evolutionary universal, and in the context of the five worlds, in which he lives, acts, and experiences daily.
4. To enlighten the student about the advantages and the costs of the secularization process, prevalent in capitalist and socialist societies.
5. To help the student, to comprehend and overcome the threats to the individuation of the individual in modern society - the a-social subject and the subjectless social process - and to strike a clear balance between personal autonomy and universal solidarity.
6. To introduce the student into the critical theory of religion and it’s many different aspects.
7. To show the student the limitations of a merely positivistically oriented theory of religion.
8. To explore the possibilities of the prophetic-Messianic religions in present modern society, as well as in alternative Future I - the entirely administered society, and in alternative Future III - the liberated and reconciled society.
9. To explore positive and negative religious responses toward the secularization of capitalist and socialist society.
10. To explore realistically religion's ability to resist the trend in modern states toward alternative Future II - the
thermonuclear holocaust, to mitigate the trend toward the alternative Future I - the administered society, and
to promote the trend toward alternative Future III - a society, characterized by meaning and love.
11. To introduce the student to different types of traditional theories of religion, prevalent in modern society.
12. To support the student in his efforts, to resolve the modern antagonism between the religious and the secular.
13. To help the student to cope with the present dialectic of enlightenment and emancipation under neo-
conservative hegemony.
14. To support the student, as he or she deals productively with the dialect of religion: particularly the
discrepancy between religious theory and praxis.
15. To show the student the intimate relationship between the socio-economic basis, the social character, and the
cultural, particularly religious superstructure of modern society.
16. To make the student aware of the tendency in capitalist and socialist society, that the superstructure may be
swallowed up by the economic and political base structure: religion by monetarization, bureaucratization,
and over-legalization.
17. To show the student the intimate relationship between forms of knowledge on one hand, and human
interests on the other, and to identify the most authentic interest to guide the critical theory of religion:
human emancipation and redemption. Where id has been, ego will be!
18. To explore, what religious communities could do, in order to help modern man in modern society to resolve
his fundamental problems: war, hunger, political oppression, ecological destruction, and alienation.
19. To find out, to what extent progressive religion can help to humanize not only the individual, but also the
collective in advanced capitalist and socialist society.
20. To explore the possibility of the further development of a critical theory of religion as well as of a critical
political theology, which could guide people's practice in the complicated modern systems of human
condition and action systems.
21. To introduce the student into the different forms of the system theory, and their views of religion.
22. To make the student receptive for religion as the thorn in the flesh of culture, which prevents it from being
sucked up by mere compensation achievements.
23. To help the student, to understand the modern liberal and political theologies.
24. To help the student, to differentiate between myth and enlightenment.
25. To help the student, to enter communicative praxis through discourse.
26. To help the student, to engage in the critical theory as practical discourse: as future-oriented remembrance of
human happiness and suffering, with the practical intent to increase the former, and to diminish the latter, far
beyond the classroom and the university: in the everyday life world, as well as in the economic and political
subsystem.

G. Academic Honesty

Students are responsible for making themselves aware of and understanding the University policies and
procedures that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and
forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. The academic policies addressing
Student Rights and Responsibilities can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog at
http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=24&navoid=974 and the Graduate Catalog at
http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=25&navoid=1030. If there is reason to believe you have been
involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the
opportunity to review the charge(s) and if you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for
a hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior
to the submission of an assignment or test.

Students and instructors are responsible for making themselves aware of and abiding by the “Western
Michigan University Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, and Stalking Policy and Procedures” related to prohibited sexual misconduct under Title IX, the Clery Act and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Campus Safe. Under this policy, responsible employees (including instructors) are required to report claims of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator or designee (located in the Office of Institutional Equity). Responsible employees are not confidential resources. For a complete list of resources and more information about the policy see www.wmich.edu/sexualmisconduct.

In addition, students are encouraged to access the Code of Conduct, as well as resources and general academic policies on such issues as diversity, religious observance, and student disabilities:
Office of Student Conduct – www.wmich.edu/conduct
Division of Student Affairs – www.wmich.edu/students/diversity
University Relations Office – www.wmich.edu/policies/religious-observances-policy
Disability Services for Students – www.wmich.edu/disabilityservices

Shalom, Salaam, Irene, Pax, Friede, Peace

Don’t Worry!!! Be Happy!!!

You Have my Telephone

Number: 269-381-0864

and

my E-mail: rudolf.siebert@wmich.edu

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