



**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**RELI 401**

**Methods and Issues in the Study of Religion**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**SCHOOL OF ART HISTORY, CLASSICS & RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON**

**TRIMESTER 2 2014**

**RELI 401**

**Methods and Issues in the Study of Religion**

<b>Course co-ordinator:</b>	Joseph Bulbulia, HU322; 463 5043 <a href="mailto:joseph.bulbulia@vuw.ac.nz">joseph.bulbulia@vuw.ac.nz</a>
<b>When and where</b>	HU 320, time to be determined
<b>Trimester dates:</b>	14 July to 16 November 2014
<b>Teaching dates:</b>	14 July to 17 October 2014
<b>Mid-trimester break:</b>	25 August to 7 September 2014
<b>Final assessment</b>	<b>17 October, 2014</b>

**Withdrawal dates:** Refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds). If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats).

**Religious Studies** is in the Hunter Building. The programme administrator, Alikali Kalliabetsos, is in room HU 318 (463 5299, [aliki.kalliabetsos@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:aliki.kalliabetsos@vuw.ac.nz)). Notices regarding the course or any information on changes will be posted on the Department Notice Board adjacent to her office.

**Office Hours:** The main office is open Monday – Friday, 9.30 am – 12:00 noon, and 2:30 - 3.30 pm. You can arrange to meet with the class co-ordinators by appointment.

A website of materials related to RELI 401 is being maintained in Blackboard. You are expected to visit the course site from time to time: <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>.

**Course Prescription**

Scholars of religion investigate religious phenomena, but what form should such investigations take? Religious studies is characterised by long-standing debates about the methodologies and theories appropriate to the discipline. This two-trimester course offers students a graduate-level introduction to such debates by encouraging critical and comparative evaluations of prominent positions.

**Course Aims**

The aim is to provide students with a basic understanding of the diversity of methods and theories defended by practitioners of the discipline. Another purpose is to raise student awareness about the methodologies and theories that frame their own scholarship, so that they may improve their Honours coursework. Finally, the course hopes to cultivate critical and creative writing skills, and to foster the subtle art of persuading audiences who do not already agree.

### Course overview

This course provides a graduate-level introduction to methods and theories in the scholarly study of religions. Students will reflect critically on scholarly readings, and on the ideas raised by them, in the seminar discussions and in the required essays.

### Course learning objectives

#### Students who pass this course will:

1. Better understand core theoretical approaches in the study of religion.
2. Better understand how to assess theoretic approaches using quantitative qualitative data.
3. Improve their skills for clear and persuasive writing.

### Course content

The course content consists of readings of important works in the field of religious studies. There will be a balance between classic, seminal writings and contemporary works that continue to redefine our field. There is also a four-week segment on methodology.

### Teaching format

This course is delivered through regular seminars. The seminar programme may be varied from time to time. As much notice as possible will be given when changes occur and, a revised programme will be issued.

### Mandatory course requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

1. Submit 2 essays

### Work-load (Recommendation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences):

The total expected workload for this course is 300 hours spread evenly over the whole year.

**Assessment for the course** is by means of two written assignments.

Assessment items and workload per item		%	CLOS	Due date
1	One essay of approximately 1500 words	50%	1, 2, 3	22.08.2014
2	One essay of approximately 1500 words	50%	1, 2, 3	17.10.2014

### Due Dates

The **final deadline** for handing in work for assessment:

**Essay 1** 22.AUG.2014

**Essay 2** 17.OCT.2014

**Rationale for assessment:** The essays allow students to apply their analytical skills through critical engagement with important theoretical works. Essays demonstrate the students' level of proficiency in reading, understanding, and critiquing scholarly writing. They develop the skills of critical reading, creative analysis, constructing an argument, and organizing material necessary for continued study in the area.

**Required text** There is no set textbook for both parts of the course. **Readings shall be available via Blackboard** or copies may be provided by the Religious Studies Programme at a student's request at cost.

### **Submission of work**

Essays must be submitted to blackboard.

Students are responsible for keeping copies of all submitted work.

### **Extensions and penalties**

#### **Extensions**

Extensions will be granted for medical excuses only.

#### **Penalties**

Late work will receive verbal feedback only (but not written feedback).

### **Class representative**

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:
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### **Student feedback**

Student feedback on University courses may be found at [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback\\_display.php](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php).

## Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism)
- Aegrotats: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats)
- Academic Progress: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress) (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates)
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: [www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin)
- Grades: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades)
- Resolving academic issues: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Special passes: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy)
- Student support: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support)
- Students with disabilities: [www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/disability](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability)
- Student Charter: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter)
- Student Contract: [www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract)
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin)
- University structure: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure)
- Victoria graduate profile: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile)
- VUWSA: [www.vuwsa.org.nz](http://www.vuwsa.org.nz)

## ***Seminar Programme***

All readings can be found as PDF documents by following links on this document.

### **PART 1: Theories in The Study of Religion**

#### **Seminar 1: Religion as Solidarity: Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)**

##### **Readings**

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by Karen Fields. New York: The Free Press, 1995 [1912], 1-44 [PDF](#) ; 207-241 [PDF](#)

Fischer, R., Callander, R., Reddish, P., and Bulbulia, J. (2013). How do rituals affect cooperation? *Human Nature*, 24(2):115–125. [PDF](#)

#### **Seminar 2: Religion as Magic: Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942)**

##### **Readings**

Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Magic, Science and Religion, and other essays*. Illinois, USA: Waveland Press, 1992 [1925], 9-92. [PDF](#)

Sosis, R. and Handwerker, W. P. (2011). Psalms and coping with uncertainty: Religious Israeli women's responses to the 2006 Lebanon war. *American Anthropologist*, 113(1):40–55. [PDF](#)

#### **Seminar 3: Civilizations Greatest Psychological Assest: Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)**

##### **Readings**

Freud, Sigmund. *The Future of an Illusion: Translated by WD Robson-Scott. Rev. and Newly Edited by James Strachey*. Ed. James Strachey. Doubleday, 1964. [PDF](#)

Sibley, C. G. and Bulbulia, J. (2012). Faith after an earthquake: A longitudinal study of religion and perceived health before and after the 2011 Christchurch New Zealand earthquake. *PloS one*, 7(12):e49648. [LINK](#)

#### **Seminar 4: Religion as Experience: William James (1842-1910)**

##### **Readings**

James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Vol. 13. Harvard University Press, 1985.

Lectures I, II, (on-line below)

<http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/james/toc.htm>

Schjoedt, Uffe, Hans Stødkilde-Jørgensen, Armin W. Geertz, and Andreas Roepstorff. "Highly religious participants recruit areas of social cognition in personal prayer." *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 4, no. 2 (2009): 199-207. [PDF](#)

## Seminar 5: Religion And Evolution: Charles Darwin (1809-1882)

### Readings

Darwin, C. (1958 [1892]). *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin and Selected Letters*. Dover Publications Inc., New York.. pp: 59-68 [PDF](#)

Darwin, C. (1981). *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. Princeton University Press, Princeton pp. 65 – 69. [PDF](#)

Wilson, David Sloan. Evolution and Religion: The Transformation of the Obvious. In Bulbulia, J., Sosis, R., Harris, E., Genet, R., Genet, C., and Wyman, K., editors, 23–29. *The Evolution of Religion: Studies, Theories and Critiques*. Santa Margarita, CA, Collins Foundation Press, 2008. (SHORT) [PDF](#)

## ESSAY 1 DUE 22 AUGUST

MID TRIMESTER BREAK 25<sup>th</sup> August – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2014

## PART 2: Testing Theories in The Study of Religion: Research Methodology in Religious Studies

### Seminar 6: Qualitative Approaches

#### Readings

Wuthnow, Robert. “Taking Talk Seriously: Religious Discourse as Social Practice.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50 1 (2011):1–21. [PDF](#)

Curtis, Bruce and Cate Curtis. “In Depth Interviewing – The Interactive Base.” In Bruce Curtis and Cate Curtis, 27-52. *Social Research: A Practical Introduction*. London, Sage Publications, 2011. [PDF](#)

### Seminar 7: Introduction to Hypothesis Testing

#### Readings

Gravetter, F. and Wallnau, L. (2006). Chapter 8: “Introduction to Hypothesis Testing” *Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences*. Cengage Learning. pp. 2-36 [PDF](#)

Ingrid Storm. *Researching Religion Using Quantitative Methods*. Institute for Social Change, University of Manchester [PDF](#)

#### Optional Readings

Slingerland, E. (2008). Who’s afraid of reductionism? The study of religion in the age of cognitive science. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 76(2):375–411. [PDF](#)

Taves, A. (2010). No field is an island: Fostering collaboration between the academic study of religion and the sciences. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 22(2):170–188 [PDF](#)

## **Seminar 8: Introduction to Quantitative Analysis : Hypothesis Testing**

### **Readings**

Tufte, E. R. (1974). Data Analysis for Politics and Policy. Chapter 1. "Introduction To Data Analysis" Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs, NJ. pp. 1-30 [PDF](#)

NZAVS Time 3.5 Questionnaire [EXCEL](#) Sampling Procedure: [DOC](#)

## **Seminar 9: Introduction to Quantitative Analysis: Basics of Model Building**

### **Readings**

Tufte, E. R. (1974). Data Analysis for Politics and Policy. Chapter 2-3. "Predictions and Projections: Some Issues in Research Design" Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs, NJ. pp. 21-64 [PDF](#)

## **Seminar 10: Introduction to Quantitative Analysis: Regression and Visualisation.**

### **Readings**

Tufte, E. R. (1974). Data Analysis for Politics and Policy. Chapter 2-3. "Two Variables and Linear Regression" Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs, NJ. pp. 65-130 [PDF](#)

Tufte, E. R. (1997). Visual & statistical thinking: Displays of evidence for decision-making author: Edward R. Tufte, publisher: Graphics. [PDF](#)

### **Optional readings**

Tufte, E. R. (2006). Beautiful Evidence, Volume 1., Chapter 7 "The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint: Pitching Out Corrupts Within" Graphics Press Cheshire, CT. [PDF](#)

See: Power point is evil

<http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/11.09/ppt2.html>

## **Seminar 11: Course Review**

Student Presentations + Course Review

**ESSAY 2 DUE 17 October**