

Religion and Unbelief

Location: Cobb 103

Instructor: Dr. Samuel Baudinette

Office hours: 3:30-4:30pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment

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*Left: A young Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers an address at University of Chicago's Rockefeller Chapel in 1953
Right: Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay) meets Elijah Muhammad, Prophet of the Nation of Islam, in his home in Kenwood*

What does it mean to be religious? What does it mean to be critical of religion? What does it mean to have a religious critique? Can one lack religion? Can one be spiritual but not religious? In this course, we will try to answer these questions by critically analyzing the terms “religion,” “secularism,” “spirituality,” and “atheism” so as to better understand how they each shape allegiances and dividing lines in contemporary social and political life. In the first part of the course, we will examine classical and contemporary approaches to religion and unpack how and why religion became an object of academic as well as political analysis. In the second part of the course, we will explore the history of secularism as a philosophical and political project that has shaped our present reality, as well as consider scholarly approaches that attempt to “speak back” to secularism’s global hegemony. Finally, we will interrogate what it might mean to claim to be spiritual but not religious, or to be an atheist, while exploring how these claims relate to the problem of secularism. As we work through course material, students will also conduct their own ethnographic research in the Hyde Park area through a series of site visits, as well as consider the politics of religion and unbelief through film and object-based learning.

Course Format

This course meets five days a week for three weeks except for June 19 and July 4. Morning sessions will take place from 9am-11:30am. Afternoon sessions will take place from 1pm-3pm.

Morning sessions will focus on class readings while in the afternoons we will generally approach themes through other modalities including short film, field trips, and student-led ethnography. I

will introduce the day's readings with a short lecture which will be followed by student-led discussion and in-class writing tasks.

All readings will be made available online through the course's Canvas website. Students should be able to access these readings directly in class either by printing out and bringing a hardcopy of each reading or by having digital access to the reading through a laptop or tablet (not their phone!)

Our course schedule—including a list of the assigned readings for each class—can be found below at the end of the syllabus.

Learning Objectives

In this class students will

1. Become familiar with a variety of approaches, both recent and historical, to the academic study of religion, secularism, spirituality, and atheism.
2. Interpret and evaluate the language and rhetoric that people use when they approach religion, secularism, spirituality, and atheism as objects of critical and political analysis, and relate this rhetoric to the geographical, epistemological and cultural assumptions that inform these approaches.
3. Conduct small-scale ethnographic fieldwork and reflect upon object- and place-based experiences in order to present a thesis-driven argument about religion and unbelief in conversation with assigned class materials.
4. Communicate their understanding of the readings studied in class in a way that acknowledges the generic conventions of scholarly argument and the cultural norms of the college classroom.
5. Connect their new-found knowledge with their own prior understanding of contemporary religion and the modern politics of unbelief.

Assignments and Requirements

Breakdown of grade distribution:

- Attendance and active participation in class discussions (40%)
- Reading diary (30%)
- Group ethnographic presentation (30%)

1. Attendance and active participation in class discussion (40%)

In this course we rely primarily on discussion to promote learning. To that end it is important that we all cultivate together a respectful and supportive environment in our classroom when we discuss the readings. *Everyone should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings, which requires that you have read all assigned texts and completed your written response to them for your reading diary assignment (outlined below).*

Moreover, in this class we shall recognize the importance of disparate ways of knowing and that the production of knowledge is ultimately collaborative and occurs through dialogue (and hence that the classroom is also a site of potential conflict which may not always be resolved

satisfactorily). Students should approach our conversations with generosity and openness to ways of knowing that differ from their own.

Students are also expected to acknowledge and respect how personal and communal experience inform what we know. That is, because the focus of our course is mainly historical and anthropological, as well as philosophical, our conversations in class will proceed by recognizing how knowledge is always *situated* and how truths are articulated by communities in contact and contestation with other communities without necessarily privileging one way of knowing or speaking over another.

We will set aside time at the beginning of the course to discuss together how we can mutually commit to making the classroom a welcoming and inclusive space with these overarching goals in mind. We shall do so in dialogue with the norms of expression outlined further down in this syllabus.

Regular physical attendance is also a requirement during this class, and I will take attendance every morning and every afternoon each day. Students who miss a session due to illness, or because of another reason, may be asked to do supplemental or additional tasks in order to make-up for their lack of attendance. *Students who need to miss a session should get in touch with the instructor via email ASAP.* Unexplained absences will be reported to the Summer Session administrative staff.

2. Reading Diary (30%)

During the course you will keep a handwritten reading diary where you will write a short response about each assigned reading. Such *regular* writing in response to reading is a useful scholarly practice since it will help you organize your thinking about the texts we will discuss in class and will provide both you and your instructors a progressive record of your approach to the material. These responses will also help prepare you to discuss the readings in class each day.

These do not need to be formal responses to the readings but evidence of your thinking with and about what the reading *says* (i.e. its content), what it is *doing* (i.e. the conceptual or critical intervention being made, or analytic terminology being introduced), and where it *comes from* (i.e. how each text has been produced by someone, somewhere, somewhen). Feel free to include not only *what you understand about the text* but also to note *what is confusing or appears questionable to you about it*.

The diary itself does not need to be a structured or detailed response to the readings but should provide evidence of a *considered engagement with each reading*. Jottings, scribbled musings, dot-point lists of claims the author of a text makes, and the copying out of important quotes (with commentary!) are all appropriate ways to organize your response. Essentially, the diary assignment exists to introduce you to the scholarly habit of notetaking, so you should not feel pressured—nor are you required—to write polished essays in response to the assigned readings.

As the course progresses you should feel free to also note *where and how* you feel any given reading relates to another text we have read during this course or is in conversation with a theme or topic we have discussed in class. If you choose to note these connections it is important to not only

indicate whether texts appear to agree or disagree, but to also include some reflection on *how* and *why* they do so.

Written responses *must be done by hand* (although typed responses will be acceptable if you need to use a computer as part of an accommodation reached with the instructor). Each written response should be *no longer than a single page*. If a class has more than one assigned reading your notes will need to respond to *each reading* in some way. This means that your response should be *selective* rather than *comprehensive* (i.e. you must respond to what in any given reading appears significant, interesting, or problematic to you without aiming to produce a complete and total summary of everything that the text discusses).

Written responses are due **no later than 8am on the morning of each class** and should be uploaded to our course's Canvas website. Since these responses are meant to be handwritten, I ask that you take a photo of your notes with your phone in order to upload them as images to Canvas. You do not need to provide me with a hardcopy of your diary entries.

Mahtab and I will read through your responses before class and will endeavor to incorporate your own questions and thoughts into our teaching each day. In this way the preparatory work you complete before class and your initial thinking about each assigned reading will shape how our discussions in class unfold.

Some examples of the reading diary entries can be found below in an appendix if you would like to see how students have approached this task in the past. They are representative of appropriately thoughtful work, as this is defined in the course's grading policy.

3. Group Ethnographic Presentation (30%)

Throughout the course, you will progressively work on an ethnographic research project in groups that culminates in a brief in-class presentation (of no more than 15 minutes per group).

The ethnographic project will involve small-scale fieldwork based on site visits to locations in Hyde Park, a discussion of how your fieldwork relates to the readings and topics discussed in class, and auto-ethnographic reflection (i.e. a narrative account of how you yourselves are part of and have shaped the anthropological inquiry as participant observers).

Your group project must address the relationship between belief and unbelief in some way, or it must offer an account of how and why a given community's religious or political beliefs and practices are shaped by—or respond to—secularism.

You may choose to visit a religious community or a community that is more explicitly “secular,” provided that the latter has some demonstrable relationship to “religious” subjects or peoples. Comparative projects where groups visit and study more than one community are encouraged, but groups must decide for themselves (in dialogue with the instructors) how many sites they can reasonably visit to study during a three-week course.

You will be given time in class to discuss the direction of your project with your peers, as well as to learn the methods of ethnographic inquiry and how to construct and administer interview

questions for the purposes of research. Mahtab and I will also be available to meet individually with students during our regular office hours should anyone want to discuss their group project.

Students will be assigned to a group early in the first week of the course. Guidelines for how best to approach the class presentations can be found as an appendix attached to this syllabus.

Grading Policy¹

The University of Chicago requires that students at the end of a class be given a qualitative letter grade based upon numerical scores given to assignments. This quarter, I will be grading all assignments for *thoughtful completion*. Here is what the different numerical grades will indicate according to this policy:

95 – If an assignment is done in a timely way that demonstrates thoughtfulness, clear effort, and understanding, it will receive a 95%. *I anticipate that the significant majority of assignments will receive 95s this quarter.*

100 – If an assignment is done in a way that is exceptionally insightful or shows superior effort and thoughtfulness, it will receive a 100%. *100s will be much less common and reserved for especially perceptive individual and group work.*

80 – If an assignment is done in a way that does not demonstrate clear effort, if it lacks insight or feels in some way slapdash or superficial, if it does not address the different aspects of the prompt in a glaring way, or if it is submitted a few hours or days late, it will usually receive an 80%.

0 – If an assignment is judged to have violated the principles of academic integrity, or if a student has disregarded the norms of expression outlined below in a way that is intentionally or deliberately offensive, it may receive a failing grade.

Student Conduct

The specific policies that govern student conduct at the University of Chicago are available online at <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/student-life-conduct/>.

Specific information about the Pre-College Summer Session can be found online at <https://summer.uchicago.edu/pre-college/pre-college-faq/>.

Norms of Expression

Because we will be critically interrogating topics related to religion, secularism, spirituality, and atheism it is especially important that we attend not only to our own personal or communal commitments to these topics, but also acknowledge and respect the views of other members of the class. Consequently, there may be moments when our own religious and political commitments could become subjects of academic discussion. In such moments it will be necessary to think carefully about how both our own feelings and those of others may be affected by what we want to say, and to strive to communicate our convictions or critiques without immediately dismissing or denigrating opinions which may challenge our own.

¹ Adapted from policies originally composed by Dr. Russell P. Johnson.

This does not mean that we shall suppress disagreement. It means that any disagreement must be respectful and that our criticism should be constructive, rather than contemptuous.

By acknowledging that our conversations and discussions will proceed in a respectful manner we also commit ourselves to using inclusive and welcoming language as much as possible. This requires that we think about language as one of the norms that will impact how our discussions unfold in the classroom. As much as possible we should avoid making assumptions about how others identify while respecting each other's desire to speak in a certain register. For instance, students are asked to respect and employ personal pronouns whenever these are disclosed and to avoid making needlessly disparaging remarks about the ways people communicate in speech and writing. We should be prepared to respond with patience and charity to those students for whom English is a second language.

However, there are some specific academic expectations about communication which we must also respect in our classroom. For instance, male pronouns (he/him/his) are no longer used universally when speaking about people in the world nor should we employ "man(kind)" when we speak about humanity—even when/if our readings and informants do so. In the academic practice of philosophy, it is also now convention to refer to a female subject when introducing thought experiments or arguments (she/her/hers) and I ask that gender neutral pronouns (they/them/theirs) be used when generalizing about collective populations (although our discussions should always aim to be as particular and specific as possible).

As much as possible we should also refer to the people we study by using their own specific and historical names for themselves. However, we will discover in our reading that many names will be contested, and we must be prepared to critically analyze and interrogate about how and why readings or communities might introduce ways of naming and speaking about themselves that we would reject or problematize.

One final set of norms we must be aware of in our discussion and in our writing are those of academic integrity. In all submitted writing your own claims and arguments should be expressed in your own words. You should aim to paraphrase the arguments of others whenever possible and ought to introduce direct quotations into your writing sparingly and only when and where the exact language of the claim or argument is pertinent to the argument or claim that you are making. Students should also be aware that while discussing material with other students in class and collaborating on projects is encouraged (and even required for the group assignment!), intentionally or unintentionally copying the work of your classmates is one of the most common forms of plagiarism and should be avoided. Students may be penalized if their work is found to have plagiarized the work of others. This includes copying or making use of another student's reading diary in order to produce your own.

The specific policies that govern academic integrity at the University of Chicago are available online at <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/>.

Accessibility and Accommodations

All students should feel that they can fully participate in class, and I am committed to ensuring this course is accessible and open to all. I welcome feedback and conversations with students who

have any concerns about accessibility or would like to make concrete suggestions about how the classroom or our assignments can be made more accessible and equitable.

Students with disabilities or other special needs have the right to accommodation. Anyone who has or believes they may have a disability that may affect their participation in this course or who would like to have officially registered with the University should communicate with Student Disability Services by phone at 773-702-6000/TTY 773-795-1186, by email at disabilities@uchicago.edu, or visit their website at <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/students/registering-with-sds/>.

Students should know that all private conversations about accommodation and dis/ability between students and the instructors will remain confidential. I recognize that individual circumstances can also change so if an accommodation we've previously agreed upon needs to be further refined, please reach out and we can make further adjustments.

"Artificial Intelligence" and Use of Technology in Class

Some instructors and members of the academic community argue that generative AI may have limited use as a study tool provided that it does not come to replace doing one's own work. Others are concerned that use of this technology may contribute to a phenomenon referred to as "cognitive offloading," citing research that demonstrates a significant statistical correlation between heavy use of AI and a decline in the skills associated with critical reasoning and problem solving. There is also considerable concern over the potential bias shown in AI search results, as well as the technology's tendency to violate the intellectual property rights of writers, artists, and others in the creative professions.

The debate over the pros and cons of AI use are ongoing, including over its detrimental environmental impact and its potential as a force for equity in the workplace and the classroom. Ultimately, however, the goal of this class (as well as of any liberal arts education) is to put your own thoughts and research into your own words rather than make use of or plagiarize the words and research of others. *I therefore consider the use of generative AI, such as ChatGPT or equivalents, at any stage during your writing process inappropriate for this class.* This includes using generative AI technology during the drafting process, to summarize readings, or to correct grammatical and spelling errors at the end of the writing process. If I detect or suspect that you have used generative AI for an assignment in this course I will consider such use an incidence of plagiarism and will address such plagiarism in line with the policies outlined in the University of Chicago Student Manual.

Limited use of translation software and electronic dictionaries for those who require them, however, is acceptable *provided students have discussed use of such software in advance with the instructor.* Students are encouraged to bring laptops and tablets which they can use to access readings during class, as well as paper notebooks and pens for in class writing tasks.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Religion

Monday (June 16)

In our morning session we will discuss the syllabus and assignments as well as get to know each other.

Reading: Bruce Lincoln, "Theses on Method": <https://religion.ua.edu/external-resources/theses-on-method/>

Bruce Lincoln is a retired professor of the history of religions at the University of Chicago where he taught the comparative study of religion. The Theses on Method is a polemic manifesto he wrote against what he believed were apologetic and uncritical tendencies that plagued the academic study of religion. As we approach this text we will need to observe and discuss not only what Lincoln believes religion to be, but also interrogate how that belief shapes his conception of what religious studies ought to look like.

We will read this text in-class together and you do not need to read it before coming to class. You also do not need to write and submit a reading entry for the Theses on Method.

Tuesday (June 17)

Reading: Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," introduction, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 53-65.

This text by Karl Marx, famous for his political theory of communism and for his account of history as class struggle, offers one of the most influential modern attempts to define the critique of religion as a political imperative. We will begin our class by interrogating how Marx defines religion and its critique before attending to the role he assigns to religion in his history of Germany's progressive movement toward revolution.

Afternoon Session: Visit to Rockefeller Chapel and Saieh Hall to view and discuss the relationship between religion and capitalism at the University.

Wednesday (June 18)

Reading: Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 87-125 (focus especially on pp. 89-98, but please read through the entire chapter).

*Clifford Geertz was an influential American anthropologist well known for his working definition of culture as a symbolic system, his scholarly practice of "thick description," and for ethnographic research undertaken in Southeast Asia and North Africa. We will read his important account of religion as a set of narratives that aim to make life and the world intelligible to people from his magnum opus, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, and compare his anthropological method to that of Marx and Lincoln.*

Afternoon session: Introduction to Ethnographic Method and to Interviewing for the purposes of qualitative research.

(Optional readings: Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*, Appendix and Allison Hurt, “Interviewing:
<https://open.oregonstate.edu/qualresearchmethods/chapter/chapter-11-interviewing/>)

Thursday (June 19)

Juneteenth Holiday (No class)

Friday (June 20)

Reading: David Morgan, “The Matter of Belief,” introduction to *Religion and Material Culture*, pp 1-12.

Reading: Susan Vogel, introduction to exhibition catalogue *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropological Collections*, pp. 11-17.

David Morgan is an art historian and scholar of religion whose work aims to interrogate how religious sensibilities are produced through embodied practice and shaped by material culture. In this brief chapter, Morgan suggests that belief entails more than the affirmation of the truth of a dogmatic proposition and ought to be understood as a kind of practice, or as a “habit of feeling.” Morgan thus asks us to consider whether religious belief precedes practice, or whether religious practice, which makes use of a variety of ritual objects and bodily gestures, precedes belief. With this question in mind we will also read and discuss Susan Vogel’s short introduction to the catalogue for the Art/Artifact exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in 1988, which invites us to interrogate how our modern understanding of art shapes how we interpret and appreciate works on display in museums, such as those we will view at the Smart Museum.

Afternoon session: Visit to Smart Museum of Art for a “Slow Viewing” exercise with Cooper Long of the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry.

Week 2: Secularism

Monday (June 23)

Reading: Charles Taylor, introduction to *A Secular Age*, pp. 1-22.

Charles Taylor is a Catholic philosopher from Canada interested in the ways that different “social imaginaries” determine the self as a moral and political subject. In his A Secular Age Taylor narrates how secularism emerged as a constitutive feature of modernity yet challenges the thesis that religion has faded away or will fade away due to secularism. We will read his introduction to this narrative, which focuses on the relation (rather than opposition) between religious belief and unbelief as epistemic options available to the subjects of secular modernity and interrogate his account of the “immanent frame” that defines the modern social imaginary.

Tuesday (June 24)

Reading: José Casanova, “The Secular and Secularisms,” *Social Research* 76.4 (2009): 1049-66 (focus on pp. 1054-64).

José Casanova is a sociologist of religion who has published widely on the so-called secularization hypothesis and whether it adequately explains the continued relevance of religion to the modern world. In this article he outlines an important definitional difference between the secular as a temporal designation and secularism as a philosophical and political project that emerged in and out of Europe. We will need to assess how he does so through a critical response to the work of Charles Taylor.

Afternoon Session: Visit to Swift Hall to view and discuss the Secondhand Sacred exhibit organized by the Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion, and curated by James S. Bielo.

You can watch a recorded interview with James Bielo which discusses the exhibition here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYqeo0oU7JQ&t=1s>

Wednesday (June 25)

Reading: Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18 (2006): 323-47 (focus on pp. 323-30 and 344-47).

Saba Mahmood was an influential anthropologist of religion, who was well known for her ethnographic work with religious women in Egypt and for her analysis of the way that liberal political theory centers autonomy and agency rather than the ethical embodiment of a religious subjectivity. In this piece, we will see how Mahmood develops this latter argument by offering a conception of secularism as a political project marked by the imperatives of Western imperialism. She does so in order to argue that the secularist claim that the State ought to be religiously neutral and culturally tolerant masks a political need to adjudicate what religions are and are not politically acceptable.

Afternoon session: Screening and discussion of the documentary *The Power of Nightmares: the Rise of the Politics of Fear* by Adam Curtis.

Thursday (June 26)

Reading: Joan Wallach Scott, "Women and Religion," in *Sex and Secularism*, pp. 30-59 (focus on pp. 30-34 and 51-59).

This chapter from feminist historian Joan Wallach Scott's Sex and Secularism aims to show how secularism as rational has been conceived as masculine while religion as passionate has been conceived as feminine. Scott also builds on Mahmood's work in order to demonstrate how secularism's attempt to adjudicate what is religiously acceptable and unacceptable is indelibly tied to a politics that sees the liberation of women from "traditional" religious rule as the primary goal of feminism's emancipatory project throughout the globe. By turning to the practice of veiling among Muslim women and the politics of anti-colonial resistance, Scott questions the Eurocentric and imperialist assumptions that appear to inform the secularist variety of feminism.

Afternoon session: Screening and discussion of the documentary *Women of Islam: Veiling and Seclusion* by Farheen Umar.

Friday (June 27)

Reading: Tisa Wenger, “Indian Dances and the Politics of Religious Freedom, 1870-1930,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79.4 (2011): 850-78.

Tisa Wenger is an historian of religion who has published books about the controversies which emerged over the Pueblo Ghost dance in the 1920s and about how American ideas about religious freedom were continually reinvented during the 19th and 20th centuries within a national discourse that cannot be separated from the politics of race and empire. In this article, Wenger brings these concerns together in order to understand how Native American peoples understood and defended their traditional practices in dialogue with White American understandings of religion and the secular. By reading and discussing Wenger’s work we will conclude our investigation of secularism by examining how American discourse polices the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable religion by upholding White religion as normative, and White culture as aspirational.

Afternoon: Field Trip to the Native Voices exhibit at the Field Museum of Natural History.

Week 3: Atheism and Spirituality

Monday (June 30)

Reading: Sam Harris, “Islam and the Future of Liberalism,”
<https://www.samharris.org/blog/islam-and-the-future-of-liberalism>

Reading: Nathan Lean, “Dawkins, Harris, Hitchens: New Atheists flirt with Islamophobia,” *The Guardian*:
https://www.salon.com/2013/06/30/dawkins_harris_hitchens_new_atheists_flirt_with_islamophobia/

Reading: Kathryn Lofton, “So You Want to Be a New Atheist,” *The Immanent Frame*:
<https://tif.ssrc.org/2009/11/16/so-you-want-to-be-a-new-atheist>

In these readings we will assess the critique of Islam forwarded by the “New Atheist” Sam Harris as well as a public response to his critique by academic Nathan Lean accusing the New Atheists of “irrational racism.” We will also read a public-facing work published by the anthropologist and historian Kathryn Lofton which aims to interrogate the “positivist” and “apocalyptic” imagination of the New Atheism. In our conversation about these pieces, we will need to consider the academic approaches to religion and secularism we have covered in our course up to this point and how they can help us assess modern atheism’s relation to the religion(s) it aims to critique.

Tuesday (July 1)

Reading: Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America’s Nones*, pp.1-15 and 246-52 (focus on **pp. 1-15**).

Elizabeth Drescher, a sociologist of religion who also works as a pastoral theologian, in this recent work of ethnography provides a detailed study of the religiosity of the American “nones”—that is, those people who in response to official censuses of public opinion claim to have no institutional or personal affiliation with any religion. Drescher’s work seeks to demonstrate that such people nevertheless often have a highly

developed understanding of their own spirituality and engage in personal and communal spiritual practices that pose significant problems for traditional accounts of contemporary religion and secularism. In our discussions we will need to find ways to account for such “spirituality without religion” in order to consider how it relates to other nonreligious phenomena constitutive of modern life—including (New) Atheism.

Afternoon session: In-class “virtual ethnography” exercise comparing the website of the Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago (<https://ethicalhumanistsociety.org/>) and the website of the Saint Germain Foundation of Schaumburg, Illinois (<https://www.saintgermainfoundation.org/>).

Wednesday (July 2)

Reading: Sophia Rose Arjana, *Buying Buddha, Selling Rumi: Orientalism and the Mystical Marketplace*, pp. 1-14 and 113-27 (focus on **pp. 1-14**).

This popular work by scholar of religion and convert to Islam, Sophia Rose Arjana, represents an attempt to examine the cultural appropriation of Eastern religions by participants of the “mystical marketplace” in the (post)modern West. Arjana asks us to consider how the economic and colonialist logics of capitalism not only enable such appropriation, but even invent “Oriental spirituality” itself as a commodity to be consumed by the West by extracting religious material out of the “traditional” context that makes it meaningful. We will want to think about how her critique could be applied to the “nones” that Drescher discusses, while also asking whether Drescher would be convinced by Arjana’s claim that the cultural appropriation and capitalist exploitation of Eastern religion by people in the West is always a moral and political problem.

Thursday (July 3)

Group Project Presentations

Friday (July 4)

Independence Day (No class)

REPRESENTATIVE SYLLABUS

Appendix: Guidelines for the Class Presentations

The following guidelines offer advice about how to think about your group presentation in view of the learning objectives of this class. They are also suggestions that aim to advise you how your presentation may be offered to the rest of the class in a way that helps your fellow students understand, analyze and respond to what you as a group find important or notable about the material you share with them. To that end the following recommendations emphasize the importance of communication and demonstrative argumentation when presenting material to class.

Communication and Delivery

- The presentation proceeded in a logical and orderly manner but without speaking too formally.
- The presenters maintained eye contact with their audience and spoke clearly and not too quickly.
- The presenters considered how their speech interacts with their body language as well as how the configuration of the classroom impacted their capacity to present and the audience's capacity to understand.
- The presenters responded thoughtfully and fairly to any questions which arose during and after their presentation.
- Any visual aids or handouts produced were well prepared, informative and assisted rather than distracted from the presentation.
- The presentation did not exceed the allotted time (15mins) and every member of the group was responsible for some aspect of the presentation (whether that be speaking or for producing handouts or visual aids like slide shows).

Knowledge Base and Understanding of the Material

- The research being presented has been adequately contextualized and is original.
- The key argument or set of evaluative claims have been related to the relevant readings assigned for class.
- All material introduced by the presenters was relevant and essential for an understanding of the project being presented.
- The presenters defined and discussed all the technical terms and key concepts that they employed (including those they have adopted from the readings).
- Any and all interpretation or evaluation of the readings relied on evidence drawn from the readings themselves or was based on evidence from their fieldwork or interviews.

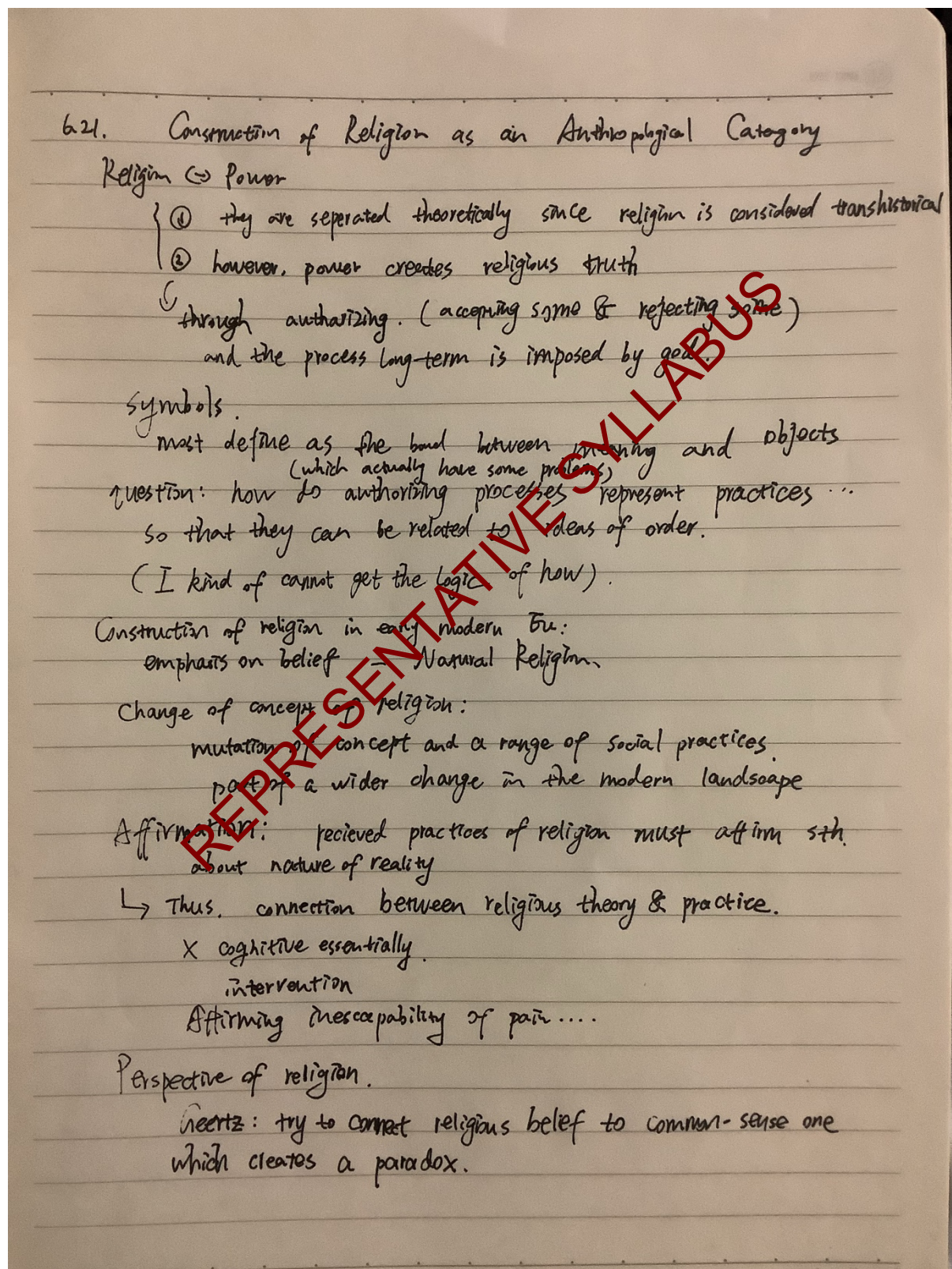
Critical Analysis

- The presenters connected what they found in the readings to their own personal experience or views about the world in a way relevant to the explicit goals of the class.
- The presenters' critique of any reading or position discovered during their fieldwork or interviews arises out of a **hermeneutics of charity** (i.e. the presenters strived to offer a fair and balanced account of an argument on its own terms before they offered an evaluation or assessment of its political and philosophical commitments or its implicit and explicit biases).

REPRESENTATIVE SYLLABUS

Appendix: Reading Diary Examples

Below I have included images that provide an example of reading diary entries that you may wish to consult in order to get an idea of how students have approached this task in the past. They respond to texts that were assigned last year, but which we are not reading this year.



Asad

Religion: a matter of symbolic meanings linked to ideas of general order
must not be confused with any of its particular historical or cultural form

a concrete set of tools attached to specific processes of power and knowledge
abstracted => universalized
↑ religious toleration
new science

Symbol: a set of relationships between object or events uniquely brought together as complexes or as concepts

* (this is more abstract than Geertz's definition of symbols to me)

Q: What the meaning of "discursive" in this kind of texts?

"The authoritative status of representations / discourses is dependant on the appropriate production of other representations / discourses; the two are intrinsically and not just temporally connected"

* whether a worshipper has "distinctive" dispositions can't identify religion
* religious symbols can fail to create moods & motivations

How does (religion) power create truth?

* Coercion
* final act of choice → spontaneous; but prepared by a long process
↓
imposed

Augustine: men needed such firm handling
"discipline" human beings were recalled, by suffering, from their own disastrous inclinations

symbols + power - laws = disciplinary activities of social institutions → human bodies

* religious dispositions x depend on cosmic framework (* feeling hard to understand)

Q: how are people convinced to believe in religions when they don't provide a world view?

Authoritative discourse: sought to the subjection of all practice to a unified authority, to a single authentic source that could tell truth from falsehood.

* weight of religion more and more onto the moods and motivations of the individual believer

Reflection: Asad's words kind of answered my question to Geertz's statement:
Who are forming the concepts? Asad answered with the explanation of "power"
A thing Asad couldn't convince me: I can't think of any religion that doesn't provide a cosmic framework. A person doesn't need to see the world new to believe in a religion, but I think a cosmology is still needed.

Response to Managing Race, Managing Religion by Vincent W. Lloyd

Argument: o reaffirms the past readings / way on extension of previous readings

note

- Race & religion are not just facts about one's identity
- it is cultural (Mehmed) - ideology that educates / modifies the religious
- We seek to uncover racial & religious formations that are rendered illegible under the current regime and to demonstrate their political potency.

Appendix

- Scholarship on race and secularism has potential in being disruptive by "refusing the naturalness of formation of race / religion under secularism. There's three methods:
 - 1) Exploring the way ↓ are managed (agency of secularism)
 - 2) How the management is contained (correlation b/w race / religion)
 3. How ↓ is refused
- must be critical
- must use these knowledge beyond uncovering secularism's hegemony, but in achieving justice
- as in collective of scholars in the book, but sounds like a Manifesto
- secularism should be studied as management of discourse and practices/bodies
 - o regime of truth / ideal norms VS of lived-experience of the way it happened matter
 - o ideology behind state AND people
 - o radical Islam = secularism → inevitable mismatch = e.g. veiling
 - o constituted state (Qatar) AND people (Zawahiri)
- discussions of the ideological impact of secularism hides its impact
- America has an imagined / fantasized place of diversity / freedom to be so = the Straussian political "agenda" (?) of the elites → create myths ↓ for the people to bind as collectives
- monopolizing secular discourse resemble dominating racial discourse (black women)
- American studies, as discipline, has pioneered in "racialization"
 - my radical research - American scholarship leads → they're more critical...? (assumption or rationality)
 - their "inspiration" didn't he pioneer? there's linear trend in studying
 - just establish the dominance of the state rule? → more narrable?
- comparisons with Casanova / Mehmed's interpretation of secularism as ideology
- redundant to read?
- more opinionated as in in need of a solution → is a scholar's job also to propose solutions?
- if there's criticalness towards white secularism, why should there be criticism against black religions?

three things

REPRESENTATIVE SYLLABUS

DATE: _____

Governmentality Technology — Management
Two Accounts for MLK & Barack Obama
(Reality: struggles as Black Preacher) Ronald Reagan
(Secularism ~~was not~~ (Protestantism) Ma-
Nonminority (White) manages
↓ Secular have a body (have practices), not
the "Secularist - Racializing Knot"
→ Current academia (intentionally)

Management of Religion | Management of Race

Federal, constitutional
disestablishment, free exercise
by Protestants, for Protestants
↑ "the" other Persons
(Indians and two fifths
of slaves are not full on
considered human ^{to man})

Cultivating good religion
extension of federal manage-
ment of religion by 14th Amendment
Kth; legally equal
under segregation

Cold War: turned religion
Cold War turned racial
disorder

Secularization discourse of industrialization
& urbanization

Multiculturalism (contemporary) or
neo-liberalism

of Race and Religion (Management of Differences)
secular, post-racial, simple humanism
religion nationalized, race naturalized,
negates religion (religion "other") by power
racial-minority communities by power
only intellectual; and secular is white (flow
America's) the management of religion in racialization of people
(no discussion of race)
ignored the racializing aspect of secularism

Responses

State-level: Bible-sworn oaths, criminalized
blasphemy, financially supporting churches
Cultivating good religion

Christian-fueled social movements,
sometimes about race abolitionism, but only a little

Civil right movement, Catholic ~~energy~~
black religion, Exhortation

Religious Northern Church) accommodating
black immigrants to get new urban lives begin ^{Cypriot} Migration

Catholic critique, language of hospitality & neighbor

REPRESENTATIVE SYLLABUS