

**R661/761 G620** Religion and Social Criticism  
Department of Religious Studies  
Indiana University  
Fall 2010  
Monday 4-6pm

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### Description

This course examines religion as a *source* or an *object* of social criticism, starting in the early modern period and concluding in the early part of the twentieth century. We will proceed along two general lines. First, we will explore how theologians, philosophers, and psychological and social theorists have seen religion as an object of critique, focusing in particular on critics' ethical, political, psychological, or economic reasons. Second, we will examine how Western thinkers have seen religion as a source of ideas for evaluating matters of personal or communal identity, cultural practices, or social institutions. We will explore how religion is theorized in the critical discourses surrounding it – especially discourses that appeal to some account of nature or natural processes in relation to which religion is evaluated. One additional question we will consider is how (and in what ways) “religion” is conceptualized in political or intellectual regimes that espouse the toleration or the unmasking of religious belief or practice.

### Format

Class meets once a week in a seminar format. The seminar will begin with a student “launch” (more on this below). That launch will set the agenda for the seminar discussion.

### Assignments

- Students are required to “launch” two discussions and to be active participants in all seminars. Each “launch” should be 7-10 minutes long and should include 3-4 questions and comments. Those questions and comments should be sent to me to post on Oncourse by Sunday 5pm before class. All other students are to post a comment (one paragraph) on Oncourse by Sunday 5pm before class. Discussion and launches are worth 20% of the final grade.
- Students are required to submit three critical papers. These papers are to address the work of authors whom you are not assigned for the “discussion launch.” The critical papers are due the Wednesday of the week for which an author has been assigned. Those papers should be 3-4 pages, single-spaced, and should critically assess the reading assignment. These papers are worth 45% of the final grade. Summary papers are not acceptable and will be returned for revision.
- A concluding focus paper, worth 35%, is required. **For R661**, that paper should be 12-15 pp., double-spaced, and should make an extended assessment of a particular line of argument that we've addressed sometime over the course of the semester. **For R761/G20**, the paper should be a 20+ pp. research paper.

All papers should be submitted to me via an email attachment in Word. Please put your name in the subject heading of the email, along with information about the paper, e.g., Miller on Hume.

## Readings

Recommended:

Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism*

Required:

Bartolomé de las Casas, O.P., *In Defense of the Indians*

John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*

David Hume, *A Natural History of Religion*

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*

Karl Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

Karl Marx *The German Ideology, Pt. 1*

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

John Dewey, *A Common Faith*

Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*

By way of recommendation, I have listed a few secondary source readings to accompany each of our primary sources. These are available either through IU Libraries or on PDF files posted on Oncourse. I recommend these readings to acquaint you with important scholarly interventions in the field as potential resources or foils for thinking about our primary sources.

## Calendar

**Wk 1 Aug 30** Introduction: On Religion, Interpretation, and Social Criticism

**Wk 2 Sept. 6** Bartolomé de las Casas, O.P., *In Defense of the Indians*, chaps. 1- 8, 28-38.

See: Anthony Padgen, “The ‘School of Salamanca’ and the ‘Affair of the Indies,’” *History of Universities of England* 1 (1981): 71-112.

**Wk 3 Sept. 13** John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*

See: Jeremy Waldron, *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers 1981-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): chap 7: “Locke, Toleration, and the Rationality of Persecution”; Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke’s Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 208-226.

**Wk 4 Sept. 20** David Hume, *A Natural History of Religion*

See: J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), chap. 5: “Religion within the Limits of ‘The Science of Man’: David Hume”; Jennifer Herdt, *Religion and Faction in Hume’s Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chap. 5: “Religion and Irrationality in History.”

**Wk 5 Sept 27** Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, Speeches 1-3.

See: Richard Crouter, "Introduction" to *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 39-55; Julia A. Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996): chap. 2, "Berlin and the *Speeches on Religion*, 1799-1801"; Andrew C. Dole, *Schleiermacher on Religion and the Natural Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), chap. 2: "Religion in Outline."

**Wk 6 Oct. 4** Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, Speeches 4-5

See: Wayne Proudfoot, "Immediacy and Intentionality in the Feeling of Absolute Dependence," and Theodore Vail, "Anschauung and Intuition, Again," in *Schleiermacher, the Study of Religion, and the Future of Theology*, ed. Brent W. Sockness and Wilhelm Gräb (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010); Frederick C. Beiser, "Schleiermacher's Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

**Wk 7 Oct. 11** Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

See: Allen W. Wood, "The Marxian Critique of Justice," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1.3 (Spring 1972): 244-82.

**Wk 8 Oct. 18** Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Pt. 1

See: Denys Turner, "Religion: Illusion and Liberation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

**Wk 9 Oct. 25** Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

See: David Little, *Religion, Order, and Law*, "Representative Literature Critical of *The Protestant Ethic*," or, Little, "Max Weber and the Comparative Study of Religious Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 2.2 (1974): 5-40.

**Wk 10 Nov. 1** No class: attending academic conference

**Wk 11 Nov. 8** Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

See: Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chap. 8: "On the Genealogy of Morals."

**Wk 12 Nov. 15** Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents*, chaps. 2, 3 5, 7, 8

See: Ernest Wallwork, *Psychoanalysis and Ethics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), chap. 2: "The Hermeneutical Problem of Reading Freud"; Preus, *Explaining Religion*, chap. 9: "Psychogenic Theory."

**Wk 13 Nov. 22** William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lectures 1-10, 16-postscript.

See: David C. Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chap. 3, "*Varieties of Religious Experience*: Indications of a

Philosophy Adapted to Normal Religious Needs”; see also Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today* (Harvard, 2002).

**Wk 14 Nov. 29** John Dewey, *A Common Faith*

See: Steven C. Rockefeller, *John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), chap. 11: “Nature, God, and Religious Feeling.”

**Wk 15 Dec. 6** Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*

See: Martin Marty, “Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience,” *Journal of Religion* 54.4 (Oct. 1974): 332-59; or Dennis McCann, “Reinhold Niebuhr and Jacques Maritain on Marxism,” *Journal of Religion* 58.2 (April 1978): 140-68.