MAGIC, SCIENCE, AND RELIGION

RELIGION 20.2

Professor Benor

Office: Thornton 304

* Is there a significant distinction to be drawn between religious and magical ritual?
* What theoretical concepts might enable us to draw such a distinction?
* Do magic or religion thrive in opposition to the science of their time or in congruence with it?
* Can we ever hope that answers to such questions will be valid across cultures and historical periods?

The course will address these, and other, core theoretical questions in the Study of Religion through analysis of various configurations of relations between the categories “Religion,” “Science,” and “Magic.” Analyses will be conducted from the perspectives of Comparative Religion, History, Philosophy of Science, Anthropology, Psychology, and Cognitive Science. The course will suggest a general theory of conditions under which religion tends to be magical and conditions under which it tends not to be.

Students are invited to challenge this theory in their own research and in the final exam.

**Requirements:**

Research Essay or Essays (~ 5000 words) = 75%

* Option 1: a term essay to be submitted in three (3) phases.
* Option 2: three (3) short essays (~1200 words), which may at some point converge into one.

Final take-home exam (~1000 words) = 25%.

**Required Books**

Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford UP: 1976.

Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*, Harvard UP: 2006 (1983).

Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, Waveland Press: 1992.

**Schedule**

1. Introduction
   1. The Argument of the Course
   2. Is religion necessarily magical?
      1. Spiro. “Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation” (1966)
      2. Guthrie. “Religion: What is it?”
      3. Berger. *The Sacred Canopy*, Chapters 1-2.
      4. [Guthrie. “Why Gods? A Cognitive Theory”]
2. Modern MSR
   1. Modernity
      1. Weber. *Sociology of Religion*, Chapter. 3 “The idea of God, Religious Ethics, and Taboo”
      2. Styers. *Making Magic: Religion, Magic and Science in the Modern World*, 25-68
      3. [Kieckhefer, R. “The Specific Rationality of Medieval Magic.” *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 3 (1994): 813–836.]
   2. Modern conception of MSR
      1. Weber*. The Protestant Ethic*, Chapter. 4 “Religious Foundations of This-Worldly Asceticism.”
      2. Spinoza. *Theological Political Tractate*, Preface
      3. [Benor. “Spinoza’s Theory of Religion”]  
         Berger. *Rumor of Angels*. Ch. 1 “The Alleged Demise of the Supernatural.”
      4. [Cassirer, Ernst. “Newton and Leibniz.” *The Philosophical Review* (1943): 366–391.]
   3. Decline of Magic
      1. Thomas. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Chapters. 3, 21-22
3. Medieval MSR
   1. The Medieval World-View
      1. Feyerabend, “The Strange Case of Astrology”
      2. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle-Ages*, Chapter. 6 “Arabic Learning and the Occult Sciences”
      3. [Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, Chapter.4]
   2. Nature & Bewitchment
      1. Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.4.2 “Problems of the Soul”
      2. Audio: Peter Adamson “A God is My Co-Pilot: the Life and Works of Plotinus”
      3. [Gerson, Lloyd, ‘Plotinus”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Sections 2 & 3; [URL](http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/plotinus/)]
4. Conceptions of Science: Positivism and Beyond
   1. Methodological Relativism: The Challenge of TCM
      1. Feyerabend, Paul. “Realism and the Historicity of Knowledge.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 86, no. 8 (1989): 393–406.
      2. Preston, Christopher J. “Pluralism and Naturalism: Why the Proliferation of Theories Is Good for the Mind.” *Philosophical Psychology* 18, no. 6 (December 1, 2005): 715–735.
   2. Monistic Account of TCM
      1. Unschuld. *Medicine in China*, Chapter 3 “Unification of the Empire, Confucianism, and the Medicine of Systematic Correspondence”
   3. Pluralistic Account of TCM
      1. Kaptchuk. *The Web that has no Weaver*, Chapter 1 “Medicine East and West: Two Ways of Seeing, Two Ways of Thinking”
      2. [Scheid, Volker. “Traditional Chinese medicine—What Are We Investigating?: The Case of Menopause.” Complementary Therapies in Medicine 15, no. 1 (2007): 54–68. ]
   4. Positivism: Basic premise of the monistic account
      1. Creath, Richard, "Logical Empiricism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosop*hy [URL](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logical-empiricism/).
   5. From Positivism to Holism: Turning point of 20th century philosophy of science
      1. “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” in Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*. Harvard University Press, 1980.
   6. Empirical confirmation — Cultural foundations of inductive validity
      1. Goodman, Nelson. *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*. Harvard University Press, 1983; Chapters 3 & 4.
      2. Putnam's "Foreword" to the 4th, 1983, edition of *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast.*
   7. Rightness: Categorization & Metaphorical Truth
      1. Goodman, Nelson. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Hackett Publishing, 1978; Chapters 6-7: “Fabrication of Facts” & “Rightness of Rendering.”
5. A Qualitative Universe: Myth, Magic & Witchcraft
   1. How did we come to live in a quantitative universe?
      1. Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences.* Northwestern UP, 1970. Part 2.
      2. [Nagel, Thomas. “Evolutionary Naturalism and the Fear of Religion,” in *The Last Word*. Oxford University Press, 1997, Chapter 7.]
   2. Mythical thought — Qualitative science
      1. “The Science of the concrete,” in Claude Lévi-Strauss. *The Savage Mind*. University of Chicago Press, 1966.
   3. Functional analysis of magical experience and belief
      1. Malinowski. *Magic, Science, and Religion*, pp. 17-93
   4. Witchcraft: A Category of Explanation
      1. Evans-Pritchard. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, pp. 1-120
   5. Ontological and Anthropological Puzzles — “Twins are one person and they are birds.”
      1. Evans-Pritchard. *Nuer Religion*, Chapter 5 “The Problem of Symbols”
      2. Quine. “Ontological Relativity,” in W. V. O.Quine. *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*. Columbia University Press, 1969, Chapter 2.
6. Cognitive Science: Emotion and Metaphor
   1. Metaphor & Metamorphosis
      1. Ricoeur, Paul. “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling.” C*ritical Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1978): 143–159.
      2. Cohen, Ted. “Metaphor, Feeling, and Narrative.” *Philosophy and Literature* 21, no. 2 (1997): 223–244.
   2. Metaphor: Embodiment or Creativity?
      1. Kulka, Tomas. “How Metaphor Makes Its Wonders.” Poetics Today 13, no. 4 (1992): 795–806.
      2. Brockman, John. “‘Philosophy in the Flesh’: A Talk with George Lakoff.” A Parte Rei: Revista de Filosofía no. 14 (2001): 2.
      3. Zemach, “Metaphors and Ways of Life,” in Hintikka, Jaakko. *Aspects of Metaphor*. Springer, 1994.
   3. Disgust: Contagion & Similarity
      1. Rozin, Paul, Linda Millman, and Carol Nemeroff. “Operation of the Laws of Sympathetic Magic in Disgust and Other Domains.” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 50, no. 4 (1986): 703–712.
      2. Kekes, John. “Disgust and Moral Taboos.” Philosophy 67, no. 262 (January 30, 2009): 431.
      3. Goldenberg, J. L., et al. “I Am Not an Animal: Mortality Salience, Disgust, and the Denial of Human Creatureliness.” *Journal of Experimental Psychology,* Vol. 130, no. 3 (2001): 427–435.
      4. Kelly, Daniel Ryan. *Yuck!: The Nature and Moral Significance of Disgust*. MIT Press, 2011 chapter 4.
   4. Emotion: Qualitative Interface with Reality
      1. Grene, Marjorie. “Sartre’s Theory of the Emotions.” *Yale French Studies* no. 1 (January 1, 1948): 97–101.
      2. Sartre. “Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions” (selection).
      3. Baier, A. “What Emotions Are about.” Philosophical Perspectives 4 (1990): 1–29.
   5. Rationality & Affectivity: Scopes of Coherence
      1. James. “Sentiment of Rationality” (selection).
      2. Toulmin, Stephen. “Be Reasonable, Not Certain.” *Concepts and Transformation* 5, no. 2 (January 1, 2000): 151–163.
      3. Carroll, Lewis. *What the Tortoise Said to Achilles*.
7. Elements of a Theory of MSR
   1. Gods: Persons or Personifications?
      1. Stafford, Emma. *Worshipping Virtues: Personification and the Divine in Ancient Greece*. Duckworth, 2000, Chapters 1, 2 and 8.
      2. Lilley, Keith D. “Mapping Cosmopolis: Moral Topographies of the Medieval City.” *Environment and Planning D* 22, no. 5 (2004): 681–698.
      3. Frank, Adam. *About Time: Cosmology and Culture at the Twilight of the Big Bang*. New York: Free Press, 2011: Chapters 1, 4, and 8.
   2. How is conflict between religion and science possible?
      1. Smith, Brian Cantwell. *God, Approximately • 4*, 1998.
      2. Bohm, David. *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. Routledge, 2002; Chapter 1 “Fragmentation and Wholeness.”
   3. Consciousness: Are we at home in the universe?
      1. Seth, Anil K. “Frontiers: The Grand Challenge of Consciousness.” *Frontiers in Consciousness Research* 1 (2010).
      2. Zemach. “Divinities,” *Iyyun* 2003.
      3. Nagel, Thomas. “The Core of ‘Mind and Cosmos.’” *New York Times*, December 7, 2013.
8. Review & General Discussion