

## ***FIRST HALF OF THE SEMESTER***

### **Readings**

- Six definitions of religion
  - *Clifford Geertz*: (1) A system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence (i.e do this thing or be punished) and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the mood and motivations seem uniquely realistic (i.e not necessarily based in reality, but gives people reason).
    - Symbols → Meanings → Culture & Behavior
  - *Talal Asad*: Religion is a separate entity from politics and law, and changes based on the time period it's being described in. “There is not a universal definition... because its constituent elements are relationships are historically specific”.
  - *Mary Daly*: Religion is a system to promote male dominance and suppression of women in all aspects of society. It has a worldwide history of creating sexual casts (patriarchy) and the solution is to undo the system which puts people in restrictive boxes
    - Daly aims to remove patriarchal connotations and organization to crack theology
  - *Luce Irigaray*: Religion is a mirror which shows your success and flaws/failures. Because of religious male-dominance in figures and positions, women cannot relate as well to this. Women in many religious stories are viewed more as accessories than they are focuses of the stories.
  - *Thomas Tweed*: Religions are confluences (junctions) of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman (other than human) forces to make homes and cross boundaries.
    - Religion is more than believing in a god and can be used to define more-than-human (love) & less-than-human (hate)
  - *Russel McCutcheon*: Religion is not a natural or self-evident phenomenon but is instead manufactured through academic and social discourses. It is a product of certain historical and cultural processes, and its supposed autonomy serves to obscure its entanglement with social, political, and economic factors.
    - Socially constructed category rather than an inherent, autonomous reality

- **Summary of Authors Definitions**

Clifford Geertz	“Religion” has to do with cultural systems and symbols that motivates and moves human pervasive, powerful, and seemingly realistic ways.
Talal Asad	“Religion” is always historically and contextually specific.
Mary Daly	Women need to liberate themselves from the historical patriarchal structures of religion organization and language and create their own theology.
Luce Irigaray	The traditional masculine representation of gods leaves women to imagine their own divinity.
Thomas Tweed	“Religion” is most aptly described in terms of movements and processes.

- Paul Hedges, *Understanding religion* → See “Key Phrases & Terms”
  - Enlightenment values: Equality, reason, and justice
- Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling* → See “Key Phrases & Terms”
- Isaac Bashevis Singer, “Little Shoemakers”
  - The story begins by introducing Abba Shuster, the founder of the shoemaking line in Frampol. His family is renowned not only in their town but also in neighboring districts. Abba is a charitable man who donates shoes to widows and orphans, and his name is recorded in the annals of the Frampol Jewish community. The shoemaking craft is passed down through generations, with each eldest son taking over the family business
  - Abba Shuster has seven sons, each trained in the shoemaking trade. The eldest son, Gimpel, is chosen to take over the business. Abba ensures Gimpel receives a comprehensive education, teaching him the intricacies of the trade. Abba's wife, Pesha, supports the family by baking and managing the household. As the family prospers, Abba considers expanding their home, but he is reluctant to change the house filled with family memories
  - Gimpel grows restless and decides to emigrate to America, seeking better opportunities. Despite Abba's initial resistance, he eventually consents. Gimpel's departure is emotional, with his family seeing him off at the train station. In America, Gimpel finds success and sends letters home, describing his new life and achievements. He marries Bessie, a girl from Romania, and starts his own shoemaking business
  - Years pass, and Frampol faces turmoil during the Austrian occupation. Abba continues his shoemaking work, even as his sons grow up and leave. The family home deteriorates, and Abba becomes increasingly isolated. The old house, once filled with life, becomes a symbol of the past. Abba's health declines, and he spends his days reminiscing about his ancestors and the family's legacy
  - Abba's sons in America arrange for him to join them. The journey is arduous, but Abba finally arrives in the United States. He is welcomed with a grand feast, and the family celebrates their reunion. Abba is overwhelmed by the modernity of his new surroundings but finds solace in the continuation of the family trade. His sons have built a successful shoemaking business, and Abba takes pride in their achievements
  - Abba's final days are spent surrounded by his family, who honor their heritage and traditions. Despite the changes brought by modernity, the Shuster family remains committed to their craft. Abba's legacy lives on through his sons and grandsons, who continue the shoemaking tradition with the same dedication and integrity. The story ends with Abba reflecting on his life and the enduring strength of family bonds

*Note: A diaspora is a population that is scattered across regions which are separate from its geographic place of origin*
- Deepak Sarma, “Gestational Surrogacy and Hindu Bioethics: The Karma of Genetics and the Genetics of Karma”
  - The article delves into the concepts of purity (shuddha) and impurity (ashuddha) within Brahminical Hinduism, especially concerning the exchange of bodily fluids between a surrogate and the fetus. The Dharmasastras, ancient Hindu texts, outline detailed protocols for maintaining purity, which include restrictions on the exchange of fluids and contact between different classes

(varna) and castes (jati). These purity issues are deeply embedded in the social and religious fabric of Brahminical Hinduism

- The article explores the idea that the exchange of nutrients and cells between the surrogate and the fetus carries karmic implications. This exchange is seen as permissible if both the surrogate and the fetus belong to the same varna and jati, maintaining the purity and integrity of their respective karmas. However, intermingling across different classes or castes is viewed as problematic, akin to miscegenation, which is forbidden in the Dharmasastras
- The article addresses the 2018 Indian law that banned commercial surrogacy to prevent the exploitation of marginalized Indian women by foreign intended parents. This law aimed to protect the rights and dignity of Indian surrogates, who were often treated unethically. The article notes that while the law addresses some ethical concerns, issues persist, especially in cases where non-Indian women act as surrogates for Indian couples outside India

### Key Phrases & Terms

- Methodological Polymorphism

- Method must take on a variety of forms in differing circumstances; Different ways to approach the same topic
  - Range of phenomena are plural, and thus so should the methods of investigations
  - Varied lenses will help us gain insights from different angles and prevent us from assuming any is the “Truth”

*Note: Assuming we cannot attain “Truth” does not mean that we cannot seek for more coherent, more consistent, or more plausible theories and explanations with a hope to approximate “truth”*

- Critical hermeneutical phenomenology

- He also terms it a “critical, embodied, feminist, postcolonial, decolonizing, philosophical hermeneutical phenomenology”
- Critical: Adopting a feminist and/or postcolonial perspective
  - Critique of ourselves and analyzing what we take for granted
- Hermeneutical: Understanding all discourse on religions as interpretations, not necessarily the absolute truth
  - A particular lineage of thought that has explored how humans make sense of the world around us through language and interpretation
- Phenomenology: Understanding that our own perspectives are shaped by how we experience and make sense of the world
  - Broadly, the study of phenomena
  - We struggle to understand things that we cannot experience ourselves

- The World Religions Paradigm (WRP)

- The dominating force that heavily influences how we think of religion today with key points:
  - There are a range of different religions which are essentially subspecies of a common genus (broader category, framework, or classification)
  - They share facets (one side of something many-sided) in common, typically scriptures, founders, beliefs, rituals, institutional organizations, and a priesthood
  - They concern personal belief and the private sphere, and do not (properly) concern politics, economics, and so forth
- Issues: Defining “world religions” automatically dismisses smaller religions despite their validity. Calling certain places/things religious inherently calls other things secular. Translations produce difficult language barriers which leads to improper/difficult-to-make distinctions

- Hedges states that religion is an essentially contested concept and there should be a “soft-deconstruction” of the term
- Restrictive with respect to MRI and SBNR
  - Religions are bounded territories of belonging. Therefore, each religions is a distinct and discrete unit to which sole allegiance is required
  - Religion is primarily about belief in a set of principles. Therefore, you cannot adhere to more than one set of beliefs at a time
  - Every religious tradition has its own set of meanings leading to a clearly defined set of beliefs and practices. Therefore, you can only practice as an “insider” of one religion at a time
- Religious “insiders” and “outsiders”
  - Insider accounts: Descriptions by a member about their own tradition
  - Outsider accounts: Descriptions by a nonmember about another person’s traditions
  - Emic accounts: Descriptions given in terms of meaningful to a believer, that is, using terms native to the tradition being described
  - Etic accounts: Description given in external theoretical terms devised by scholars

*Argument: Outsiders can bring a sense of objectivity (but what is it?) and classificatory tools and modes of analysis not native to the tradition, this will only be a partial account. Without understanding what specific rituals, teachings, or practices mean to insiders, and how they operate within a wider system, such understanding will be incomplete and unrepresentative.*

- Multiple Religious Identities (MRI)
  - The phenomenon of belonging to, or identifying with, more than one religion
    - The WRP makes it appear natural to assume that people can only (properly) belong to just one religion. This does not reflect the way that much of the world has made sense of being religious
- “Dwelling” and three actions in dwelling
 

*“Dwelling, as I use the term, involves three overlapping processes: mapping, building, and inhabiting. It refers to the confluence of organic-cultural flows that allows devotees to map, build, and inhabit worlds. It is homemaking. In other words, as clusters of dwelling practices, religions orient individuals and groups in time and space, transform the natural environment, and allow devotees to inhabit the worlds they construct.”*

  - Mapping: Connecting, mapping places/dates/things
  - Building: Constructing community, establishing social groups, providing shelter
  - Inhabiting: Living in the world that has been mapped and built
- Emplacement and displacement
  - Emplacement
    - The process or practice of situating religious beliefs, practices, or symbols within specific social, cultural, geographical, or historical contexts
    - Emphasizes how religions are embedded in particular environments and how these contexts shape their expressions and meanings
    - Can involve examining how local traditions, histories, and identities influence the way a religion is practiced or understood in a specific place, as well as how religions interact with and respond to the surrounding cultural and social dynamics
  - Displacement

- Cultural Adaptation: Religious practices may be adapted or altered as they are introduced to new cultural environments, leading to a blending of traditions or the emergence of new forms of belief
- Secularization: As societies become more secular, traditional religious practices may be displaced or transformed, leading to a decline in their influence or a reimagining of their role in public life
- Protest and Resistance: Displacement can also involve the rejection of dominant religious or cultural narratives, leading to the revitalization of alternative spiritual practices or beliefs
- Diaspora: When religious communities migrate, their practices and beliefs may change as they encounter different social and cultural contexts, often leading to new interpretations and expressions of faith
- Tweed's Metaphors of Religion
  - Religion as watch and compass
    - Religion provides a framework for understanding and structuring time.
    - Religious calendars, rituals, and festivals mark significant moments and seasons, guiding adherents through the temporal rhythms of their lives
    - Religion, like a watch, offers a sense of order and regularity, helping individuals navigate the passage of time with purpose and meaning
    - Religion offers moral and ethical guidance, helping believers make decisions and find their way through the complexities of life
    - Religious teachings, doctrines, and narratives serve as a moral compass, pointing individuals toward a particular path and providing a sense of direction in their spiritual and ethical journeys
  - Biological and cultural clocks
    - Refers to the natural, physiological rhythms that govern human life, such as circadian rhythms, aging, and reproductive cycles
    - Religion often intersects with these biological clocks by providing rituals and practices that mark significant life stages and transitions, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death
    - Religious observances can help individuals make sense of these biological changes and integrate them into a broader spiritual narrative
    - Refer to the socially constructed ways in which time is organized and understood within a particular culture
    - Cultural clocks encompass calendars, holidays, and historical commemorations that are shaped by religious traditions
    - Religion influences cultural clocks by establishing sacred times and seasons, creating a shared temporal framework that unites communities and reinforces collective identities
  - Neural and cultural compasses
 

*Neural Compasses: Autocentric framing focuses on individual cognitive and emotional processes, while allocentric framing emphasizes the influence of communal religious practices on these processes. Together, they show how personal religious experiences are shaped by both internal neural activity and external social interactions.*

    - Refers to the cognitive and neurological processes that underlie religious belief and practice

- Neuroscientific research has shown that certain areas of the brain are involved in religious experiences, such as feelings of transcendence, awe, and moral reasoning
- The neural compass metaphor suggests that our brains are wired to seek meaning, purpose, and connection, which religion helps to fulfill

*Cultural Compasses: Autocentric framing highlights how individuals internalize and personally interpret cultural elements, while allocentric framing emphasizes the role of shared symbols and narratives in creating collective identity and guiding group behavior. Together, they illustrate how religion provides both personal direction and communal cohesion.*

- Refers to the shared symbols, narratives, and practices that guide collective understanding and behavior within a religious community
  - Cultural compasses provide a framework for interpreting the world and navigating social interactions. They shape the way individuals perceive reality, make ethical decisions, and relate to others
  - Religion, as a cultural compass, offers a coherent worldview and a set of guiding principles that help adherents orient themselves within their social and cultural environments
- Allocentric and autocentric orientation
    - Allocentric: Self-centered spatial representations or reference frames
      - In psych: Involve the parietal neocortex, draw on cognitive processes involved in action and attention, and orient humans in the immediate environment
    - Autocentric: Object-oriented spatial representations or reference frames (external orientations)
      - In psych: Involve the hippocampus and adjacent cortical and subcortical structures, concern large distances and long-term spatial memory, and aid humans in orienting and navigating space beyond the body and the immediate environment
  - Religion and the body

*The first watch and compass*

- Religions imagine the body
  - They use figures or tropes to imagine the body in a variety of ways. The religious turn to myths about the origin of the human body—which often intertwine with stories about the universe’s origin—and they draw on analogical language to represent the corporeal form
  - Example: Passages in the Hebrew Bible propose that embodied humans resemble the divine: “So God created humankind in his image.”

*The likeness suggested here is not imagined as similar physical appearance but as a parallel in relationship and role: humans are like divine children just as Adam also fathered a child “according to his image” and humans, like God, have “dominion” over the earth*

- Religions mark boundaries
  - They exclude as much as they enclose. They chart the cosmos, patrol the borders, and fence the home, but they also monitor bodily orifices and habituate sensory processes
  - Example: Some Zoroastrians have engaged in multiple practices to protect and purify the body, some Jain monks have worn masks over their mouths to avoid inadvertently ingesting an insect or some other small living being
- Religions also alter the body
  - Religions do not only represent and regulate the body; they alter it
  - Example: Olympic athletes wearing tattoos in order to express their faith
- Where “dwelling” happens

- Home
  - Religiously formed bodies function as watch and compass, but the religious also autocentrically and allocentrically orient themselves by constructing, adorning, and inhabiting domestic space. Religion, in this sense, is housework. It is homemaking
  - Homes vary widely in form, permanence, and scale. Home is not always a permanent dwelling, and it is not always a built structure
- Homeland
  - Homemaking does not end at the front door. It extends to the boundaries of the territory that group members allocentrically imagine as their space, but since the homeland is an imagined territory inhabited by an imagined community, a space and group continually figured and refigured in contact with others, its borders shift over time and across cultures
  - The boundaries of the homeland can contract and expand. The homeland's scope depends not only on the tropes used to imagine it—motherland or chosen land—but also on the form and complexity of social organization
  - Religions have mapped the homeland, and the peoples within and outside its borders, in many other ways as well. Some traditions have proposed that the landscape itself is sacred
- Cosmos
  - The religious also negotiate power and meaning as they imagine the structure, history, and limits of the wider landscape and the entire universe. Using allocentric reference frames, they produce geographies (Includes sacred sites, places of worship, or the spatial organization of communities and how these are infused with religious meaning), cosmographies (details about celestial bodies, spatial organization, and the overall framework of existence), cosmogonies (narrower; how the world came into existence, the role of deities or supernatural forces in that creation, and the implications for humanity and the cosmos), and teleographies (concepts of destiny, salvation, or the end times)
- Myth and Mythology
  - Myths are relevant to a community and illustrate certain morals and can sometimes be cross-generational. They can have ancient origins and don't necessarily need to be the truth. They may contain an other-than-human element.
  - A type of story that offers guidance at the cost of rootedness in reality

### Key Questions from Midterm:

- How does the short story by Isaac Bashevis Singer, “Little Shoemakers,” reflect Tweed’s theory of religion as dwelling?
  - Mapping: Abba Shuster’s role as the founder of the shoemaking lineage maps a clear familial and cultural tradition within the Jewish community of Frampol. This mapping isn’t just geographical but also metaphorical—rooting the family within a specific socio-religious identity. Abba's practice of donating shoes to widows and orphans extends beyond commerce, reflecting a deep engagement with community welfare and cultural continuity, much like religion maps out a person's place in a broader social and spiritual landscape.
  - Building: The story also aligns with Tweed’s notion of building as part of dwelling. Abba builds not just a home for his family but an enduring legacy through the craft of shoemaking, which is passed down through generations. The family’s shoemaking business is a form of homemaking, transforming both their social environment (through community recognition) and physical space

(as they expand their home). Even when the family faces challenges—such as Gimpel’s emigration to America—the tradition they’ve built continues, symbolizing the role of religion in structuring daily life and social interactions.

- Inhabiting: Abba's attachment to his home, and his reluctance to change it despite the success of his family, signifies how individuals inhabit the worlds they construct. The house filled with family memories becomes a physical manifestation of their religious and cultural heritage. As Abba ages and reflects on his past, the home and shoemaking tradition become symbols of the world he inhabits—one shaped by family, tradition, and community. His eventual relocation to America shows how people can adapt to new environments while carrying their inherited practices, much like religions evolve while holding onto core principles.
- How does the Hindu perspective discussed in Sarma’s article “Gestational Surrogacy and Hindu Bioethics” reflect Tweed’s theory of religion as dwelling?
  - Mapping: Purity (shuddha) and impurity (ashuddha) create a symbolic map that governs bodily and social interactions. The article emphasizes how these religious and social rules, especially concerning the exchange of fluids during surrogacy, map out boundaries between individuals based on caste (jati) and class (varna). The purity guidelines in the Dharmasastras serve to orient individuals within a structured moral and spiritual framework, much like Tweed’s concept of religion orienting individuals in time and space. This mapping is also tied to karmic implications, suggesting that religious practices situate individuals within both their current social status and their cosmic journey.
  - Building: The purity rules discussed in the article help to construct social and ethical boundaries that shape the community. The maintenance of caste and class distinctions through the regulation of bodily exchanges in surrogacy builds the moral structure of Brahminical Hindu society. This reflects Tweed’s view that religion involves “building,” as these religiously prescribed practices create and sustain the social order, transforming how individuals and communities navigate biological, spiritual, and social life. Surrogacy, especially when restricted by laws about caste purity, also reflects a homemaking process within the Hindu worldview—one that preserves the integrity of family lines and karmic purity.
  - The notion of inhabiting in Tweed’s framework is evident in how Brahminical Hindus inhabit the moral worlds shaped by these purity laws. The surrogate and intended parents are bound by religious expectations, inhabiting a reality in which the exchange of bodily fluids during pregnancy is not just a biological event but a deeply karmic and ethical one. The restrictions on inter-caste surrogacy reflect how religious rules permeate daily life, shaping not only family practices but the very experience of conception, gestation, and birth. The article’s discussion of the 2018 surrogacy law in India, which banned commercial surrogacy, also demonstrates how these religious values influence national policies, showing the material and ethical worlds people inhabit through religious traditions.

## ***SECOND HALF OF THE SEMESTER***

### **Crossing Chapter - Tweed**

- ***Terrestrial***
  - Technologies
    - Religious crossings are mediated by divergent transportation and communication technologies



- Religious crossings also vary according to the nature of the journey and the motive of the transit
      - Pilgrimages (instrumental, devotional, normative, wandering, initiatory, obligatory, etc.)
      - Missions
      - Other itinerant practices
      - Compelled passages and constrained crossings
    - Journeys
      - Religious crossings also vary according to the nature of the journey and the motive of the transit (e.g. Pilgrimages, Missions, Other itinerant practices, Completed passages and constrained crossings)
    - Intention
  - **Corporeal**
    - Dealing with limits
      - “To say that religions confront limit situations suggest that encounters at the limit of the embodied self are mediated is to suggest that religions provide tropes, narratives, codes, artifacts, and rituals that mark those boundaries and clear paths across them. Religions interpret limits and promote crossings.” (pp. 137-138) (e.g. Going to mass, )
      - Most religions mark the thresholds of birth, puberty, marriage, and death
      - Compelled passages and constrained crossings
    - Dealing with transitions
    - Intention
  - **Cosmic**
    - Religions produce teleographics, representations of the end, the temporal and spatial limit of human life, the ultimate horizon. Those teleographies are categories of desires...

	Transporting	Transforming
Horizon	Horizon as boundary between this world and another world	Horizon as a personal or social limit or limitation
Space	Focused more on the home and the cosmos, on domestic and cosmic space	Focused more on the body and the homeland, on corporeal and social space
Crossing	Crossing as change in location: ascent, descent, rebirth, encounter, communication	Crossing as change in condition: insight, purification, healing, reform, revolution

- The text explores the concept of "crossing" in religious practices, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between dwelling and movement within religious contexts. The analysis is structured around various types of crossings, including terrestrial, corporeal, and cosmic, each representing different aspects of religious experience and expression.
    - **Terrestrial Crossings**
      - The discussion begins with terrestrial crossings, highlighting historical and cultural movements across geographical boundaries. The text underscores how religious practices

have been influenced by shifts in travel and communication technologies. For instance, the development of new modes of transport, such as the caravel and steamship, facilitated religious exchanges and missions across continents. This section illustrates how religious movements are deeply intertwined with technological advancements and historical migrations.

- Terrestrial crossings involve the movement of people and religious practices across physical landscapes. The text highlights how these movements have been historically significant in shaping religious experiences and exchanges. For example:
  - Historical Migrations: The movement of peoples, such as nomadic tribes and pilgrims, has facilitated the spread of religious ideas and practices. This includes ancient migrations out of Africa and the spread of religions along trade routes like the Silk Road.
  - Technological Impact: Innovations in transportation, such as the development of the caravel, steamship, and later, airplanes, have transformed religious exchanges. These technologies enabled missionaries to travel further and faster, spreading their faiths to new regions.
  - Cultural Exchange: As people moved, they carried their religious beliefs and practices with them, leading to cultural exchanges and the blending of religious traditions. This is evident in the spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road and the Christian missions during European colonial expansions.

- ***Corporeal Crossings***

- Next, the text delves into corporeal crossings, which focus on the human body and its limitations. It discusses rites of passage, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death, which are pivotal in marking transitions in the life cycle. These rituals often symbolize the crossing of social and spiritual thresholds, reinforcing communal bonds and individual identities within religious frameworks.
- Corporeal crossings focus on the human body and its transitions through various life stages. These crossings are often marked by rituals that signify changes in social and spiritual status:
  - Rites of Passage: Key life events such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death are marked by religious rituals. These rites help individuals and communities navigate the transitions between different stages of life.
  - Social and Spiritual Boundaries: These rituals often involve crossing social boundaries, such as moving from childhood to adulthood or from singlehood to marriage. They also address spiritual boundaries, reinforcing the individual's place within the religious community.
  - Embodied Limits: The text discusses how religions confront the limits of embodied existence, such as illness and death, through rituals that provide meaning and structure to these experiences.

- ***Cosmic Crossings***

- The concept of cosmic crossings addresses the ultimate horizons of human existence, exploring how religions imagine and construct teleographies—maps of spiritual ends and means. This section contrasts transporting teleographies, which view the horizon as a boundary between worlds, with transforming teleographies, which see it as a personal or social limit. The text discusses various religious traditions, including Hinduism,

Buddhism, and Christianity, illustrating how they conceptualize the crossing from earthly life to spiritual realms.

- Cosmic crossings explore the ultimate horizons of human existence and the metaphysical boundaries between life and the afterlife:
  - Teleographies: Religions construct teleographies—maps of spiritual ends and means—that guide adherents in their spiritual journeys. These can be transporting, focusing on moving between worlds, or transforming, emphasizing personal and social change.
  - Transcendence and Immanence: Different religions have varied conceptions of the afterlife and spiritual realms. For instance, Hinduism and Buddhism discuss liberation from the cycle of rebirth, while Christianity and Islam focus on the journey to heaven.
  - Rituals and Practices: Practices such as pilgrimage, meditation, and prayer are seen as means of crossing into spiritual realms or achieving higher states of consciousness.
- ***Religious Telegraphy***
  - Teleo-, from the Greek telos, meaning “end, consummation, completeness”. -graphy, a process or form of writing, representing, recording, describing, or an art or science concerned with such a process.
  - Religious teleographies are frameworks that outline the spiritual objectives and methods for achieving them. They serve as cartographies of desire, mapping what adherents seek to attain, such as liberation, enlightenment, or divine communion. These maps vary across cultures and religions, reflecting diverse beliefs about the cosmos and the afterlife.
  - Cosmic crossings, as articulated through these teleographies, involve navigating the ultimate horizons of human existence. They guide adherents in understanding how to traverse the spiritual landscape, whether through transporting journeys to other realms or transforming experiences that alter one's state of being.
    - Integration of Both Types: Many religious traditions incorporate elements of both transporting and transforming teleographies, recognizing the need for both external and internal journeys in the spiritual life.
    - Dynamic Interaction: The interplay between these teleographies reflects the dynamic nature of cosmic crossings, where adherents are continually negotiating the boundaries and limits of their spiritual existence.
- ***Transporting and Transforming***
  - Religious teleographies can be categorized into two main types: transporting and transforming. Each type offers a different perspective on cosmic crossings:
  - Transporting Teleographies
    - Boundary as a Divide: In transporting teleographies, the horizon is seen as a boundary between this world and another. This perspective emphasizes crossing from the earthly realm to a spiritual or celestial realm.
    - Cosmic Journey: Transporting teleographies often involve narratives of ascent or descent, such as the soul's journey to heaven or the cycle of rebirth in Hinduism and Buddhism. These journeys are seen as literal or metaphorical crossings into another realm of existence.

- Spiritual Practices: Rituals like pilgrimage, meditation, and prayer function as vehicles for transporting the soul across these boundaries, enabling adherents to connect with the divine or achieve spiritual goals.
- Transforming Teleographies
  - Horizon as a Limit: In transforming teleographies, the horizon represents a personal or social limit rather than a boundary between worlds. This approach focuses on inner transformation and social change as the means of crossing spiritual thresholds.
  - Condition Change: Transforming teleographies emphasize changes in condition, such as personal insight, healing, or social reform. The crossing is not about moving to another realm but about achieving a new state of being or consciousness.
  - Collective and Personal Goals: These teleographies often involve collective aspirations for social justice or personal goals of enlightenment and self-realization, reflecting a more this-worldly focus.
- *Concealed Crossings*
  - “Religions move between what is imagined as the most distant horizon and what is imagined as the most intimate domain. ... They bring the gods to earth and transport the faithful to the heavens. And they move horizontally, back and forth in social space. The religious also are propelled through time, allowing travel among imagined pasts, presents, and futures. As itinerants, the religious never remain anywhere or anytime for long. It is in this sense, I suggest, that religions are flows, translocative and transtemporal crossings”
  - Finally, the text explores concealed crossings, using theoretical insights from Bruno Latour to suggest that religious practices often involve subtle movements between the close and distant, the present and the transcendent. It highlights how religious narratives and rituals transport adherents across time and space, creating a dynamic interplay between presence and absence.
  - Concealed crossings involve subtle, often metaphorical movements within religious practices that are not immediately apparent:
    - Bruno Latour’s Insights: The text uses Latour’s ideas to suggest that religious practices involve a constant interplay between the distant and the near, the seen and the unseen. Religious rituals and narratives transport believers across these boundaries, creating a dynamic experience of the sacred.
    - Presence and Absence: Religious artifacts and narratives often direct attention to the presence of the divine in what appears absent, encouraging a deeper engagement with spiritual realities.
    - Temporal and Spatial Dynamics: These crossings emphasize that religious experiences are not static but involve continuous movement through time and space, reflecting the fluid nature of spiritual life.
- Throughout the analysis, the text emphasizes the fluid and translocative nature of religious practices, suggesting that they are constantly on the move, both temporally and spatially. This exploration of crossings provides a comprehensive understanding of how religions navigate and negotiate the complexities of human existence.

- Overall, the text illustrates how these crossings are integral to religious practices, shaping how individuals and communities experience and express their faith.

### **Banshoji Video - Connection to Crossing**

- Terrestrial
  - Increase of people coming to the temple, physical movement
- Corporeal
  - Temple changed and adapted to the changing times
  - Preaching and ritual performance changed

### **Process of the Hajj**

- Entering the state of ihram (state of holiness)
- First day, or the Tarwiyah Day
  - Tawaf: circumambulating the Kaaba
  - Prayers
  - Head to Mina
- Second day
  - Mina - Arafat. spend the afternoon at Arafat
  - Spend the night at Muzdalifah
- Third day
  - Return to Mina
  - Stoning of the devil, slaughtering animal, trimming hair, revisit Kaaba
- Fourth and Fifth day
  - Repeating stoning of the devil and tawaf
- Optional journey to Medina and visit Muhammad's tomb

### **Howe - Guest Lecture Reading**

- "Honoring the Prophet, Performing American Islam: The Webb Mawlid" by Justine Howe examines the dynamic and improvisational nature of the mawlid celebrations within the Webb community. Here are the key points:
  - Context and Significance
    - Mawlid as a Ritual: The mawlid, a celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth, is highlighted as the Webb Foundation's most significant public ritual, reflecting its growth and confidence in promoting American Islam.
    - Cultural Integration: The mawlid serves as a means to integrate American cultural elements with Islamic traditions, creating a unique American Muslim identity.
  - Ritual Performance
    - Female Leadership: The Webb mawlids emphasize female authority, with women taking leading roles in planning and executing the events. This highlights shifts in gender dynamics within the community.
    - Dynamic Elements: Each mawlid is distinct, incorporating diverse elements such as music, language, and devotional practices, which reflect the community's evolving connections with the Prophet Muhammad.
  - Community and Belonging
    - Intergenerational Participation: The mawlids attract a diverse audience, fostering a sense of community among Chicago's Muslims. They serve as a platform for both religious and social engagement.

- Cultural Adaptation: The use of English and incorporation of American cultural forms, like spoken word poetry, illustrate the community's efforts to make the mawlid relevant to a broader audience.
- Theological and Ideological Debates
  - Wahhabi Influence: The chapter discusses tensions with Wahhabi interpretations, which have historically marginalized practices like the mawlid. Webb members view the mawlid as an authentic Islamic practice.
  - Authority and Authenticity: The mawlid is positioned within broader debates about religious authority and the boundaries of Islamic tradition, challenging perceptions of what constitutes "authentic" Islam.
- Challenges and Innovations
  - Language and Belonging: The chapter explores the complexities of using English in religious rituals, reflecting broader linguistic shifts in American Muslim communities.
  - Experimentation: The Webb community's mawlids are spaces of improvisation, allowing for the exploration of new forms of expression while maintaining historical continuity.
- Conclusion
  - American Muslim Identity: The mawlid at Webb exemplifies the community's efforts to create an inclusive and adaptive American Muslim identity, balancing tradition with innovation.
  - Spiritual and Social Impact: The celebrations are seen as fulfilling spiritual needs and fostering community bonds, emphasizing the importance of ritual in contemporary religious life.
- Overall, the chapter highlights the Webb mawlid as a vibrant and evolving practice that embodies the complexities of performing American Islam, navigating cultural, theological, and social dimensions.

## Secular vs. Religious Activities

1. Talking
  - a. Could be religious if you're preaching, or sharing religious information with the *intent* of being religious
  - b. Does not have to be religious even if you're talking about actual religious topics
2. Walking
  - a. Could be a religious practice if you're walking with religious intent or practicing a certain tradition
  - b. Walking could be as simple as walking to a math class in the morning, not necessarily feeling anything in particular
3. Sleeping
  - a. Sukkot - a hut with between 3 and 3.5 walls, roof allows you to see the stars. Jewish tradition where you are meant to eat, sleep, and live in it for the duration of the holiday. This is an example of religious sleeping
  - b. You also sleep every day, but that doesn't mean its religious; Just a routine and fact of life
4. Dreaming
  - a. Lucid Dreaming or meditation can be religious, but Lucid Dreaming doesn't always have to be religious
  - b. We dream at night without our control, and it doesn't need to be religious inherently
5. Praying

- a. Obvious religious prayers, like in church or praying to a higher or external power
  - b. 'I pray this happens.' In this case it's just wishing or projecting your hopes onto the outside world
6. Reading & Writing
  - a. What you're reading and writing can be religious, but it ultimately depends on the context in which you are doing said actions
7. Eating
  - a. On its own, eating is just a normal part of everyday life and is not religious in any way
  - b. For religious peoples, christian communion is eating 'the body of christ' in the form of wafers or bread as a group
8. Cooking
  - a. Motivation or intention behind the action is what would classify religious cooking
  - b. Time, space, or community you are cooking in or for
9. Acupuncture
  - a. Various interpretations based on background, but largely voted to be a cultural practice
10. Alchemy
  - a. Voted to be more of a magic/superstition based practice
  - b. Was also the precursor to chemistry when chemistry was not understood
  - c. We see that practices we don't understand at first are magical but then become science as they are more widely adopted and understood

### Hedges - "Bodies: Material Religion, Embodiment, and Materiality," in Understanding Religion

- Material Religious
  - A shift in Religious Studies that emphasizes embodied practice or materiality
    - Religion as performative, corporeal, and ephemeral (instead of cognitive, disembodied, and eternal)
    - Implications: Expanding the WRP to studies of magic, superstition, religion, and science
- The Spiritual as Physical
  - "Everything that we see, know, and think about as religious or spiritual is mediated through the body"
    - Phenomenology:
    - Religion and the body: imagining, marking boundaries, altering, etc.
- The idea that we and our world is simply a social/linguistic construct is based upon a white, male, western, middle or upper class norm. It assumes that we can make ourselves anew, be infinitely adaptable, and have no natural limitations.
  - This theory is not a neutral description, but comes from a stance of unreflective privilege
- The chapter "Bodies: Material Religion, Embodiment, and Materiality" from Paul Hedges' book "Understanding Religion: Theories and Methods for Studying Religiously Diverse Societies" explores the intersection of materiality and religion. Hedges' work explores the significance of material aspects in religion, emphasizing how religious practices are deeply intertwined with physical objects, bodily actions, and social structures. Here are the key points:
  - **Material Religion** and Bodily Discipline
    - Material Aspects: The chapter begins by highlighting the importance of material aspects in religion, such as buildings, rituals, and clothing. These elements are not merely reflections of beliefs but are integral to religious experiences. The chapter emphasizes the

significance of material aspects in religion, such as buildings, rituals, and clothing, which are often seen as reflections of spiritual beliefs.

- Embodiment and Materiality: It discusses how religion is embodied, emplaced, and enacted, moving beyond the traditional view of religion as purely cognitive or spiritual.
- Theoretical Perspectives
  - Idealism vs. Empiricism: The text contrasts idealist and empiricist philosophies, highlighting how Western thought has often prioritized intellectual understanding over embodied experience.
  - Logocentrism: It critiques the Western philosophical focus on language and reason, suggesting that understanding should also consider embodied experiences.
- **Embodiment** in Religion
  - Embodiment and Materiality: The chapter stresses that studying religion involves examining its material and embodied aspects. Religion is seen as something enacted and experienced through the body and physical world.
  - Regimes of Knowledge: The chapter examines how bodies are classified and controlled through religious and secular regimes, affecting how knowledge and beliefs are structured.
  - Rituals as Embodied Practice: Rituals are discussed as significant material aspects of religion, with examples from Christian Eucharist, Buddhist meditation, and Islamic prayer.
- Theorizing Material Religion
  - Embodied Practice: Scholars emphasize the importance of embodied practice and materiality in religion. This approach contrasts with traditional views that see religion as primarily cognitive and disembodied.
  - Ritual as Bodily Practice: Rituals are discussed as forms of bodily practice that are social and psychological. The chapter examines how rituals are not just symbolic but also enact specific effects on the world.
- Materiality and Power
  - Decolonial Perspectives: The chapter addresses the importance of considering gender, race, and colonial history in understanding material religion, advocating for a decolonial approach to materiality.
- Embodiment and Being-in-the-World
  - Maurice Merleau-Ponty: The philosopher's ideas on embodiment are discussed, emphasizing that our thoughts and beliefs are shaped by our physical and social environment. Our being-in-the-world is both social and physical, and we cannot escape the limitations of our bodies.
- Regulation of Bodies
  - Social Structures: The chapter explores how bodies are regulated through social structures, such as gender, race, and colonialism. These structures classify and control bodies in ways that often go unnoticed.
  - Colonial Bodies: The impact of colonialism on the classification and regulation of bodies is examined. Colonial regimes often imposed hierarchical classifications based on race and gender.
- Materiality and Knowledge



- Material Turn: The material turn in scholarship emphasizes the significance of the material world in shaping our knowledge and experiences. This approach challenges the idea that knowledge is purely social or linguistic.
- Embodiment and Power: The chapter discusses how embodiment and materiality are linked to power dynamics. The regulation of bodies and material conditions shape social realities and control actions and understandings.
- Case Studies
  - Weeping Statues: The chapter presents case studies like the phenomena of weeping statues, exploring how such events are perceived as miracles or superstition.
  - Christian Shrine Practices: It discusses embodied practices at Christian shrines, focusing on how architecture and pilgrimage influence religious experience.
- Overall, the chapter challenges readers to rethink the role of materiality in religion, emphasizing the importance of embodied practices and the physical world in shaping religious experiences and knowledge.
- Embodiment in Religion: The chapter concludes by emphasizing that religious experiences and practices are always mediated through the body and material world. Understanding religion requires acknowledging the centrality of embodiment and materiality.

### **Chidester - Rock and Roll**

- The article by David Chidester, "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock 'n' Roll: Theoretical Models for the Study of Religion in American Popular Culture," explores the intersection of religion and popular culture through three metaphors: church, fetish, and potlatch. The essay "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock 'n' Roll" by David Chidester examines the intersections between religion and American popular culture. Through the metaphors of church, fetish, and potlatch, Chidester proposes theoretical frameworks to understand the "religious" characteristics of baseball, Coca-Cola, and rock 'n' roll. Here are some key Points:
  - ***The Church of Baseball***
    - Baseball as Religion: Chidester discusses how baseball functions as a religion due to its structured rituals, community building, and moral codes. The term "Church of Baseball" is used to describe how baseball creates a sense of belonging and sacred space for its followers.
    - Community and Tradition: Baseball fosters community and continuity in a rapidly changing America, serving as a repository of collective memory and tradition.
    - Ritual and Sacred Space: The rituals of baseball, such as games and ceremonies, are likened to religious practices that create a sacred experience for participants.
    - Baseball ensures a sense of continuity in the midst of a constantly changing America through the forces of tradition, heritage, and collective memory
    - Baseball supports a sense of uniformity, a sense of belonging to a vast, extended American family that attends the same church
    - The religion of baseball represents the sacred space of home. In this respect, baseball is a religion of the domestic, of the familiar, and even of the obvious
    - The religion of baseball represents the sacred time of ritual
    - Chidester explores baseball as a form of religion by referencing Buck O'Neil's and Ken Burns's interpretations. Baseball functions like a church by institutionalizing collective memory, providing sacred spaces, and ritualizing time. It reinforces values through adherence to rules and a sense of belonging, creating a sacred experience for its

community. For example, fans and players treat baseball as a source of continuity and tradition, echoing the structure and function of religious institutions.

- However, Chidester juxtaposes this perspective with earlier anthropological interpretations that viewed baseball as "magic" rather than religion. Practices like players' superstitions (e.g., rituals for luck) were often classified as magic in contrast to the social integration attributed to religion. By presenting baseball as religion, Chidester critiques the binary distinction between religion and superstition, showcasing baseball as an authentic cultural institution.
- Baseball ensures a sense of continuity in the midst of a constantly changing America through the forces of tradition, heritage, and collective memory.
- Baseball supports a sense of uniformity, a sense of belonging to a vast, extended American family that attends the same church.
- The religion of baseball represents the sacred space of home. In this respect, baseball is a religion of the domestic, of the familiar, and even of the obvious.
- The religion of baseball represents the sacred time of ritual.
- The ***Fetish*** of Coca-Cola
  - “The religious character of advertising, consumerism, and commodity”
  - “The fetish is not an object, it is a subject for arguments about meaning and value in human relations”
  - Coca-Cola as a Sacred Symbol: The beverage is analyzed as a "sacred symbol" with global influence, representing American values and identity.
  - Cultural Significance: Coca-Cola's advertising and branding strategies are viewed as creating a form of religious devotion, where the product becomes a symbol of American culture and lifestyle.
  - Commodity Fetishism: The concept of fetishism is applied to illustrate how Coca-Cola transcends its status as a mere consumer product to become an object of cultural and religious significance.
  - Using the theoretical framework of Clifford Geertz, Chidester posits that Coca-Cola embodies a "sacred symbol," forming a global religious system. The brand's mythology, global reach, and associated rituals (e.g., the "pause that refreshes") parallel religious devotion. Coca-Cola's corporate narratives, such as its secret formula and "missionary zeal" for global expansion, evoke religious fervor.
  - Chidester draws on the concept of the fetish—an object endowed with extraordinary significance. He highlights the fetishization of Coca-Cola as an "artificial focus for religious desire." This parallels Marx's and Freud's critiques of modern subjectivities, where commodities or symbols take on sacred meaning. The brand becomes a cultural icon that transcends its status as a consumer product to represent values such as American modernity and global influence.
- The ***Potlatch*** of Rock 'n' Roll
  - **Definition of Potlatch**
    - A ceremonial feast of the American Indians of the northwest coast marked by the host's lavish distribution of gifts or sometimes destruction of property to demonstrate wealth and generosity with the expectation of eventual reciprocation
    - A social event or celebration
  - The “agnostic” nature of both the potlatch and rock n roll

- “Rock 'n' roll, as anti-structure to the dominant American social structure, achieves the human solidarity, mutuality, and spontaneity that Turner captures in the term *communitas*. It happens in religious ritual; it happens in rock 'n' roll.”
- Rock 'n' Roll as Ritual: The music genre is examined through the lens of the potlatch, a ceremonial exchange system. Rock 'n' roll is seen as a cultural ritual involving the exchange of energy, identity, and rebellion.
- Cultural Exchange and Subversion: Rock 'n' roll challenges traditional social structures and norms, acting as a form of cultural exchange that can subvert established values.
- Symbolic Economy: The potlatch metaphor highlights how rock 'n' roll operates within a symbolic economy of excess and destruction, similar to the ritualistic gift-giving of indigenous cultures.
- Chidester interprets rock 'n' roll through the Native American potlatch ritual, characterized by extravagant giving and destruction to assert status and meaning. Songs like “Louie, Louie” symbolize the potlatch's "gift" in their defiant and communal performances. Rock 'n' roll challenges capitalist norms of productivity and accumulation, embodying rituals of expenditure and loss.
- He connects this ritualized gift-giving with Georges Bataille's notion of unproductive expenditure, emphasizing rock's rejection of material utility in favor of emotional intensity and symbolic acts. Rock 'n' roll becomes a site of resistance and solidarity, resonating with Victor Turner's concept of *communitas*, where collective participation disrupts established social hierarchies.
- ***Productive economic activity and expenditure***
  - Chidester contrasts economic productivity with religious practices like the potlatch that prioritize excess and symbolic destruction over material gain. This critique, derived from Bataille, illuminates the subversive nature of cultural phenomena like rock music. By emphasizing loss and ritualized performance, Chidester positions American popular culture as a site where religion intersects with consumerism, challenging traditional boundaries between sacred and profane.
  - “While productive economic activity is directed towards goals of subsistence, gain, and accumulation, expenditure is devoted to achieving dramatic, spectacular loss.”
  - “The gift, as in “Let's Give It To 'Em, Right Now,” reopens the complex ritual negotiations over meaning and power, over place and position, over contested issues of value in modern American society.”
- **Conclusion:**
  - Religion in Popular Culture: Chidester argues that these metaphors—church, fetish, and potlatch—offer valuable frameworks for understanding how elements of popular culture function as forms of religion.
  - Cultural Analysis: The study emphasizes the need to recognize and analyze the religious dimensions of popular culture, exploring how cultural practices, symbols, and rituals fulfill roles traditionally associated with religion.
- **Broader Implications**
  - The essay invites readers to rethink the definition of religion, arguing that cultural practices like baseball, Coca-Cola, and rock 'n' roll can fulfill roles traditionally ascribed to religion. These cultural forms evoke devotion, community, and transcendence, challenging academia to consider broader, non-traditional expressions of religiosity.

- Chidester concludes that religion in popular culture is not confined to beliefs in supernatural beings or sacred institutions but is embedded in the metaphors, symbols, and practices of everyday life. This broadens the scope of religious studies, integrating secular cultural practices into its analysis.
- Chidester's work challenges the boundaries between secular and sacred, suggesting that popular culture can serve religious functions in modern society.

#### **Definitions of Religion: A review and new definitions**

Clifford Geertz	“Religion” has to do with cultural systems and symbols that motivates and moves human pervasive, powerful, and seemingly realistic ways. They establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.
Talal Asad	“Religion” is always historically and contextually specific. There cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition itself is the historical product of a discursive process.
Mary Daly	Women need to liberate themselves from the historical patriarchal structures of religion organization and language and create their own theology. If God is male, the male is God. The divine patriarch castrates women as long as he is allowed to live on in the human imagination.
Luce Irigaray	The traditional masculine representation of gods leaves women to imagine their own divinity.
Thomas Tweed	“Religion” is most aptly described in terms of movements and processes. Religions are confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries.
Russel McCutcheon	The field of “Religious Studies” is a historically constructed phenomenon and its own history deserves our critical study.
William James	Religion... shall mean for us the feeling, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.
Emile Durkheim	A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.

**Vernon Andrews - “Rituals of the African American Domus: Church, Community, Sport and LeBron James”**

- The document "Rituals of the African American Domus" by Vernon L. Andrews explores the intricate connections between African American cultural rituals, religion, and sports, with a particular focus on LeBron James. Here's a detailed summary of the key points, including discussions on "Ritualizing" and "Domus":
  - Key Points and Themes
    - ***Ritualizing***
      - Definition and Context: Ritualizing refers to the creation and performance of rituals that express cultural and social values. In the African American context, ritualizing is deeply rooted in the Black Church and extends to various aspects of life, including sports.
      - Examples in Sports: The document highlights several examples of ritualizing in sports, such as pre-game circle rituals, LeBron James's powder-toss, slam-dunking, and end-zone dancing. These rituals serve to harmonize and energize teams, and they have become significant cultural expressions in popular sports.
    - ***Domus***
      - Concept of Domus: The term "domus" is used to describe the extended family and community structure that influences all aspects of life. In African American culture, the Black Church acts as the domus, providing a space for communal activities, cultural expression, and social support.
      - Transition to Secular Spaces: The document discusses how rituals from the Black Church have transitioned into secular spaces, particularly in sports. This includes the expressive behaviors of athletes like LeBron James, who bring elements of Black Church rituals into their performances on the court.
  - Detailed Analysis
    - African American Expressive Rituals
      - Church and Community: The Black Church has historically been a central institution for African Americans, serving as a conduit for cultural expression through singing, preaching, and other forms of bodily display. These rituals have been adapted and reworked into everyday life and sports.
      - LeBron James's Rituals: LeBron James's pre-game powder-toss and slam-dunks are highlighted as modern examples of African American ritualizing. These acts are not just athletic performances but also cultural expressions that resonate with the communal and spiritual practices of the Black Church.
    - The Ring and Circle in Black Sport
      - Cultural Roots: The ring and circle rituals in sports, where athletes gather in a circle to chant and dance, have roots in African traditions. These rituals emphasize community, support, and interdependence, mirroring the practices found in African American churches and social gatherings.
      - Impact on Team Dynamics: Such rituals are crucial for team cohesion and morale, creating a sense of unity and shared purpose among players.
    - Call-and-Response
      - Church Influence: The call-and-response dynamic, a staple of Black Church services, is evident in the interactions between athletes and their audiences. This

form of communication fosters a deep connection between performers and spectators, enhancing the overall experience.

- Sports Applications: In sports, this dynamic is seen in the way athletes engage with fans, such as through celebratory gestures and performances that invite audience participation.
- Secularization and Individualization
  - Changing Social Structures: The document notes a decline in regular church attendance among African Americans, particularly among the youth. This shift has led to the secularization of rituals, with new forms of cultural expression emerging in public spaces like sports arenas.
  - Continued Cultural Expression: Despite these changes, the core elements of African American ritualizing continue to thrive in new contexts, maintaining their cultural significance and impact.
- Conclusion
  - The document provides a comprehensive analysis of how African American rituals, rooted in the Black Church, have evolved and found new expressions in sports. LeBron James serves as a prominent example of this cultural continuity, embodying the ritualistic and communal aspects of African American life in his athletic performances. The concepts of ritualizing and domus are central to understanding these cultural dynamics, highlighting the deep interconnections between religion, community, and individual expression in African American culture.

### **Brian Clites Guest Lecture**

#### *“Lived Religion” & the Study of Religions in American Cultures*

- What is a “domus”?
- What is “lived religion”?
  - Describes the way people live their lives when not actively worshipping
- Epigraph - start to the reading
  - “It is a story of the search for the cultural ways in which African Americans have communicated meaning through gesture, dance, and other forms of bodily display...”
- African American religious, social, and sports rituals are all interconnected
- The black church has served as the main institutional conduit
- The churches of black expressivity are stadiums and arenas all over America

### **The AAR Religious Literacy Guidelines: What U.S. College Graduates Need to Understand about Religion**

- The document, "AAR Religious Literacy Guidelines," outlines essential approaches and outcomes for enhancing religious literacy in two- and four-year colleges and universities. Developed by the American Academy of Religion (AAR), it aims to equip graduates with the critical understanding of religion's role in human experience and societal structures.
- Key Points and Summary
  - *Approaches Adopted by Two- and Four-Year Colleges and Universities*
    - The document identifies several methodologies used in teaching about religion, emphasizing their roles in fostering religious literacy:
      1. Religious Studies Approach:
        - The core academic approach, treating religion as a subject of study rather than promoting any faith.

- Focuses on the diversity, evolution, and historical/cultural contexts of religious traditions.
- Employs multidisciplinary methods like anthropology, sociology, history, and textual analysis.
- Views religions as culturally embedded and internally diverse, avoiding confessional biases.
- 2. Faith-Based Approaches:
  - Promotes understanding and practice of a specific faith.
  - Common in religiously affiliated institutions and campus ministries.
  - May include critical analyses to deepen internal understanding of a faith tradition.
- 3. Faith-Sensitive Approaches:
  - Acknowledges and respects religious traditions while allowing students to reflect on their own.
  - Particularly prevalent in institutions with diverse student bodies.
- 4. Interfaith Approaches:
  - Encourages dialogue and mutual understanding between diverse religious traditions.
  - Highlights the value of shared experiences to advance religious comprehension.
- 5. Experiential Approaches:
  - Immerses students in real-world religious contexts through ethnographic research, site visits, or direct encounters with practitioners.
  - Requires framing these experiences within broader academic and cultural analyses.
- 6. Consensus and Quantitative Data Approaches:
  - Focus on creating shared civic understandings or analyzing numerical data to study trends in religious adherence or practices.
  - Provides foundational knowledge necessary for civic engagement and public discourse.

These varied approaches contribute collectively to a nuanced understanding of religion's multifaceted role in personal, societal, and global contexts.

- ***Suggested Outcomes for Students***

- The guidelines emphasize several competencies that college graduates should achieve:
  - **Accurate Understanding:** Graduates should discern credible knowledge about diverse religious traditions and practices.
  - **Recognition of Diversity:** Students must recognize internal diversities within and across religious traditions.
  - **Cultural Contexts:** Students should understand how religions shape and are shaped by historical and cultural forces.
  - **Interpretation of Symbols and Art:** Grasp how religious expressions employ cultural and artistic representations.
  - **Analytical Distinctions:** Be able to distinguish between descriptive, analytical, and prescriptive religious statements.

- These competencies support broader educational goals, such as fostering informed citizenship, intercultural competence, and critical thinking skills.
- Broader Educational Value
  - The document argues that religious literacy is essential for various fields, including STEM, social sciences, healthcare, and business. Knowledge of religious frameworks enhances cultural awareness, ethical decision-making, and the ability to navigate complex professional and social environments.
- Conclusion
  - The guidelines advocate integrating religious literacy into general education to prepare students for informed, respectful, and analytical engagement with the world's diverse cultural and religious landscapes. While focused on academic rigor, the document acknowledges the complementary roles of faith-based, experiential, and interfaith approaches in promoting a well-rounded understanding of religion.

### **Penny Lane - *Hail Satan? The Satanic Temple (TST)***

- Unsettling, goes against the upbringings of many religious folks
- Unapologetically disruptive
- Activities
  - Satan worshiping(?)/black mass
    - Politically motivated
    - Activism
  - Community work
  - 7 tenets
- US is still a christian nation, and TST is there to disturb it
- 7 Tenets - not necessarily specific to TST, more governing and 'common-sense' laws for reasonable human beings
  - I: One should strive to act with compassion and empathy toward all creatures in accordance with reason.
  - II: The struggle for justice is an ongoing and necessary pursuit that should prevail over laws and institutions.
  - III: One's body is inviolable, subject to one's own will alone.
  - IV: The freedoms of others should be respected, including the freedom to offend. To willfully and unjustly encroach upon the freedoms of another is to forgo one's own.
  - V: Beliefs should conform to one's best scientific understanding of the world. One should take care never to distort scientific facts to fit one's beliefs.
  - VI: People are fallible. If one makes a mistake, one should do one's best to rectify it and resolve any harm that might have been caused.
  - VII: Every tenet is a guiding principle designed to inspire nobility in action and thought. The spirit of compassion, wisdom, and justice should always prevail over the written or spoken word.
- Key Aspects
  - Focus on Activism: The Satanic Temple uses humor, satire, and legal battles to confront issues like government favoritism of Christian ideology. The film highlights their campaigns, such as advocating for equal representation in public spaces where religious monuments are displayed.
  - Themes: It explores broader questions of religious freedom, the meaning of faith, and the role of dissent in democracy.



- Tone: Penny Lane approaches the topic with a mix of seriousness and wit, providing insight into the members' motivations while addressing misconceptions about Satanism.
- Critical Reception: The film was praised for its balanced and entertaining portrayal of a polarizing subject. It offers a thoughtful examination of modern-day activism and the power of performance art in political discourse.
- Themes
  - Separation of Church and State
    - What It Explores: The Satanic Temple's activism underscores the importance of maintaining a secular government. They frequently challenge instances where Christian symbols or practices are given preferential treatment in public institutions.
    - Examples: A key campaign highlighted in the film is the fight to erect a statue of Baphomet next to a Ten Commandments monument on government property. This is framed not as a promotion of Satanism but as a demand for equal representation.
    - Underlying Message: The film probes the constitutional principle of religious neutrality and how it is often compromised in practice.
  - Religious Pluralism and Freedom
    - What It Explores: Hail Satan? questions the boundaries of what constitutes a legitimate religion and who gets to decide. The Satanic Temple's nontheistic approach defies traditional definitions of faith, focusing instead on shared values and ethical principles.
    - Broader Implication: By redefining what religion can look like, the film challenges viewers to think critically about religious freedom as a universal right, not just a privilege for mainstream faiths.
  - Power of Satire and Symbolism
    - What It Explores: The Temple's use of satanic imagery and satire is central to its strategy. By adopting a figure traditionally seen as "evil," they invert its meaning to critique authoritarianism, dogma, and hypocrisy in religious and political institutions.
    - Significance: This theme emphasizes the role of art and symbolism in activism. The provocative use of Satan forces society to confront its biases and assumptions about morality and power.
  - Community and Belonging
    - What It Explores: Despite its controversial name, The Satanic Temple fosters a sense of community and shared purpose among its members. Many join not because they literally worship Satan but because they value inclusivity, compassion, and rebellion against injustice.
    - Connection to Modernity: This theme reflects a growing trend where people seek alternative forms of belonging in a world increasingly skeptical of organized religion.
  - Moral and Ethical Philosophy
    - What It Explores: The Temple promotes a rationalist, human-centered ethical framework through its Seven Tenets, which emphasize justice, empathy, and personal freedom.
    - Contrast to Mainstream Religion: By focusing on tangible human values rather than divine commandments, the film prompts viewers to reconsider the origins of morality and whether religion is necessary for ethical behavior.
  - Dissent and Democracy

- What It Explores: The Satanic Temple acts as a disruptive force in a democratic society, using provocative tactics to challenge the status quo. The film portrays them as a modern-day David taking on Goliath-like institutions of power.
    - Philosophical Undertone: This theme delves into the idea of dissent as a patriotic act, emphasizing the necessity of questioning authority to preserve democratic ideals.
  - The Cultural Stigma of Satan
    - What It Explores: The film confronts the cultural fear and misunderstanding surrounding Satanism, which is often conflated with evil or criminality.
    - Reframing Satan: The Temple uses Satan as a symbol of rebellion and intellectual freedom, inspired by literary and historical interpretations rather than religious ones.
- Summary
  - What started out as a religious non-theistic movement by members of what would become The Satanic Temple, founded by Lucien Greaves and Malcolm Jarry, to praise then Governor of Florida, Rick Scott, for his support of school prayer (Which was actually a publicity stunt and sarcastic attack on the Governor's hypocrisy), leads to the founding of the organization as an actual recognized religious group. Members organize a series of public actions advocating religious pluralism, with a broad focus on the Statue of Baphomet. The group campaigns to have it erected next to a Ten Commandments monument to raise awareness of how Christian privilege is discrimination, while also supporting the rights of Woman's Reproductive freedom and the LGBT community. With a mischievous sense of humor, a group of rebellious misunderstood outsiders committed to social justice and political egalitarianism empower thousands around the world.
  - The themes of Hail Satan? go beyond the antics of The Satanic Temple, providing a thoughtful commentary on contemporary issues of faith, governance, and social justice. The film encourages viewers to question societal norms and reflect on the meaning of equality and freedom in a pluralistic world. It balances humor and gravity, inviting audiences to engage with challenging ideas in a nuanced way.

### **“This Little Light of Mine:” Interview with Joy Bostic**

- The document "This Little Light of Mine" features an insightful interview with Joy Bostic, a scholar focused on Africana spirituality, exploring its expression through popular music, dance, and visual culture. Bostic, the Director of Africana and African American Studies at Case Western Reserve University, examines the intersection of spirituality, identity, and cultural performance, revealing how these elements shape individual and collective experiences.
- Key Themes and Cosmology:
  - Embodiment and Vitality:
    - Bostic underscores that Africana spirituality is deeply embodied, rooted in the cultural and spiritual practices originating from African ethnic religions and their adaptation during the transatlantic slave trade. Practices such as the "ring shout" exemplify these embodied rituals, which utilize movement, rhythm, and improvisation as spiritual and communal expressions. She highlights "vitality" as the mystical energy derived from these rituals, enabling participants to connect with ancestral spirits and divine presence.
  - *Cosmology*:
    - The cosmology of Africana spirituality integrates the visible and invisible worlds, suggesting a continuum where ancestors and divine forces interact with the living. This worldview influences various cultural expressions, from gospel and jazz to hip-hop,

bridging sacred and secular domains. Bostic emphasizes that this cosmology fosters resilience and empowerment by connecting the past, present, and future.

- The Power of Music:
  - Music serves as both a spiritual and political tool, as seen in its role during the Civil Rights Movement. Bostic recounts how songs like "This Little Light of Mine" transformed fear into collective strength, fostering both individual empowerment and communal solidarity. Such music encapsulates the dynamic interplay between individual agency and collective identity, central to Africana aesthetics.
- Spirituality and Agency:
  - Bostic explores how Africana spirituality blends individual and collective dimensions. The "I" in spiritual declarations, such as "I'm going to let it shine," reflects personal agency while drawing from communal reservoirs of spiritual energy. This dynamic is cultivated through traditions that affirm identity and value from a young age, fostering a sense of divine purpose and self-worth.
- Cultural Adaptation and Decolonization:
  - Bostic highlights the adaptability of Africana traditions in diasporic contexts, where diverse cultural groups merged their practices, resulting in new forms like the blues and jazz. This adaptability contrasts colonial frameworks, which often imposed rigid separations between sacred and secular realms. She advocates for a decolonized approach to spirituality and theology, challenging internalized colonial ideologies and affirming black cosmologies.
- Broader Relevance and Radical Love:
  - Bostic argues that Africana spirituality holds universal relevance, offering insights into overcoming alienation and fostering relationality across cultural boundaries. She emphasizes "radical love" as a transformative force, advocating for deep engagement and mutual recognition as a counter to oppressive systems. This concept resonates with bell hooks' idea of love as a political and spiritual act, challenging exploitative structures and fostering meaningful connections.
- Conclusion:
  - Joy Bostic's work illuminates the profound depth of Africana spirituality and its pervasive influence across cultural, spiritual, and political landscapes. By integrating cosmology, music, and embodied practices, her scholarship affirms the transformative power of Africana traditions while challenging narratives that marginalize their contributions to global culture and spirituality.

### **MIDTERM EXAM**

1. Which of the following theorists claimed that "there cannot be a universal definition of religion, ... because that definition is itself the historical product of a discursive process"? **Talal Asad**
2. Which of the following scholars of religion is most likely the author of a book with the title *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*? **Russel McCutcheon**
3. Which of the following best describes a feminist critique of religion? **Feminism works to redress inequality at the societal level, this includes religious communities as social networks that historically marginalized women.**
4. Which of the following could be a methodological approach used in Religious Studies?
  - a. Participant observation and ethnographic interviews
  - b. Textual studies
  - c. Art history inquiry
  - d. **All of the above**

5. The World Religions Paradigm **Makes the assumption that people only belong to one religion at a time**
6. Which of the following best describes Hedges' method of "Critical hermeneutical phenomenology"?
  - a. **Adopting a feminist and/or postcolonial perspective in studying religion**
  - b. **Understanding that our own perspectives are shaped by how we experience and make sense of the world**
7. A myth primarily functions to claim historical credibility, rather than to persuade the reader or to sanction religious truths. **False**
8. Which of the following is NOT an example of Multiple Religious Identity? **A wedding between a Catholic and a Hindu practitioner at city hall**
9. Who is an “insider” or an “outsider” of a certain religion is decided at birth and cannot be changed. **False**
10. In some cases, secular laws prohibit the religious expression in terms of dress and clothing. For example, the French Ministry of Sports, while not banning athletes from other countries from wearing headscarves, decided to forbid athletes representing France to wear them. What part of Tweed’s theory on dwelling correspond to this event? **The body as a watch and compass**
11. The ongoing conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Kurram, northwest Pakistan, is in part due to different beliefs about the succession of Prophet Muhammad. This shows how religious communities navigate historical disagreements through territorial disputes. What part of Tweed’s theory on dwelling is reflected here?
  - a. Emplacement
  - b. Mapping
  - c. Religion as Watch and Compass
  - d. **All of the above**
12. The rise of Christian Nationalism in the US has been linked to a shrinking proportion of white Christians in America. Which level of dwelling is taking place as demonstrated by this change, according to Tweed’s theory?
  - a. **The homeland**
13. Rakshabandhan (meaning “tie of protection”) is a Hindu ceremony honoring the bond between sisters and brothers. During Rakshabandhan, sisters tie a protective thread around the right wrist of their brothers. Brothers give gifts and promise protection to their sisters. The festival affirms the crucial importance of family in the Hindu tradition. What part of Tweed’s theory on dwelling correspond to this description? **Emplacement & Religions marking boundaries on the body**
14. Isaac Bashevis Singer’s “Little Shoemakers” could be understood as a myth because **It resonates with the theme of displacement and yearning for the homeland central to Jewish identity**
15. Which of the following is NOT a consideration in the issue of surrogacy in Hindu bioethics? **Accumulating bad karma due to commercializing human bodies**

Identification Questions - 5 points each! Underlined words are ‘incorrect’/insufficient

Allocentric	Autocentric	Biological Clock	Building
Displacement	Emplacement	Hermeneutics	Inhabiting
Mapping	Myth	Religions regulating the body	Religions altering the body

1. (4/5) The dress customs of the Eastern Dakota in the mid-nineteenth century alternately accommodated and resisted the Euro-American Protestant missionaries' effort to convert. These customs signal their affiliation with the American nation by abandoning their blankets, beads, and braids and accepting the civilizing power of fitted bodices, cotton undergarments, and lace collars.
  - a. **Identification:** Displacement
  - b. **Explanation:** This is a clear cultural adaptation example, where the previous customs are discarded due to colonialism.
2. (5/5) Since returning to power, the Taliban have been enforcing oppressive laws that violate people's freedoms and human rights, especially those of women and girls. But a newly passed "vice and virtue" law goes further. It imposes a lengthy list of repressive provisions on women, including mandates that they wear clothing covering their entire bodies, bans on their voices being heard in public, and further restrictions on their movement without a male relative.
  - a. **Identification:** Emplacement
  - b. **Explanation:** This study shows the Taliban 'putting women into the place', which is sadly an example of religion's ability to emplace.
3. (5/5) Even before Hurricane Helene made landfall in the United States, near Tallahassee, Florida, faith-based disaster groups were on the move. Disaster relief staff from the Southern Baptist Convention shipped food and other essentials to Valdosta, Georgia, where Send Relief, a Southern Baptist humanitarian group, runs a ministry center. In the early days of their response, along with assessing damages, Southern Baptists and Salvation Army officials planned to establish mobile kitchens capable of turning out 10,000 meals a day in Georgia and Florida. Other faith groups will send teams of relief workers with chainsaws to clean up debris and tools to help muck out flooded houses, and will provide chaplains to support those affected by the storm.
  - a. **Identification:** Building
  - b. **Explanation:** Specifically, faith-based groups are rebuilding destroyed communities by providing shelter and food.
4. (5/5) A week before France is set to welcome the world for the Olympics and Paralympics Summer Games of 2024, Amnesty International published a damning report on the host country's decision to bar its athletes from wearing a hijab while competing during the games. The report, casts a critical eye on France's "discriminatory policies against Muslim women" in sports and society, promulgated in the name of "laïcité," or secularism, which demands religious neutrality in public spaces. French Minister of Sports Amélie Oudéa-Castéra announced in September 2023 that while female athletes from other countries could cover their heads, France would bar its delegation from wearing headscarves during the competition.
  - a. **Identification:** Displacement
  - b. **Explanation:** Secularization leads to traditional religious practices being displaced and transformed, leading to a decline in their influence or roles in the public space
5. (2/5) Halal mortgages, which avoid the interest forbidden in Islam, have been featured in Canada's federal budget proposal. This budget aims to facilitate the construction of approximately 10.2 million homes and flats by 2031 and includes support for halal loans as part of this effort. Islam permits three types of loans in Canada. In "Ijara", the property is leased to the borrower until the final rent payment. In "murabaha", a lending company owns the property and sells it to the customer in installments over 15 years. In "musharaka", the lender and borrower co-own the property, with the borrower buying out shares over a typical mortgage period of 25-30 years.
  - a. **Identification:** Inhabiting

- b. Explanation:** This Proposal allows Islamic peoples to live in communities that are built for them and with policies that embody Islam's mapping.