Course Description
Why study religion in a presumably ‘secular’ age? Recent trends and events have overturned the long-standing assumption that the rise of modernity would result in the inevitable demise of religion. In this class, we will explore how—far from modernity’s opposition—the very concept of ‘religion,’ as well as practices, narratives, cosmologies, and images we call ‘religious’ are situated at modernity’s core. Ultimately the course has two aims that are central to the study of religion in the present but which, at times, exist in complex tension with one another. We will both examine ‘religion’ as a particularly modern and often problematic concept, while also exploring some of the rich and diverse experiences, objects, and ontologies to which the label ‘religious’ is applied around the world.
Course Texts
The following texts are available on reserve at the NYU library and/or for purchase at the NYU bookstore. All other readings not found in these texts will be made available on NYU Classes.


Expectations of Students
Participation and Attendance (20%)
All students are expected to attend all course sessions. If a student cannot attend a class, he or she must inform the professor in advance. This is a seminar class that will be primarily driven by student discussion. All students must come to class having completed the required readings and be prepared to discuss the ideas found within. Cell phones must be turned off and placed at the bottom of your bag for the duration of the class. Students may use laptops to take notes, but they are prohibited from being online.

Late Policy
All assignments must be handed in by the deadline. Late papers will be docked 2% per day.

Assessment
Reading Responses (15%)
Over the course of the semester, students must submit three 1-2-page responses to the assigned readings. In these responses, students must summarize the key argument of each of the assigned texts, reflect on how they relate to the week’s theme, and offer a comparison to other texts we have read over the semester. In addition to the reading response, students must also submit an image of a current event, work of art, or historical moment that the reading brought to mind. In the second week of the class, students will sign up for their preferred response dates. Reading responses must be submitted by email to the professor by 10am the day of the class for which students have chosen to write a response.

Note-taker (10%)
Each week, one student will be responsible for recording the contributions, discussions, and insights developed over the course of the class. The note-taker will then write a one page, single spaced summary of the class and send it to the professor by 10am the day of class the following week. The professor will provide copies of the summary to all class members; each session will begin with the notes from the previous week, read aloud by the author. Members of the class then accept or amend the notes.
Seminar Lead (20%)
Each week, a pair of students will lead the discussion for a class session. This will require the pair to meet in advance and decide what aspects of the readings and themes to bring to the fore through a series of thoughtful questions and/or activities.

Research Papers (35%)
The major assignment for the semester will be the completion of a research paper. The 15-20-page paper will engage with contemporary debates in the current study of religion or trace the transformation of a key term in the study of religion over time. Doctoral students may certainly use this paper to further explore the specific sites and topics they address in their research. In order to ensure that the students have chosen manageable and precise topics to explore, they will be required to submit a topic proposal and literature review that demonstrate their progress in thinking through their chosen topics. Neither of these requirements will be graded but students will be required to submit them in order to be able to submit the final paper. The professor will provide ample guidance and feedback to the topic proposal and literature review.

*Topic Proposals* – students will be required to submit a 2-3-page-topic-proposal clearly outlining the research questions orienting the paper, the contributions the paper will make to the study of religion, and a brief summary of the evidence that will be used to explore the research questions.

*Literature Review* – building on feedback provided on the topic proposals students will identify key debates in the study of religion to which their paper will contribute by summarizing the work of at least four seminal texts in their field.

*Final Papers* – the final research paper will build on comments provided on the topic proposal and literature review and provide a clear argument that makes an intervention into the current study of religion. By engaging in one of the many contemporary debates or following the lifespan and current place of a key term in the field, the students will demonstrate their comprehension of the state of the study of religion and identify the manner in which they intend to contribute to it.

Academic Honesty
All acts of plagiarism will be punished according to university guidelines. Please carefully review the Academic Integrity section of the College of Arts and Science web site: http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity. Check out this online tutorial to learn what plagiarism is and strategies to avoid it: http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/.

Week 1: Introductions
*Friday, September 4, 2015*
5:00-4:40pm
- Introductions, course syllabus, and assignments

Week 2: The Concept of Religion
*Monday, September 14, 2015*

Week 3: The Enlightened Discovery of ‘Religion’
Monday, September 21, 2015
• Hume, David. 1757. The Natural History of Religion.

Week 4: Religion and the Fragmented Social
Monday, September 28, 2015

Week 5: Religion and the Unified Social
Monday, October 5, 2015
Week 6: Religion as Experience  
_Tuesday, October 13, 2015_  

Week 7: Religion as Meaning  
_Monday, October 19, 2015_  

Week 8: Religion as Power  
_Monday, October 26, 2015_  

Week 9: Religion and the Unconscious  
_Monday, November 2, 2015_  

**Week 10: Religion and Dialectics**
*Monday, November 9, 2015*

**Topic Statements Due In-Class**


**Week 11: Religion and Mediation**
*Monday, November 16, 2015*


**Week 12: NO CLASS**
*Monday, November 23, 2015*

Cancelled for the American Academy of Religion Conference

**Week 13: Gender, Religion, and Embodiment**
*Monday, November 30, 2015*

**Literature Reviews Due In-Class**


### Week 14: Secular Belief and Religious Reason

*Monday, December 7, 2015*


### Week 15: Religion, Money, and Markets

*Monday, December 14, 2015*


#### Friday, December 19 – Research Papers Due electronically by 5:00pm