

Honours Seminar

RELS401
Winter 2017
Thursdays 2:30-5:30
Stirling Hall 412B

Instructors

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Objectives

Spirituality is the new cultural buzzword. More and more people prefer to call themselves spiritual but not religious (SBNR). Yoga studios, and mindfulness programs, offering people help along their spiritual paths, are popping up left and right. Go into any bookstore today and don't be surprised to find the "mind-body-spirit" section stocked, with new titles being added monthly. What's more, spiritual gurus today sell out their stadium-sized speaking events, CEOs are taking weekend spiritual retreats, and corporations are looking to enhance their employee's "spiritual intelligence" in order to boost profits and transform the nature of work. Even the public sector is following the trend; from healthcare to education, interest in spirituality is on the rise. This cultural shift has provoked a host of reactions from within the academy. However, for the most part, scholars of religion and culture have looked upon the rise of the spiritual with, at best, deep suspicion, and at worst, disdain. Some argue that spirituality is nothing but a religion of capitalism, which degrades traditional forms of community and exacerbates the very problems it purports to address. Others—a minority—defend what they see as a potentially progressive, even revolutionary, force for social change. Despite these ongoing debates, there is a relative consensus that the rising popularity of spirituality in the contemporary West reveals much about the present religious and cultural moment, and ought to be of interest to scholars.

In this course we shall investigate this loaded and highly ambiguous term, and the (often misunderstood) social and ideological phenomena it is meant to signify. Of interest will be the following questions:

- In what ways has the term "spirituality" been operationalized, and for what (political) ends?
- Is "spirituality" a meaningful term, or is it, rather, an empty signifier used by anyone to mean anything they want it to?
- What might it mean to be "spiritual but not religious" (SBNR)? What are the economic, social and cultural changes that have enabled SBNR to become a (coherent?) category of self-classification in the contemporary west?
- What might the rising popularity of this moniker reveal about the current religious and cultural climates? What social, political and ecological implications might this trend hold for contemporary society, more generally?

- And, finally, in light of the recent scholarly attention given to problematizing the concept “religion”, emerging most forcefully from the critical study of religion, how ought we to make sense of “spirituality” as both an emic and etic term? In other words, what methods and theories are appropriate to study it?

Method

In this course we shall critically investigate these questions from an interdisciplinary perspective. We shall read texts from a range of disciplines, and exploring competing, sometimes even contradictory, assessments of spirituality. The goal shall be to ascertain a critical, yet balanced, understanding of the range of discourses, ideas and material practices that surround the term “spirituality” today. We shall discuss these texts in class, writing a short research paper at the end.

Reading

We have organized a reading list around various themes, each offering its own distinct way into the study of spirituality. As we shall come to see, “spirituality” seems to mean different things in different contexts. Moreover scholars have competing perspectives and rarely agree with each other. The purpose of reading is not to find out “information” or simply to understand other people’s ideas. Rather you should also be considering the author’s assumptions, biases, background and values. Note that we have assigned readings that offer competing claims, readings that we do not agree with, and others that we wholeheartedly praise.

Discussion

Discussion is the key element of the seminar process. By participating in a collective reading seminar, we hope you will develop your skills in creative and critical thinking, oral presentation, intellectual debate, listening to others, and thinking on your feet. We will begin each class by discussing the four required readings, beginning with the ideas and comments of students who have written a reflection paper. Everyone, however, is responsible for contributing to the discussion.

Each class will also feature a 30 minute activity or presentation that is planned by a group of students, which we shall then discuss as a whole.

Research

The course ends with a term paper. You will be responsible for defining a topic, conducting bibliographic research, evaluating sources, formulating an argument, and writing up and presenting research results.

Assignments

1. **Group Presentation/Activity** (worth 20%). Each week a group of 2 or 3 will create a 30 minute presentation or class activity that relates to the week’s theme. The goal is to bring the theme “down to earth” by demonstrating how it is reflected in the lives of everyday people (including our own). This assignment is purposefully open to interpretation, for we encourage you to be as creative as you can be. Essentially, you are free to do whatever you want, so long as it is interesting, thoughtful and relevant. Maybe you can record a podcast and have us listen to it; show a video that engages everyone’s attention; have us partake in an activity of some kind; play a game; or even take a (quick) field trip (or do a combination of these!) Be inventive. The 30 minutes is all yours, and your group will be expected to take the entire allotted time. However, the thirty minutes are not meant for discussion. Think of the time as your opportunity to teach us something about the week’s topic in whatever way you think best. We will discuss our reactions and ask questions afterwards. The activity will be anonymously graded by all the class participants, based on its creativity, effectiveness of communication, and intellectual depth.
2. Four **reflections** on one of the required readings from that week (worth 5% each, total 20%), no more than one page, uploaded to OnQ before the start of class. The point is to demonstrate that you can engage with a specific reading in a thoughtful and original manner. The only requirement is to clearly identify which of the weekly readings you are writing about. After that you are free to engage the reading however you wish. You might challenge a specific claim the author makes, or offer an extended defence of something she or he criticizes; you might provide a tentative reflection on the wider implications you think the author’s arguments could hold and/or specific questions it might raise; or you might take-up a relevant issue that she or he fails to address. Again, feel free to be creative. We encourage you to bring the text into conversation with other assigned materials from the course, as well as draw from your own personal experience, if you think it is relevant. Our

hope is that some of these critical reflections will make it onto the Queen's School of Religion blog.

You must submit at least four reflections between weeks 2-11, each uploaded to OnQ before class starts. You may submit as many reflections as you like and your best four will count towards your final grade. However, you may not write a reflection the same week that you are doing a group presentation. In addition to uploading your presentation to OnQ before the class, please bring a hardcopy of your reflection with you to the seminar. You will be expected to discuss what you have written in class, so it will be helpful to have it to refer to.

3. **Final Essay**, max. 2,500 words, (worth 40%) submitted via OnQ by April 20, 2017 at 9am. The goal of the final essay is to analyze one specific topic in light of the issues raised in a specific week's readings. In this proposal you will identify this topic, set out the issues that you believe it raises, and justify its significance. The topic can be any event, news story, person, organization, or social phenomenon that exemplifies any one of the weeks' themes. You may choose the same theme as your group presentation.
4. **Participation** (worth 20%) based on your attendance and participation in class discussions. Class attendance is required and will be taken in every class. Your attendance in class is part of your grade, along with participation. We evaluate these holistically, taking into account unavoidable absences due to illness and religious obligations. If you are unable to attend class due to illness, or religious obligation, we ask that you please let us both know beforehand.

Policies

1. We reserve the right to update this syllabus throughout the term. Please consult OnQ for the current version.
2. Because group presentations/activities and reflection papers are tied to each week's readings, late papers are not accepted. If you wish to graduate in June, you must also hand in the final paper by the deadline. Any delay will prevent you from graduating.
3. Check your Queen's email and the OnQ site regularly for announcements, course updates etc. Whenever we update the syllabus or post your

assignment guidelines, OnQ should email your Queen's address to notify you. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are subscribed to all OnQ forums so that you receive these notifications and it is your responsibility to regularly check your Queen's email to stay on top of them.

4. We uphold a rule of courtesy in the classroom. This includes common sense behaviours such as arriving on time to class, ensuring that cell phones are turned off or silenced. It also means honouring the principle of charity, meaning the practice of interpreting a speaker's statements to be rational and, in the case of any argument, considering its best, strongest possible interpretation. In other words, all class discussions should be conducted with respect.
5. We will determine a note-taking / laptop / iPad policy in the first week of class.

Special Needs and Accommodations:

If you have a physical or learning related disability make sure that you register with the Disability Office as soon as possible. As the year progresses this office gets more and more swamped with requests. The staff are excellent, but there are not enough of them given the size of the student population and the extent of the need for their services. It is in your interest to book an appointment to register if you have an already diagnosed disability that has implications for your learning or the evaluation of your work. You should also book an appointment if you think that you may have such a disability and would like to arrange testing and diagnosis. Information about the services available from the Disability Office and how to contact its staff is available online at <http://www.queensu.ca/hcds/ds/index.html>

If you need special accommodations or alternative arrangements to support your learning, or the evaluation of your work in this course, it is helpful to contact us as early as possible in the term, explaining specifically what accommodations you need. It is best to do this by email (or in person after class or by appointment). You need not explain the nature of your disability; you have a right to privacy. You will, however, be asked to provide documentation from the Disability Office supporting your request for accommodation.

Schedule

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS

Recommended media articles on “spiritual but not religious.” Please read these for the first class.

- New York Times article on SBNR. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/19/us/examining-the-growth-of-the-spiritual-but-not-religious.html>
- Carlson, Kathryn. 'Organized Religion On The Decline? Growing Number Of Canadians 'Spiritual But Not Religious''. National Post. N.p., 2014. Web. 22 Oct. 2014. <http://news.nationalpost.com/holy-post/organized-religion-on-the-decline-growing-number-of-canadians-spiritual-but-not-religious>
- Lillian Daniel. Huffington post article http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lillian-daniel/spiritual-but-not-religio_b_959216.html
- Carl McColman. Huffington post article http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carl-mccolman/spiritual-but-not-religious-alternative_b_1113829.html
- Bruce Davis. Huffington post article http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bruce-davis-phd/spiritual-but-not-religio_3_b_5631095.html

WEEK 2: METHODS

Required Reading

- Heelas, Paul, and Linda Woodhead. 2005. "Introduction." In *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality*, 1-11. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub.
- Heelas, Paul, and Linda Woodhead. 2005. "Chapter 1: Distinguishing Religion and Spirituality: Findings from Kendal." In *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality*, 12-32. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub.
- Holmes, Peter R. 2007. "Chapter 1: Spirituality: Some Disciplinary Perspectives." In *A Sociology of Spirituality* edited by Kieran Flanagan and Peter C. Jupp.

- Houtman, Dick, and Stef Aupers. "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981-2000." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46 (3): 305-320.

Supplementary Readings

- Beyer, Peter, and Lori G. Beaman. 2013. "Betwixt and Between: A Canadian Perspective on the Challenges of Researching the Spiritual but not Religious." In *Social Identities Between the Sacred and the Secular*, 127-142. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Ammerman, Nancy T. 2013. "Spiritual But Not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52 (2): 258-78.
- Davie, Grace. 2012. "Keynote 5: Spirituality and Religion." *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 2 (2): 163-169.

WEEK 3: GENEALOGY

Required Readings

- Anne C. 2013. "Spirituality: History and Contemporary developments – An evaluation" *Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 78 (1): 1-12.
- Carrette, Jeremy, and Richard King. 2005. "Chapter One: A Brief History of Spirituality." In *Selling Spirituality*, 30-53. New York: Routledge.
- Lynch, Gordon. 2007. "Chapter 1: The roots of the new progressive spirituality." In *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-first Century*, 17-39. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Porterfield, Amanda. 2001. "Introduction: Post-Protestant America." In *The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late-Twentieth-Century Awakening*, 1-22. Oxford Scholarship Online.

Supplementary Readings

- Bregman, Lucy. 2014. "Chapter One: Definitions of Spirituality: Ninety-Two and Still Counting." In *The Ecology of Spirituality*, 9-28. Waco, Texas: Baylor.

WEEK 4: SECULARIZATION

Required Readings

- Berger, Peter. 1982. "From the Crisis of Religion to the Crisis of Secularity." In *Religion and America: Spiritual Life in a Secular Age*, 14-24. MA: Beacon Press Books.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2000. "New Age Religion and Secularization." *Numen* 47 (3).
- Bruce, Steve. 2006. "Secularization and the Impotence of Individualized Religion" *The Hedgehog Review, Spring & Summer* 8 (1-2): 35-45.
- Heelas, Paul. 2007. "The Holistic Milieu and Spirituality: Reflections on Voas and Bruce." In *A Sociology of Spirituality*, 63-80. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Supplementary Readings

- Aupers, Stef. 2007. "Better than the real world': On the Reality and Meaning of Online Computer Games." *Fabula*
- Putick, Elizabeth. 2000. "Personal Development: the Spiritualisation and Secularisation of the Human Potential Movement." In *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*, 201-219. Edinburgh University Press.
- Heelas, Paul. 1993. "The New Age in Cultural Context: The Premodern, the Modern and the Postmodern" *Religion* 23 (2): 103-116.

Media/Podcast

- Linda Woodhead on "The Secularization Thesis." <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/podcast-linda-woodhead-on-the-secularisation-thesis/>

WEEK 5: PRIVATIZATION

Required Readings

- Altglas, Véronique. 2014. "Introduction." In *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*, 1-23. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, Craig. 2014. "Introduction." In *Capitalizing Religion: Ideology and the Opiate of the Bourgeoisie*, 1-12. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

- Martin, Craig. 2014. "Chapter 2: Theorizing 'Individual Religion.'" In *Capitalizing Religion: Ideology and the Opiate of the Bourgeoisie*, 33-51. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- Aupers, Stef, and Dick Houtman. 2010. "Chapter 7: Beyond the Spiritual Supermarket: The Social and Public Significance of New Age." In *Religions of Modernity: Relocating the Sacred to the Self and the Digital*, 135-160. Vanders, MA: Brill.

Supplementary Readings

- Kevin Whitesides's response to Altglas's interview the RSP: <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/2014/12/12/the-logics-of-bricolage-reconsidered-a-cognitive-approach-to-individuals-and-their-constraints-by-kevin-whitesides/>

Podcast

- Craig Martin on *Capitalizing Religion*. <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/identity-and-capitalism/>

WEEK 6: CONSUMERISM

Required Readings

- Martin, Craig. 2014. "Chapter 3: Our 'religion' of the status quo." In *Capitalizing Religion: Ideology and the Opiate of the Bourgeoisie*, 53-85. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- Altglas, Véronique. 2014. "Chapter 7: Religious Exoticism and the 'New Petite Bourgeoisie'" In *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*, 282-323. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heelas, Paul. 2008. "Chapter 3: The Debate." In *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*, 81-96. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Heelas, Paul. 2008. "Chapter 5: The Sacred and the Profane: Spiritual Direction or Consumer Preference?" In *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*, 113-136. Oxford: Blackwell.

Supplementary Readings

- David Loy. Huffington post article on McMindfulness. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ron-purser/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.html

- Joe Pinsker. Atlantic article on capitalist meditation. <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/03/corporations-newest-productivity-hack-meditation/387286/>

WEEK 7: ORIENTALISM

Required Readings

- Carrette, Jeremy, and Richard King. 2005. "Chapter 3: Spirituality and the Privatisation of Asian Wisdom Traditions." In *Selling Spirituality*, 87-122. New York: Routledge.
- Porterfield, Amanda. 2001. "Chapter 4: Buddhism and the Deconstruction of Selfhood." In *The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late-Twentieth-Century Awakening*, 125-162. Oxford Scholarship Online.
- Altglas, Véronique. 2014. "Chapter 3: Universalizing and Decontextualizing Exotic Religious Resources" In *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*, 119-163. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dawson, Andrew. 2006. "East is East, Except When It's West: The Easternization Thesis and the Western Habitus" *Journal of Religion & Society* 8:1-13.

Supplementary Readings

- York, Michael. 2001. "New Age Commodification and Appropriation of Spirituality" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16 (3): 361-372.

Media

- Website: Take Back Yoga (American Hindu Association). <http://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/takeyogaback>
- CBC Article on yoga class cancellation at Ottawa U. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/university-ottawa-yoga-cultural-sensitivity-1.3330441>
- Best Dressed Monk clothing line. <http://bdmonk.com/collections/mens-new-arrivals>

WEEK 8: POLITICS

Guest Speaker: Andrea Reid (Cultural Studies MA student)

Required Readings

- Heelas, Paul. 2008. "Chapter 9: Inside Out." In *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*, 195-221. Oxford: Blackwell.
- King, Ursula. 2011. "Can Spirituality Transform Our World?" *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 1 (1): 17-34.
- Chandler, Siobhan. 2010. "Chapter 4: Private Religion in the public sphere: Life spirituality in civil society." In *Religions of Modernity: Relocating the Sacred to the Self and the Digital*, 69-88. Danvers, MA: Brill.
- Lynch, Gordon. 2007. "Chapter 2: The ideology of progressive spirituality." In *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-first Century*, 40-70. London: I.B. Tauris.

Media Articles

- Deepak Chopra Huffington post article. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/deepak-chopra/why-spirituality-matters-_b_6646038.html

Websites

- <http://subtleactivism.net>
- <http://gaiafield.net/about-wise-usa/>

WEEK 9: PSYCHOLOGY

Required Readings

- Altglas, Véronique. 2014. "Chapter 6: Bricolage and the Social Significance of Self Realization." In *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*, 239-261. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carrette, Jeremy, and Richard King. 2005. "Chapter 2: "Western Psychology and the Politics of Spirituality." In *Selling Spirituality*, 54-86. New York: Routledge.
- Porterfield, Amanda. 2001. "Chapter 5: Gender Consciousness, Body Awareness, and the Humanization of Religion." In *The Transformation of*

American Religion: The Story of a Late-Twentieth-Century Awakening, 187-201. Oxford Scholarship Online.

- Gilbert, Peter. 2014. "Understanding Mental Health and Spirituality." *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 4 (1): 8-23.

Supplementary Materials

- Website: <http://www.contemplativeeducation.ca>
- Website: <http://www.contemplativemind.org>

WEEK 10: GENDER

Required Readings

- Altglas, Véronique. 2014. "Chapter 6: Bricolage and the Social Significance of Self Realization." In *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*, 262-281. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Woodhead, Linda. 2007. "Chapter 6: Why so Many Women in Holistic Spirituality? A Puzzle Revisited." In *A Sociology of Spirituality*, 115-126. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Sointu, Eeva, and Linda Woodhead. 2008. "Spirituality, Gender, and Expressive Selfhood" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47 (2): 259-276.
- Porterfield, Amanda. 2001. "Chapter 5: Gender Consciousness, Body Awareness, and the Humanization of Religion." In *The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late-Twentieth-Century Awakening*, 163-177. Oxford Scholarship Online.=

Supplementary Readings

- Orr, Deborah. 2002. "The Uses of Mindfulness in Anti-oppressive Pedagogies: Philosophy and Praxis" *Canadian Journal of Education* 27(4). 477-490.

Media Articles

- Huffington post article on women and spirituality http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/20/women-spiritual-but-not-religious_n_6723216.html

Podcasts

- Anna Fedele on Religion, Gender and Corporeality, *Religious Studies Podcast* <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/religion-gender-and-corporeality/>
- Laurence Cox on "Encounters between Buddhism and the West" <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/encounters-between-buddhism-and-the-west/>
- Véronique Altglas on "Bricolage" <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/an-interview-with-veronique-altglas-on-bricolage/>

WEEK 11: ECOLOGY

Required Readings

- Hedlund-de Witt, Annick. 2011. "The rising culture and worldview of contemporary spirituality: A sociological study of potentials and pitfalls for sustainable development" *Ecological Economics* 70 (6): 1057-1065.
- Gottlieb, Roger S. 2015. "Chapter 2: Spiritual Deep Ecology and the Left: An Effort at Reconciliation." In *Political and Spiritual*, 23-44. London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bron Taylor. 2010. "Chapter 2: Dark Green Religion." In *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*, 13-41. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Porterfield, Amanda. 2001. "Chapter 5: Gender Consciousness, Body Awareness, and the Humanization of Religion." In *The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late-Twentieth-Century Awakening*, 178-186. Oxford Scholarship Online.

Supplementary Materials

- Taylor, Bron. 2007. "Surfing into Spirituality." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4: 923-951
- Orr, Deborah. "Chapter 6: Thinking Outside the Academic Box: With a Focus on the Ecological Crisis" (sent directly from author – will be uploaded onto onQ directly by Galen)

WEEK 12: THE FUTURE

Required Readings

- Porterfield, Amanda. 2001. "Chapter 6: The Pragmatic Role of Religious Studies." In *The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late-Twentieth-Century Awakening*, 202-226. Oxford Scholarship Online.
- Woodhead, Linda. 2010. "Chapter 2: Real Religion and Fuzzy Spirituality? Taking Sides in the Sociology of Religion." in *Religions of Modernity: Relocating the Sacred to the Self and the Digital*, 31-48. Danvers, MA: Brill.