RS400 Senior Seminar

Dr. Mary Kelly
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Office: AL672
594-2723 (no voice mail)
Hrs: T 2:30-3:30, W5:30-6:30pm
(or by appointment)

Course Description
This course will provide graduating seniors with an opportunity to reflect on and synthesize what you have learned from the academic study of religion in your course work at SDSU. The theme of the seminar is the relationship of religion and culture. In addition to the assigned readings related to the theme, position papers and critiques of those papers, the major task of the course will be to facilitate your completion of a research project by the end of the semester.

Course Objectives
- To understand ways religions and cultures interact with each other
- To reflect on the interdisciplinary nature of religious studies and current methodologies employed in the field
- To learn how to design and carry out a scholarly research project
- To learn to critique each other’s work in a collegial manner
- To improve written and oral communication skills

Readings
- Weekly readings posted on Blackboard

Course Requirements
- Completing the weekly reading posted on Blackboard and coming to the seminar prepared to discuss them
- Writing weekly position papers on an assigned question or topic—or writing critiques of your colleagues’ papers
- Completing an outline of your project, a formal research paper and a presentation to faculty and students at the end of the semester

Graded Work
- Position papers
  - Four position papers on the readings, approximately two typed, double-spaced pages, responding to a question posted on Blackboard
  - Papers should be posted on Blackboard under Communications/Discussion Board no later than 9am Monday before the reading is due (No late papers accepted!)
  - You will be assigned partners to critique your paper—if your partner does not post a paper, choose someone else’s to critique
✓ On the basis of these critiques you will have the opportunity to revise your papers (due the following week)

- Critiques of position papers
  ✓ Each week you will read and critique your assigned partner's position paper in written form
  ✓ Your critique should consider ways to strengthen and expand upon the ideas expressed in their position papers
  ✓ We will workshop these papers in class, after which you will hand in your critique

- Paper Outline with Annotated Bibliography
  ✓ Due March 21
  ✓ Further instructions on BB

- Research Paper
  ✓ Approximately 15-20 double-spaced pages
  ✓ Guidelines for paper and presentation posted on Blackboard under Research Project
  ✓ Due by the end of the semester

- Presentation
  ✓ Approximately 20-25 minutes
  ✓ Presentation date to be assigned by mid-semester

- Grading values
  - Position Papers 40 pts. (your four best papers—10 pts. each)
  - Critiques 20 pts. (your four best critiques—5 pts. each)
  - Paper Outline 40 pts.
  - Research Paper 100 pts.
  - Presentation 90 pts.
  - Class Participation 30 pts.
  - Total Points 320 pts.

- Grades will be determined on a percentage basis of the total points for the course: 90-100% = A, 80-90% B, 70-80% C, 60-70% D, below 60% F. Plus and minus grades will be assigned in the final grade.

Class Schedule

Jan 22 Introduction to the course and to seminar participants

Jan 29 Religious and Cultural Diversity
Diana Eck, "From Many, One" in A New Religious America

Feb 5 Urban Religious Geographies
Robert Orsi "Crossing the City Line" in Gods of the City
Karen McCarthy Brown, "Staying Grounded in a High-rise Building: Ecological Dissonance and Ritual Accommodation in Haitian Vodou"
Feb 12 More Urban Religious Geographies
Madeline Duntley, "Heritage, Ritual, and Translation: Seattle's Japanese Presbyterian Church"

Feb 19 Library Research Workshop
Rural Religious Geographies
Timothy K. Beal, Introduction to Roadside Religion

Feb 26 More Rural Religious Geographies
Beal, "Biblical Recreation" and "The World's Largest Ten Commandments"

Mar 4 Writing and Methodology Workshop
Urban Meets Rural
Wayne Ashley, "Stations of the Cross" (Gods of the City) and Beal, "Stations of the Course"

Mar 11 More Rural Religious Geographies
Beal, "Mr. Brown's Cabinet of Prayers"
Paper outline with annotated bibliography due

Mar 18 Commercialism and Religion
Beal, "Magic Kingdom Come" and "Isn't It Just Precious"

Mar 25 Religion and Art
Beal, "Folk Art Church"
Draft of paper due

Apr 1 Spring Break (Or is it April Fool's?)

Apr 8 Presentations

Apr 15 Presentations

Apr 22 Presentations

Apr 29 Presentations

May 6 Presentations

May 13 Presentations
ALL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE