

RELS 1510
BROWN UNIVERSITY
CALEB ELFENBEIN

RELIGION AND COLONIALISM
SPRING 2008

RELIGION AND COLONIALISM: A SEMINAR

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SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

There is broad agreement in religious studies that the foundations of the discipline rest on scholarship that grew out of and informed modern European colonialisms. Early efforts to locate the origins of religion drew from the field studies of colonial administrators and scholars. Modern methods in the comparative study of religions grew out of efforts by colonial powers (broadly conceived) to identify the most appropriate means of (some combination of) converting, subduing, disciplining, and managing subject populations, often with the result of constructing “religions” that did not previously exist as such. Too often, however, it is sufficient to simply acknowledge this relationship; rarely does it become an object of study in itself. This course does just that. What we take from doing so certainly has bearing on the study of religion, shedding light on different theories and methods in the study of religion. At the same time, it also has bearing on how we analyze the place of religion in postcolonial societies and the conflicts that continue to mark the relationship between former colonial powers, postcolonial societies, and current international powers.

It is difficult to make overly broad statements about both elements under consideration. As the category of religion brings together vastly different practices and beliefs, “colonialism” refers to a number of different kinds of projects with different aims and different effects. The imprecise nature of both concepts (religion and colonialism) introduces serious theoretical and methodological questions in the study of religion. In order to lend some precision to our investigation of the broad question of religion and colonialism, the course consists of three sections—missions, management, and effects. In “Missions,” we will look at primary documents and scholarly essays concerning colonialisms in which conversion was a primary concern. In “Management,” we will discuss the concept of religion as it functioned in colonialisms of modernization, focusing on the fields of education and law. In the final sections, we will concentrate on the growth of world religions (as a concept) and the effects of modern colonialism on colonizing and colonized societies. Of particular concern is the objectification and reconfiguration of indigenous traditions in the image of “religion” and how the experience and management of other traditions in turn transformed conceptions of religion in the metropole.

The different kinds of sources that we will use in our seminar come out of the practices and analysis of colonialisms in the Western hemisphere, Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East. We will work with primary documents and scholarly essays, each of which employs (at least) an implicit definition of religion. Identifying and analyzing this definition and its implications will constitute a good deal of the work we do in this course, so please keep this in mind as you read for each week.

COURSE TEXTS

Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Bayly, C.A. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*. Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Burris, John P. *Exhibiting Religion*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001.

Chidester, David. *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996.

Cohn, Bernard. *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Howe, Stephen. *Empire: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones*. Indianapolis: Islamic Trust Publications, 1990.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *The 'Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

COURSE GRADING

PARTICIPATION: 20%

Having 20% percent of your grade come from participation is a reflection of the importance I give to this component of our course. I consider participation to include: attending class consistently, completing assigned readings consistently and in a timely manner, and participating fruitfully in course discussions. I do not expect that all students participate in the same way. Some of you will speak up more often in class, but ultimately I consider the quality of participation in discussions to be more important than quantity. Please keep this in mind.

SHORT ASSIGNMENTS/DISCUSSION: 35%

Over the course of the semester, you will be responsible for submitting five one-page (single space) critical reviews of course materials. These will consist of about half a page of synopsis and about half a page of your own analysis. Depending on class size, a number of you will submit these reviews the evening before class (via Mycourses) and your work will serve as an important part of seminar discussion.

FINAL PAPER: 45%

The final paper will be 15-20 pp. and will be an exercise in which you will use sources we have spent the semester discussing to address a question or series of questions that emerge from our conversations.

IMPORTANT DATES

February 20: Last day to add a course, change from audit to credit or change a grade option declaration

March 27: no class

April 25-May 6: reading period

COURSE SCHEDULE

Modernity, Religion and Colonialism

Week Two (January 31): Setting the Ground

C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*: 1-120.

Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Short Introduction*

Nermeen Shaikh, "Interview with Talal Asad, author of *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*." *Asia Source* (R)

JZ Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious." In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998: 269-284. (R)

Section One: Colonialisms of Missionization

Week Three (February 7): the Americas, Conversion, and Extraction

Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995: 29-62. (R)

Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991: 15-48, 249-280. (R)

Christopher Columbus, *The Libro de las profecías of Christopher Columbus*, trans. Delno C. West and August Kling. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991: 98-111, 239-241. (R)

Patricia Seed, "The Requirement: A Protocol for Conquest," in *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640*. Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995: 69-99. (R)

Bonar Ludwig Hernandez, "The Las Casa-Sepulveda Controversy" (R)

Bartolomé de Las Casas, "Apologetic History of the Indies," in *Apologética historia de las Indias* (Madrid, 1909), originally translated for *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946, 1954, 1961). (R)

Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. and trans. Nigel Griffin. New York: Penguin Books, 1999: 9-30. (R)

Week Four (February 14): Africa, Settlement, and Religion

David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996: 1-115.

Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa." *American Ethnologist* 13 (1): 1-22. (R)

Reverend Samuel Abraham Walker, "Preface." In *The Church of England Mission in Sierra Leone*. London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1846: v-vii. (R)

Section Two: Turn to the Modern, Colonialisms of Management

Week Five (February 21)

David Scott, "Colonial Governmentality." *Social Text* no. 43 (Autumn 1995): 191-220 (R)

C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*: 245-324.

Michel Foucault, "Governmentality." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991: 87-104. (R)

Week Six (February 28)

C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*: 325-365.

Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Imperial Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001: 3-29. (R)

Talal Asad, "Introduction" and "What Might an Anthropology of Secularism Look Like?" in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003: 1-20, 21-66.

Week Seven (March 6)

"The Government of India Act, 1833." In *Speeches and Documents on India Policy, 1750-1921*, vol. 1. London: Oxford University Press, 1922: 266-274. (R)

Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education." In *Selected Writings*, ed. John Clive and Thomas Pinney. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972: 237-251. (R)

Bernard Cohn, "Introduction" and "Command of Language and Language of Command," in *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996: 1-56.

Gauri Viswanathan, "Currying Favor: The Politics of British Educational and Cultural Policy in India, 1813-1854." *Social Text* 19/20 (1988): 85-104. (R)

Reverend J.B. Coles, "The Government System of Education: What Is Its Tendency and What Are the Fruits Hitherto Realized?" In *Proceedings of the South India Missionary Conference Held at Ootacamund*. Madras: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1858: 202-207. (R)

Reverend W. Tracy, "On Missionary Education." In *Proceedings of the South India Missionary Conference Held at Ootacamund*. Madras: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1858: 170-171. (R)

Reverend William Howland, "Historical Sketch of the Ceylon Mission." In *Historical Sketch of the Ceylon Mission and of the Madura and Madras Missions*. Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1856: 3-7. (R)

Week Eight (March 13)

Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, "Introduction" and "The Background: 19th Century Political, Educational, Legal and Religious Developments." In *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of the Dar al-Ifta*. Leiden: Brill, 1997: 1-35, 36-80. (R)

Gregory Starrett, "Creating an Object" and "Education and the Management of Populations." In *Putting Islam to Work*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998: 3-22, 23-61. (R)

Letter from residents of Helwan, Egypt, to British Consul-General Lord Cromer, on missionary activity in the area (May 1900) (British National Archives, FO 78/5087) (R)

Week Nine (March 20)

Rudolph Peters, "State, Law and Society in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: Introduction." *Die Welt des Islams* 39 (3): 267-272. (R)

Rudolph Peters, "Administrators and Magistrates: The Development of a Secular Judiciary in Egypt, 1842-1871." *Die Welt des Islams* 39 (3): 378-397. (R)

Khaled Fahmy, "The Police and the People in Nineteenth Century Egypt." *Die Welt des Islams* 39 (3): 340-377. (R)

Talal Asad, "Reconfiguration of Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt," in *Formations of the Secular*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003: 205-256.

Week Ten (April 3)

Bernard Cohn, "Law and the Colonial State in India," in *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996: 57-75.

Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Introduction," "Islamic Law and the 'Ulama in Colonial India: A Legal Tradition in Transition," and "The Rhetoric of Reform and the Religious Sphere," in *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002: 1-16, 17-37, 60-86.

Mark Galanter, "Hinduism, Secularism and the Indian Judiciary." In *Philosophy East and West* 21 (1971): 467-487. (R)

Section three: Thinking about Effects

Week Eleven (April 10)

John P. Burris, *Exhibiting Religion*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001.

John Henry Barrows, "Program of Objects of a Parliament," in *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Connection with the Columbia Exposition of 1893*, vol. 1. Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893: 18. (R)

Jean Reville, "Principles of the Scientific Classification of Religions," in *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Connection with the Columbia Exposition of 1893*, vol. 1. Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893: 1367-1369. (R)

Reverend John Keane, "The Ultimate Religion," in *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Connection with the Columbia Exposition of 1893*, vol. 1. Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893: 1331-1338. (R)

Weeks Twelve (April 17) and Thirteen (April 24): Case Study: Islamism in Egypt

Salwa Ismail, "The Study of Islamism Revisited" and "The Paradox of Islamist Politics," in *Rethinking Islamist Politics*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006: 1-26, 160-176. (R)

Evelyn Baring (Lord Cromer), "The Europeanized Egyptians," in *Modern Egypt*, vol. 2. London: the Macmillan Company, 1908: 228-244. (R)

Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*. Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1990.

Saba Mahmood, "Pedagogies of Persuasion," in *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005: 79-117. (R)