

## Religious Studies 490: Senior Seminar NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

**Joseph Adler**  
O'Connor 204  
adlerj@kenyon.edu  
427-5290 (office)

**Fall 2013**  
Tues. 7-10 pm  
Lentz 104  
Office hours: MWF 3:10-4, T 2-4  
and by appointment

- [Links](#)
- [Paper format guide](#)
- [Paper criteria](#)

This year's seminar will examine the phenomenon of new religious movements in global perspective. The term "new religious movements" (NRMs) has become, in recent years, the preferred term for what used to be called "cults" and "sects." Although those terms had and still have legitimate sociological usages, over the past few decades they have acquired distinctly negative connotations, so most scholars now use the newer terminology. The study of NRMs has developed into a distinct sub-field within religious studies. We will be examining both its methodological considerations and a wide variety of case studies, ranging from North America to Europe to Africa and Asia.

### **Reading:**

#### Available in Bookstore

- Elijah Siegler, *New Religious Movements* (2007).
- John A. Saliba, *Understanding New Religious Movements*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2003)
- Lorne L. Dawson, ed., *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader* (2003)

#### On Course Reserve

- George D. Chryssides, *Historical Dictionary of New Religious Movements* (2001).
- George D. Chryssides and Margaret Z. Wilkins, eds., *A Reader in New Religious Movements* (2006)
- Peter B. Clarke, *New Religions in Global Perspective: A Study of Religious Change in the Modern World* (2006).
- Dereck Daschke and Michael Ashcraft, eds., *New Religious Movements: A Documentary Reader* (2005).
- James R. Lewis, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements* (2004).
- Phillip Charles Lucas and Thomas Robbins, eds., *New Religious Movements in the Twenty-first Century: Legal, Political, and Social Challenges in Global Perspective* (2004).
- Christopher Partridge, ed., *New Religions: A Guide: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities* (2004).
- See also online books on Links page

## Course Requirements and Grading:

- 1. Participation** (25% of course grade). The success of a seminar depends on the active participation of all members. Attendance at all meetings is required, unless you have a legitimate excuse and inform me about it beforehand. You are expected to have read the assigned material and to participate regularly in seminar discussion, both when we have readings to discuss and during the class presentations of case studies.
- 2. Discussion topics** (15%). Each week there is assigned reading (weeks 2-5, 7-9, 12) you will turn in (keeping a copy for yourself) a typed list of topics you would like to discuss, a minimum of two for each chapter or article.
- 3. Preliminary reports** (15%). On October 8 each of you will give an oral report of your preliminary research on your NRM case study (see list next page). This should consist primarily of an objective survey of the history, doctrines, and practices of the NRM.
- 4. Oral presentation** (15%) and **research paper** (30%) on your case study. The oral presentation will be given during the last two weeks of the semester. This should focus primarily on scholarly research and your analysis of the NRM. The final paper, which will include both the objective description and the scholarly analysis, will be due one week after your oral presentation.

The case studies should deal with topics and questions such as these (not an exhaustive list):

- The origin and historical development of the NRM
- What are the beliefs and practices of the NRM?
- What religious, social, and/or intellectual traditions does the NRM draw upon?
- What social conditions and processes is the NRM responding to?
- Who joins the movement and why?
- How does affiliation satisfy the needs of its members?
- How does affiliation affect members' other social relations?
- Gender relations in the NRM
- Patterns of authority in the NRM

**Case study topics (\* required):**

1. \* Scientology
  2. \* Neo-Paganism, including Wicca
  3. \* Buddhism in U.S.
  4. \* ISKCON (International Society of Krishna Consciousness)
- \* Japan (at least one):
5. Soka Gakkai
  6. Aum Shinrikyo
  7. Tenrikyo
  8. Rissho Kosei-kai
- \* China (at least one):
9. Yiguandao (China and Taiwan)
  10. Falun Gong
11. Unification Church (Moonies)
  12. Children of God (The Family)
  13. Christian Science
  14. Adventists
  15. Santeria
  16. Rastafari
  17. Nation of Islam
  18. People's Temple
  19. Jehovah's Witnesses
  20. Heaven's Gate and other UFO and millennial groups (Y2K)

## SEMINAR SCHEDULE

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>	
1	Sep 3	Introduction	" Siegler, <i>New Religious Movements</i> , 8-23
2	Sep 10	Quick survey	" Siegler, 24-114
3	Sep 17	What are NRMs?	" Saliba, <i>Understanding New Religious Movements</i> , ch. 1 " Dawson, <i>Cults and New Religious Movements</i> , chs. 1-4
4	Sep 24	History of NRMs in the West	" Saliba, ch. 2 " Dawson, chs. 5 - 6
5	Oct 1	Various topics (all on <a href="#">Moodle</a> )	" Melton, "Perspective: Toward a Definition of 'New Religion'" " Partridge, "Alternative Spiritualities, New Religions, and the Reenchantment of the West" " Trompf, "History and the End of Time in New Religions" " Hammer, "Esoterism in New Religious Movements" " Pye, "New Religions in East Asia"
6	Oct 8	Preliminary presentations	
<< October Break >>			
7	Oct 15	Psychological perspectives	" Saliba, ch. 3 " Dawson, chs. 9 - 11
8	Oct 22	Sociological perspectives	" Saliba, ch. 4 " Dawson, chs. 7 - 8 " Wessinger, "Charismatic Leaders in New Religions" ( <a href="#">Moodle</a> )
9	Oct 29	Legal issues & violence	" Saliba, ch. 5 " Dawson, chs. 12 - 13
10	Nov 5	No class (senior exercise week)	
11	Nov 12	Films	
12	Nov 19	Gender issues & the future	" Palmer, "Women in New Religious Movements" ( <a href="#">Moodle</a> ) " Dawson, chs. 14 - 17
<< Thanksgiving Break >>			
13	Dec 3	Final presentations	
14	Dec 10	Final presentations	