

**RLR 700H: Introduction to the Interdisciplinary Study of Religious Practices and Practical Theology**

Wednesdays 1-4  
Spring 2008

Joyce Flueckiger  
Callaway S211  
404-727-4642

reljbf@emory.edu  
Office Hours: by appt.

Elizabeth Bounds  
Callaway S214  
404-727-6333 (Caro/Penso)  
712-9064 (Blankson)  
ebounds@emory.edu  
Office Hours: T/Th 1-3 (by appt)

This course is the one common required course for the Concentration in Religious Practices and Practical Theology. Its purpose is to provide an orientation to the Concentration through attention to different methods used in the study of religious practices.

Many of the readings in the course are ethnographies, written by scholars of anthropology, sociology, religious studies, and practical theology. Many of the ethnographies are paired with a short theoretical reading which will help us consider background assumptions and theoretical frameworks for the analysis of religious practices and to see how (or whether) these theories work “on the ground” in the study of actual practices. While the earlier weeks of the course focus on ethnographic and religious studies methodologies, towards the latter part we will consider two other issues key to the Concentration: the definition(s) of practical theology and the relation of the study of religious practices to practical theology. We will read some key pieces seeking to define practical theology, along with an ethnographically-oriented theological work and work in congregational studies.

Two ongoing dimensions of this course are: 1) the engagement of differences among seminar participants, both in terms of method and overall orientation to the study of religious practices (religious studies and theology), and 2) an ongoing discussion of the “mini-ethnographies” of one religious practice required from each student. Throughout the course we will be attentive to how religions are lived and practiced and how we can analyze and best understand these practices

**CLASSES**

***January 23 Introduction: Beginning to Ask Questions  
Examples from Practical Theology and Ethnography***

Wolfteich, chapter from *Lord Have Mercy* (pdf file)  
Abu-Lughod, Ch. 1, *Writing Women's Worlds* (pdf file)

Recommended: Robert Wuthnow, *Rediscovering the Sacred*, Ch. 1 and 2 (copy from GDR)  
Nieman/Cahalan, “Mapping the Field of Practical Theology” from Dykstra and Bass, eds., *For Life Abundant*, pp. 59(71)-82(94) (pdf file)

***January 30 Practicing Religion***

Courtney Bender, *Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at God's Love, We Deliver*  
Pierre Bourdieu, “Fieldwork in Philosophy” (esp. pp. 3-25) (ereserve)

**February 6 Working Ethnographically**

Pierre Bourdieu, "Understanding" from Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World* (ereserve)  
 Abu-Lughod, Introduction, *Writing Women's Worlds* (pdf file)

John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (excerpt, ereserve)

Recommended: Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 1995, Chapters 1 and 2 available at GDR)

**\*\*Ethnographic Exercise due****February 13 Performance**

Laurel Kendall, "Initiating Performance," from *The Performance of Healing*, eds. Carol Laderman and Marina Roseman, 1996. (ereserve)  
 (we'll view Kendall film: "An Initiation Kut for a Korean Shaman" in class)

Saba Mahmood, "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of *Salat*." *American Ethnologist* 28 (4): 827-53.(ereserve)

Catherine Bell, "Performance" from *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark Taylor (ereserve)

**February 20 Narratives and Practices**

Joyce Flueckiger, *In Amma's Healing Room*

**Project Topic due****February 27 Ritual and Rhetoric**

Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*.

**March 5 Cultural History and Practices**

Robert Orsi, *Thank You St. Jude*

Robert Orsi, "Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion," in *Lived Religion in America*, ed. David D. Hall (ereserve)

**March 12 SPRING BREAK****March 19 Practicing Theology 1**

Marla Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith*.

**Project Update due**

**March 26      *Practicing Theology 2***

Fulkerson, Mary McClintock, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church*  
 James Nieman, "Attending Locally," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 6/2 (Fall 2002):  
 198-225 (ereserve)

**April 2      *Congregational Practices***

Nancy Ammerman, "Religious Identities and Religious Institutions" in *Handbook of the  
 Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michele Dillon (ereserve)  
 1 congregational profiles from *Congregations and Community* (ereserve)  
 Interviews/Notes from Eiesland-Bounds Project/Intro to Atlas

**April 9      *Practical Theology: Theories and Approaches***

Craig Dykstra, "Reconceiving Practice," in *Shifting Boundaries*, ed. Barbara Wheeler (ereserve)  
 Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Purposes of Practical Theology" (ereserve)  
 Don Browning, "Congregational Studies as Practical Theology," in *American Congregations*, ed.  
 James Wind and James Lewis (ereserve)

View <http://www.practicingourfaith.org>

**April 16      *Presentations*****April 23      *Presentations*****April 30      *Wrap-Up*****REQUIREMENTS**

1. ***Reading and Discussion***
2. ***Discussion facilitator for one seminar class***  
 Prepare 3-5 pages of reflections on main text(s) for class discussion, which may include key definitions assumptions, methods, comparisons with previous readings/classes, and questions for discussion. This document should be sent out by *Tuesday evening at the latest*.
3. ***Class recorder***  
 Provide 2-page summary of one class discussion (due the following class session).
4. ***Short ethnographic exercise***  
 5-7 page description and questions re: one common practice (e.g., class at Emory). To be emailed to class by the end of day on **Monday February 4**.
5. ***Research Project***
  - a. Project topic (**due February 20**)
  - b. Written project update/fieldnotes/questions (**March 19**)
  - c. Research presentation (**April 16 and April 23**)
  - d. Research paper (**due Monday May 5**)