

HIST 585-004: Special Topics in History:
(cross-listed with ICIVS 770-000/RLR 710-000)

Topic: History of Religion (OPUS title) or
The History of the History of Religions (complete course title)

Instructor	Day(s)	Time(s)	Maximum Enrollment
Cornell	TH	1:00 – 4:00 pm	20

Semester Description:

This course critically examines the field of Religious Studies (*Religionsgeschichte* or *Religionswissenschaft*) as a product of Western intellectual history. Two key questions that will be asked in this course are: How was the study of religions conceived as a science? And why did Religious Studies first develop in the West? Topics to be covered in our attempt to answer these questions will include: historicism and the philosophy of religion; linguistics, philology, and the History of Religions; imperialism, orientalism and Religious Studies; ideologies of origin and race; primitivism and the quest for authenticity; nationalism and the History of Religions; phenomenology and the problem of comparison; the “mystery” of the academic study of mysticism; traditionalism and perennialism; the influence of the History of Religions on religious movements in the Non-Western world.

Required Textbooks, Articles, and Resources (possibly subject to revision):

1. Taylor, Mark C. Ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*
2. Kippenberg, Hans G., *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age*
3. Arvidsson, Stefan, *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science*
4. Wasserstrom, Steven M., *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos*
5. Sedgwick, Mark, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*
6. Kripal, Jeffrey J., *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and Reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism*
7. Bhatt, Chetan, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths*

Fall 2016

Grading:

- Regular class attendance
- In-class presentations on assigned topics (30%)
- A written critical review of a theoretical work in Religious Studies (15 pages, 30%)
- A 20 to 25-page research paper on a theoretical problem in the History of Religions (40%)