Course Description: This course begins with the question of whether it is possible to find religion in non-religious places. What does the term “religion” mean? Does religion always and only have to be found in a church/mosque/temple? Or can it be found in other so-called “secular” places? Is Hockey a religion? Are visits to Graceland or Star Trek conventions a modern form of pilgrimage? Are Raves an urban expression of religious transcendence and healing? This course will explore the concept of “implicit religion” using these and other examples. Key theorists of religious studies concepts will be introduced and their ideas explored and applied to the examples covered in class.

Texts: There is no assigned textbook for this class.

Requirements:

Participation 10%
Paper proposal 20%
Research Term Paper 35%
Take Home Final Exam 35%

Participation: This class is going to follow a mixed lecture/discussion format. Although I will be giving lectures to cover the necessary introduction to the topics and theoretical ideas that we will be studying in the class, these lectures will be interactive: you are encouraged and expected to come prepared by having read the assigned readings, and to have comments and questions relevant to the topic ready to contribute in class. Please make sure you come prepared to class: it will make the class more enjoyable for everyone!

Proposal: Write a paper proposal that outlines the topic you will explore, the key theoretical ideas you will draw upon in your analysis, and includes an annotated bibliography of academic and primary sources that you will use in your work. Due: Feb. 12, 2015.

Research Term Paper: Theories of implicit religion, secular religion, and so on can be applied to a wide variety of topics; the few that we cover in this course represent simply a
small sample of the ways that religious studies can be beneficial in understanding human experience and practice outside the confines of mainstream religious contexts. For your research paper, choose a topic relevant to implicit religion (Twihards and the Church of Cullen? PETA as religious extremists? Oprah as New Age Guru? Post-Modernism and Implicit Religion? Etc.) Choose a theoretical model or models to work with, and show how/why Religious Studies can (or possibly fails to) shed light on these dimensions of human concern. Length: 3000-4000 words. **Due: March 19, 2015.**

**Take-home Exam:** This course will have a take-home final exam. It is worth 35% of your grade. This exam will be essay-style, with multiple questions, and with some choice of questions. There will be questions that focus on the various specific examples of implicit religion covered in class, and others that encourage analysis of themes present in several or all of the examples we have studied. The exam is designed to encourage you to show your understanding of the details and implications of the material we have been studying. You may draw upon outside sources to answer the questions on the exam; however, you are not required to do so. The exam will be handed out on the last day of class, and will be due on whatever date is assigned to us by the Registrar’s Office.

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**Course Outline:**

**Tuesday January 6:** Introduction to the Course – course outlines, key concepts, theories, issues.

**Section One: David Chidester’s ‘Authentic Fakes’ and Disney (Jan 8 - 27)**


**Section Two: Adam Possamai’s ‘Hyper-Real Religion’ and Star Wars (Jan 29 - Feb. 10)**


Watch: (Part of) The Force Among Us

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**Section Three: Edward Bailey’s ‘Implicit Religion’ and Star Trek (Feb. 12 - 24)**


February 17 – Midterm Break.

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**Section Four: Pilgrimage Studies and Star Trek (Feb 26 - March 3)**


Watch: Trekkies 2

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**Section Five: Implicit Religion and Raves (March 5 -10)**

Section Six: Catherine Albanese’s ‘American Religion’ and Elvis (March 12 - 17)


Watch: The Church of Elvis (if available).

Section Seven: Thomas Luckman’s ‘Invisible Religion’ and Hockey (March 19 - 26)


Watch: The Chiefs

Section Eight: Ritual Studies and Professional Wrestling (March 31, April 2)


Watch: WWE matches – Hulk Hogan vs Andre the Giant; Hulk Hogan turns heel; redemption of Hulk Hogan