School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology

Department of Religions and Theology

Contemporary Theories of Religion

Module Code: BCRE03

Semester/term taught: Michaelmas Term
ECTS: 5
Contact hours: Two lectures of one-hour duration per week for one term
Lecturer(s): Professor Alexandra Grieser (griesera@tcd.ie)

Module Description:
Studying religion as an ever-changing cultural phenomenon requires dynamic theories. This course will, firstly, address fundamental questions relevant to the contemporary study of religion, for instance, how we compare religious phenomena, or what makes a workable theory when we want to gain independent knowledge about religion. Secondly, continuities will be explored from key concepts developed in the course from the “cultural turn” since the 1960s (for instance colonialism, gender, emotions) to recently developed approaches, for example, in the field of ritual studies, or the cognitive study of religion. Thirdly, the questions of how contemporary theories explain religious change, and the changing forms of religion in modernity will be addressed. Active contribution is expected by signing up for an “expert group” on weekly readings. The essay assignment involves applying theories to empirical and historical cases.

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Recognize the multi-methodical, systematic structure of the discipline and distinguish different methodologies and perspectives.
- Identify, distinguish and characterise key concepts in the contemporary academic study of religion
- Identify the relevance and consequences of theorizing in the study of religion
- Understand and reconstruct critical discussion of theoretical issues
- Apply concepts to empirical cases

BROAD CURRICULUM – COURSE REQUIREMENT 2015/16
Students are required to submit one essay (2,500 words) on the last day of Michaelmas Term. Submission date is Friday 18th December 2015, 12 noon, in hard copy to the Dept. Office, R. 5010, Arts Building. Students are not required to sit an examination. Students are welcome to contact the Department of Religions & Theology (welch@tcd.ie) if they have any further queries.