The Comparative Study of Religion

Harvard University

The Senior Honors Thesis

Handbook

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THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RELIGION
Harvard University

THE SENIOR HONORS THESIS

I. Introduction

The thesis is an essay that deals in a sustained way with a topic that is of particular interest to the student and that raises broader questions for the study of religion. In selecting a topic students should keep in mind both of these criteria as well as the fact that the paper should be an example of what the word essay means: a careful effort to develop and test the writer’s analytical and interpretative powers. The honors thesis is not to be a small-scale Ph.D. dissertation. An exhaustive command of the topic is not required. Ideally the project should address a significant question that has a future, i.e., that is capable of sustaining interest and generating dialogue among scholars over an extended period of time. An effective thesis, however, will address such a question by focusing on a specific, manageable aspect of it. Students are strongly encouraged to build on projects they have already explored in a junior tutorial or other coursework. The senior thesis is the capstone of the undergraduate curriculum in the Study of Religion, and has the potential to be a significant experience of intellectual and personal growth.

The subject matter of the theses will naturally vary widely, by virtue of the nature of the field of religion. In every case, the subject should be specific enough to allow for depth of treatment. At the same time, however, it should not be so narrowly and technically construed as to allow the writer to lose sight of its relations to broader issues in the study of religion. Approval of the topic will be based upon its cogency and its suitability as subject matter for a senior honors thesis in the Comparative Study of Religion.

The thesis will also vary according to a student’s overall plan of study within the concentration. Students pursuing a plan of study in Two Major Traditions or One Major Tradition and One Theme (Option A) will usually craft theses that involve the two traditions, or the one tradition and one theme, that they have examined during the course of their undergraduate work. Thesis-writers following One Major Tradition (Option B) will focus their theses primarily upon the tradition they have examined during the course of their undergraduate work. Students who are pursuing a joint concentration in Religion and another field (Option C) are required to center their theses on the tradition they have studied within the Comparative Study of Religion, while also engaging the other field. Finally, joint concentrators for whom the Comparative Study of Religion is the secondary field (Option D) will follow the thesis guidelines set by their primary concentration, but will also explore a topic that relates to the tradition they have studied within the Study of Religion. In all cases, students may center their work within one or more traditions, but deal with an issue that is connected to broader issues in the academic study of religion.

All concentrators are expected to designate the area or the general topic of the thesis in April of their Junior year. A prospectus approved and signed by the senior thesis advisor is due in September of the senior year. Primary concentrators will also submit an outline of the thesis October and a draft of each of their three chapters of the thesis: one in November, a second in December, and a third in January. The completed thesis is due in March of the senior year. Unless otherwise indicated, drafts are due in electronic form to the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies, and in either electronic or hard-copy form to both the faculty and graduate student advisors (check with your advisors about which form they prefer).
II. Calendar of Deadlines and Events for 2013-2014

Tuesday, September 24 by 5 p.m.:
A 2-page prospectus of the thesis, approved and signed by both the faculty and graduate student thesis advisors, along with a bibliography and tentative title.

Friday, October 4, 9 – 11 a.m.:
A 20-minute individual meeting with members of the Faculty to discuss and review the prospectus. You will be assigned a specific time slot within the 2-hour period.

Friday, October 25, by 5 p.m.:
A detailed overview or outline of your three thesis chapters (no more than 6 total pages). You should also indicate which chapter you plan to draft for the November deadline.

Tuesday, November 26, by 5 p.m.:
A 12-15 page draft of one chapter of the thesis. Note: This deadline falls on a Tuesday, rather than a Friday, since Thanksgiving break begins on Wednesday of this week.

Friday, December 20, by 5 p.m.:
A 12-15 page draft of a second chapter of the thesis.

Friday, January 24, by 5 p.m.:
A 12-15 page draft of a third chapter of the thesis. Note: This deadline falls at the end of the January break, before the spring semester begins.

Friday, February 21, by 5 p.m.
A revised draft of all chapters of the thesis AND a draft of the introduction and conclusion.

Monday, March 10, by 5 p.m.:

Monday, April 28 – Thursday, May 8:
A 1½-hour oral defense of the thesis with members of the thesis evaluation committee.

Please note:
- These dates apply for May degree candidates only.
- All drafts are due in hard copy or electronic form to the faculty and graduate student advisors (ask them which form they prefer), and in electronic form to the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies.
- Extensions will be granted only by written appeal to the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies.
- There are no extensions for the March 10 deadline.
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III. Prospectus Guidelines

Due Tuesday, September 24, by 5 p.m.

*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* defines a prospectus as “something (as a statement or situation) that forecasts the course or nature of something not yet existent or developed.” As you begin to draft your prospectus, keep in mind that the purpose of this document is to provide yourself, your advisors, and the prospectus committee with a statement of your intentions for your thesis – a kind of road-map or blueprint for your project. It is very important to talk with your advisors and listen to their guidance at this point because it is difficult to know how much you can accomplish in a year. A prospectus is, by definition, a forecasting tool for a work in progress. It is neither final nor immutable.

Your senior thesis prospectus should include the following elements:

1. a tentative thesis title
2. a 2-page statement of the thesis topic, argument, and methodology
3. a preliminary bibliography of 2-3 pages
4. a signature of approval by both your graduate student and faculty thesis advisors

Your prospectus should introduce the topic of your thesis and explain why the subject you have chosen is significant. A helpful way to begin thinking about your thesis, as well as to begin your thesis prospectus, is to formulate a question with which you plan to grapple in your thesis. Instead of beginning: “My thesis will examine the *vrata* tradition in India and its significance for Hindu women,” try beginning: “What are *vrata* rites? What role do they play in the Hindu religious tradition? What significance do they have for Hindu women in particular?”

Formulating your topic as a question, or series of questions, also sets you up to discuss how you propose to go about researching and answering these queries. Although it is likely that you do not have a fully formulated thesis statement at this stage of the process, you should indicate how you intend to undertake the research that will help you to make an argument about the issues you have raised. What methodologies, or approaches will you use in your research? Will your project be based upon close, textual analysis? Will you be conducting ethnographic interviews? Will you be observing rituals? Comparing various historical phenomena? These are the kinds of questions you will want to ask yourself as you draft your prospectus.

The prospectus should also indicate how your thesis topic and the questions it generates relate to broader issues in the study of religion. What kind of contribution to the field of religious studies do you hope to make? What conversations within the diverse field of religion will your project participate in? What kind of voice do you want to speak in? What kind of an argument do you hope to make—analytical? theological? ethical? historical? sociological? Please remember that these categories are only suggestions, and certainly not exhaustive or mutually exclusive.
THE SENIOR HONORS THESIS

Additional questions that you may find helpful as you formulate your prospectus include:

Are you beginning with a question that is unresolved? What puzzles you? What do you want to find out?

Do you care about the question? Are you clear about what you are asking? What observations have led you to ask this question? What hunches do you have about possible answers?

Is the topic interesting? What interests you about it? Can it be made interesting to others?

Can the topic be researched? How can it be researched? What kinds of information are needed to answer the questions posed?

Does the topic present problems that can be explored or solved with analysis? Does it provide you with an opportunity to do some creative or original thinking?

Examples of prospectuses from previous years may be found at the back of this booklet.

IV. Prospectus Committee Meeting Guidelines

After the prospectus has been submitted, it will be copied and distributed to members of the prospectus committee. This committee is composed of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies, and several members of the Faculty. The purpose of the prospectus committee meeting is to provide you with comments on your prospectus. You should come prepared to answer questions from members of the committee regarding the suitability of your topic, the viability of your research plan, and the opportunities your project presents for addressing broader issues within the study of religion. Your prospectus committee meeting will be individually-scheduled, and should take approximately 20 minutes.

The prospectus committee may request you to rewrite or append your prospectus in response to any concerns that are raised regarding your thesis project.

V. Prospectus Guidelines For Joint Concentrators with Religion as a Secondary Field

Joint concentrators for whom the Comparative Study of Religion is not the primary field are required to submit a copy of their senior thesis prospectus to the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Study of Religion by the deadline set for other concentrators. Final approval of the prospectus will be at the discretion of the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies. If the prospectus is not approved, the student will be asked to rewrite and resubmit the prospectus. In the event that the prospectus remains unapproved, the student will not be allowed to continue to pursue a joint concentration with religion as the secondary field.
VI. Preliminary Outline

Due Friday, October 25, by 5 p.m.

This assignment differs from the thesis prospectus in several ways. First, it is assumed that you have undertaken a significant amount of research since writing the prospectus. This assignment provides you with an opportunity to begin to think through (in written form) how you will use the data you are collecting in your research to support, and perhaps to reformulate, the argument of your thesis. Second, this assignment should include preliminary, yet detailed overviews or outlines of each chapter that you envision. The goal of this requirement is to help you to begin the process of organizing your research in a coherent manner.

You may structure this 6-page assignment in the format that seems most suitable to you. You may wish to submit an alpha-numeric outline; or, you may choose to submit a narrative overview; or, you may submit a graphically-structured flow chart! In any case, your submission must include detailed, thoughtful content that helps you and your advisors to begin to envision the thesis in its final form. While the purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to begin thinking systematically about your data and your argument, we do not expect or require that the final draft of your thesis conform to this preliminary outline.
VII. Chapter Guidelines

- First Chapter Draft due Tuesday, November 26, by 5 p.m.
- Second Chapter Draft due Friday, December 20, by 5 p.m.
- Third Chapter Draft due Friday, January 24, by 5 p.m.
- Revised Draft of All Chapters AND Draft of Introduction and Conclusion due Friday, February 21, by 5 p.m.

Each chapter draft must present a coherent, focused, and structured argument that is supported by appropriate citations and analysis. Your submissions should represent carefully considered and researched drafts of the more polished arguments that you will produce in the final thesis. Free-writing, though very helpful in the process of producing these assignments, is not appropriate in this context.

Please remember, however, that a draft is, by definition, preliminary. We do not expect these submissions to be in their final form, and assume that you will revise your work multiple times throughout the thesis-writing process. Additionally, these drafts need not follow a rigid chapter-by-chapter progression. For example, you may choose to submit a draft of what will ultimately become your third chapter at the first deadline.

Each chapter draft should be roughly 12-15 pages, although you may submit longer drafts if you desire. It is essential to stick to the deadlines so that your advisors have time to give you comments, and so that you have time for revisions. Extensions will be granted only by written appeal to the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies.
VIII. Content and Style Guidelines

Format

The thesis has three parts: preliminaries, text, and back matter. The title page, a table of contents, and a very brief preface (or simply acknowledgments) are ordinarily the only necessary preliminaries. The text is the thesis itself. The back matter comprises: (1) the bibliography, which is always necessary; and (2) appendices (including glossaries, charts, indices, maps, etc.) when they are needed. The bibliography must include full bibliographic information on every important source used in the preparation of the thesis. Whenever you make use of a book or other source—not simply when quoting directly from a text—you should include it in the bibliography.

Style

Good theses not only present illuminating and original arguments, but do so in lucid language and polished prose. Attention to the quality of your prose style should not be reserved for the final stages of editing the thesis; be sure to take into account issues of style as you are drafting and revising your thesis, as well. Since you are devoting many months to examining and writing about a specific area of interest, you owe it to yourself to employ language that reflects your understanding of and enthusiasm for your topic. Please recognize, however, that you are addressing an audience that may not share your degree of expertise on your topic, so be careful to avoid jargon and to define clearly any technical terms that you feel are crucial to your argument.

In the final stages of editing, be particularly attuned to misspellings, typographical and grammatical errors, and insufficient or inaccurate documentation. Errors of this kind, while they do not necessarily reflect the amount of work that has gone into the thesis, will distract your reader from the substance of your argument and suggest that the argument is as sloppy as the prose in which it is conveyed.

Style Manual

The Chicago Manual of Style (now in its 16th edition) is the most common citation and style guide in publications concerning religion, and unless another style is preferred in your sub-discipline, it should serve as the basic reference for your citations and bibliography. It can be found online (accessible through the Harvard University network) at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.
A footnote supplies the reader with a reference to the source(s) of factual information, specific ideas, or direct quotations used in the text of the thesis. A note may also provide supplemental information that is relevant but tangential to your argument. The tendency of many writers is to use the first kind of note too sparingly, and the latter kind too much. The rule for the former is simple: any passage or idea that is not your own should be credited to its source. To do otherwise is to plagiarize. As to the use of notes for supplemental information, the discretion of the writer must suffice. Note, however, that the value of a piece of scholarship is not judged by the length and abundance of its notes. If particular information is necessary to the argument, incorporate it into the main text. For guidelines on notation, see the manuals described above.

Direct citations from other sources must be treated with the utmost care and precision. To misquote someone else is a serious fault in any kind of writing. Every direct quotation must be reproduced exactly as it stands in the original. Except where integration of a quotation in your own sentence structure requires a change of type-case or end punctuation, the capitalization and punctuation in the quoted passage must be carefully reproduced. Italics in the original must be retained in your quotation. When using ellipses to eliminate unneeded words or phrases from a quoted passage, be sure not to change or misrepresent the original author’s intention and meaning. Any addition to a quoted passage must be enclosed in brackets (not parentheses).

Foreign words and phrases should be underlined or italicized. Passages in foreign languages should be given in English translation when used in the text. If the translation is not your own, the translator must be acknowledged. When it is important to do so, the text in its original language and wording should be given in a note either in transliteration or in the appropriate script.

Illustrations and photographs. These illustrations are normally placed on separate pages, with their legend typed either beneath the figure or on the front or back of the preceding page. Pages of illustrations and figures should be interleaved with the text of the thesis. If illustrations, as in the case of photographs, need to be mounted on the page, a good quality commercial paste or dry-mounting adhesive should be used. Like citations from other sources, illustrations must be credited to the appropriate sources.
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IX. Format and Submission Guidelines

Length The minimum length is 50 pages (in double-spaced, 12-point type). The maximum length is 80 pages (in double-spaced, 12 point type). These limits refer to the main text of the thesis (including introduction and conclusion) but not to back matter such as appendices and bibliography. Within these limits, the length of the thesis should be determined by the demands of the particular topic. No thesis may fall outside of these limits without prior written permission from the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies, on or before January 27, 2013.

Copies Theses should be produced on a laser printer and should be printed in 12-point type. Three typescript copies on 8½ by 11 inch paper are required. One copy must be on archival-quality paper – the thesis paper sold at the Harvard Coop is recommended for this purpose. The other copies may be clear photocopies. All copies must be submitted in a black spring binder (no ring binders are acceptable). Binders are available at Bob Slate Stationer. The title of the thesis, name of the author, and date of submission (e.g., March 2013) should appear on a label firmly fixed to the front cover and the spine of each binder (adhesive labels are preferable). The writer should retain a copy of the thesis for him- or herself. All theses that received grades of summa or magna will be placed in the University Archives, and the Committee on the Study of Religion will keep one copy of every thesis, regardless of the grade received. If the thesis is to be entered in competition for prizes (such as the Thomas Hoopes Prize), additional copies should be prepared.

Format The thesis should be typed on one side of the page, double-spaced (except for indented quotation and footnotes) with margins of 1 inch at the top, bottom, and on the right hand side, and 1½ inches on the left hand side. Notes should be placed at the bottom of the page (footnotes). All pages should be numbered: preliminary matter with Roman numerals, and the remainder of the thesis, beginning with the first page of the Introduction and continuing to the last page of the bibliography, with Arabic numerals. The title page should conform exactly to the model on the following page.

Submission Three bound copies of the thesis are due Monday, March 10, by 5 p.m. Theses must be submitted to the Study of Religion main office in the Barker Center before the 5 p.m. deadline in order to receive full credit.
THE SENIOR HONORS THESIS

Lateness Policy

Theses submitted after the March 10, 5 p.m. deadline will receive grade reductions as follows:

If submitted by 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 11: The evaluation for theses submitted between 5 p.m. March 11 and 5 p.m. March 12 will be lowered by a full grade. For example:

Grades of summa will be lowered to magna
Grades of summa minus will be lowered to magna minus
Grades of magna plus will be lowered to cum plus
Grades of magna will be lowered to cum
Grades of magna minus will be lowered to cum minus
Grades of cum plus, cum, or cum minus will not be recommended for honors

If submitted by 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 12: The evaluation for theses submitted between 5 p.m. March 12 and 5 p.m. March 13 will be lowered by two full grades. For example:

Grades of summa will be lowered to cum
Grades of summa minus will be lowered to cum minus
Grades of magna plus or below will not be recommended for honors

Any thesis received after 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 12 will receive a non-honors grade.
[TITLE]

A Thesis Presented

By

[Full name, including middle name, of author]

To

The Committee on the Study of Religion

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

[Harvard University]

[month and year of submission of the completed thesis]
THE SENIOR HONORS THESIS

X. Evaluation of the Thesis

Thesis Evaluation Committee

The thesis evaluation committee consists of the thesis readers. There are usually three readers of the thesis: the faculty thesis advisor, and two other outside faculty members (who may often be outside the student’s sub-discipline). In the case of students in Option C, one of the readers will usually be a faculty member from the other field. Seniors are encouraged to suggest possible readers for their theses. The final choice of readers, however, is subject to approval by the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Evaluation

Theses will be read and commented on by the members of the thesis evaluation committee. Readers’ comments will be made available to the student prior to the oral examination. Theses will be graded on a scale of summa cum laude to cum laude minus, which corresponds to the letter grade range of A plus to B minus (with B minus being the lowest honors grade).

A summa essay (summa, summa minus) is equivalent to an A plus. It should make a significant contribution to knowledge, either by presenting successful research on a new or little studied problem, or providing an original and perceptive reassessment of familiar questions. A summa thesis should be based on rigorous and original research in appropriate primary sources, show a thorough command of the secondary literature on the topic, be well-written, provide a well-crafted argument, and offer incisive and first-rate creative thinking with respect to the problem(s) it addresses.

A magna-range essay (magna plus, magna, magna minus) is equivalent to an A or A minus. It is an excellent piece of undergraduate work, showing rigorous research, strong writing skills, a well-crafted argument, incisive and creative thinking, and a good grasp of the issues at stake.

A cum-range essay is equivalent to a B (cum plus = B plus, cum = B, cum minus = B minus). A cum-range thesis, considered worthy of “honor,” must show serious thought and effort.
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XI. Advising Resources

Senior Thesis Advisors

Students will meet regularly during the senior year both with a member of the Harvard faculty and with an advanced graduate student to discuss work-in-progress.

Students are encouraged to meet at least once a month with their faculty advisors. The faculty advisor often assumes the role of “expert in the field,” helping the student to determine how his or her thesis contributes to current scholarship and identifying relevant secondary literature with which the student ought to be familiar. Students should take the initiative in scheduling appointments with faculty advisors.

Students are expected to meet with their graduate student advisor for roughly one hour a week. (Some weeks may call for a slightly longer meeting, whereas in other weeks, a somewhat shorter meeting may be sufficient.) The graduate student advisor serves as a conversation partner who helps the student to focus and communicate her or his arguments through these weekly meetings and through comments on written drafts.

At least twice a year, students are expected to schedule a joint meeting with both of their thesis advisors. These meetings usually take place in October and February.

Senior Seminar: Religion 99

The Senior Seminar is a year-long course, graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory, which culminates in the completion and submission of the senior honors thesis. In order to receive a Satisfactory in Religion 99 for the fall semester, a student must submit a thesis prospectus, a preliminary outline, and two draft chapters of the senior thesis by the stipulated due dates. Submission and acceptance of the senior thesis in March fulfills the Religion 99 requirement for the spring semester.

The Senior Seminar is designed as a forum for discussing the thesis-writing process and as a workshop for developing research and writing skills. The syllabus for the Senior Seminar will be made available at the beginning of each semester. Regular attendance at the Senior Seminar is required to receive a grade of Satisfactory.

Other Professors

Students may also find it helpful to discuss their thesis topics and progress with other professors in related fields of study. Although Harvard faculty can be quite busy, under-graduate education is the core of the activity of the University. Don’t hesitate to make an appointment with a faculty member to discuss your ideas or to ask for reading recommendations.
As always, the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies are willing to discuss any general questions or problems related to the creation of a senior thesis. Even if you are very unsure of your direction, it is better to communicate with one of us than to isolate yourself, which may tend to exacerbate the problem. Let us help you in whatever way we can. Just start by asking!

Harvard Libraries offer a wealth of print and and electronic resources. The Widener and Andover-Harvard libraries are the primary locations for materials related to the Study of Religion, but you will probably use other libraries as well. Depending on your topic, you may want to consult ethnographic material in the Tozzer Library, material related to human rights in the Law School Library, or Buddhist texts in the Harvard-Yenching Library, just as a few examples. Whatever library you visit, Reference staff will be happy to help you understand the library’s collections and to suggest approaches to your research.

In addition, you will find it helpful to consult with the librarians who serve as Harvard College Library liaisons to Study of Religion students:

Reed Lowrie, Reference Librarian, Cabot Science Library
lowrie@fas.harvard.edu, (617) 496-5534

Ramona Islam, Reference Librarian, Widener Library
Rlislam@fas.harvard.edu, (617) 384-5848

In your required meeting with these liaisons during the fall semester, they will suggest print and electronic resources relevant to your topic. If possible, they will also show you additional resources and refer you to other librarians who are knowledgeable in the field you are investigating.

The Writing Center, part of the Harvard College Writing Program, is located in the basement of the Barker Center and offers individual consultations to senior thesis writers on an occasional or regular basis. The Writing Center advisors address the research and (especially) writing needs of thesis writers. Although they are not experts in your specific field, they offer invaluable advice on writing strategies. Check out their website: http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr.

“How can I learn if I'm not motivated?” “I'd like to change my habit of procrastination.” “I need to read more quickly.” “I’m feeling really stressed.” These are only a few of the hundreds of issues that the counselors at the Bureau of Study Counsel deal with. Feel free to approach anyone at the Bureau with any question of concern. You may initially want to speak with Sheila Reindl, who has worked with several of us in the Study of Religion (both students and faculty members). The Bureau has a large staff of counselors who deal with a broad range of issues. The website for the Bureau is http://bsc.harvard.edu.
APIATAN AND SITTING BULL:
The Anadarko Debate and the Decline of the Ghost Dance on the Southern Plains, 1891

This thesis will examine questions of religious failure through a close analysis of the debate leading to the Kiowas' decision to abandon their participation in the Ghost Dance in February of 1891. The Ghost Dance of 1890 was a messianic, millenialist pan-Native religion begun by the Paiute medicine man Wovoka in 1889. Prophesying the rebirth of the world, the resurrection of the dead, the return of the buffalo, and the destruction of the whites, the Dance spread rapidly across the Basin and Great Plains and affected nearly all the Indians west of the Mississippi. Popular imagination links the Dance primarily to the December 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, S.D. of over 200 Lakota men, women, and children by the American cavalry under a flag of truce. Though the Wounded Knee tragedy is certainly worthy of study in its own right, it had very little to do with the lived experience of most Ghost Dancers and therefore makes a poor point of entry for historical or religious analysis of the movement. To say that a religion can be suppressed by killing all of its adherents is to state the obvious and unhelpful. I want to understand the more subtle ways in which economic deprivation, governmental actions, massive population loss, and social disintegration combined to affect Ghost Dancers' conceptions of their religion. As such, I will examine the often-overlooked case of the southern plains, where a military confrontation was never a serious threat.

In 1890, the Arapaho apostle Sitting Bull (no relation to the famous Lakota chief) brought the Ghost Dance to the tribes then living on reservations in Oklahoma Territory; he was its chief proponent for years. Apiatan was a Kiowa Ghost Dancer who grew skeptical of the new religion when, during repeated trances entered while dancing, he was unable to see a vision of his recently deceased son. He journeyed to the prophet Wovoka to ask to see his son, arriving shortly after news of the Wounded Knee massacre had reached the Paiute. Wovoka, upset by the tragedy, refused to show Apiatan his son and told him to return to his people and tell them to stop dancing. U.S. Indian agent Charles Adams organized a massive council at the Anadarko agency on February 19, 1891, where Sitting Bull and Apiatan debated whether the Kiowa should continue to dance. In the end, the Kiowa voted to give up the religion that they had embraced less than a year and a half before.

This event demands explanation. What did the Ghost Dance mean to its Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Arapaho adherents? How were these meanings manifested ritually and artistically? What were the religion's promises, and why were they accepted? How were whites involved or implicated? And most importantly, what happened at the Anadarko council that so radically changed the Kiowa understanding of the Ghost Dance as to make so many of them suddenly dissociate themselves from the faith completely?

Those who have held to a faith had reasons for doing so, and the act of consciously rejecting that faith forces practitioners to articulate for themselves with some specificity these reasons, as well as
why they are no longer applicable. Many religious people find their faith difficult or impossible to express through language, leaving precious little data for the scholar. By looking at the act of well-articulated rejection of faith, we can attempt to circumvent this problem.

In the end, what I am studying is a case of religious failure. What does it mean for a religion to fail in the minds and hearts of its adherents? What is the former adherent’s understanding of the rejected religion, and how can this perspective contribute to an academic understanding of that religion in general? How does a person (or a society) remain affected by a religion after having consciously dissociated themselves from it? And what is the shape of a religion’s crumble—that is, which aspects or functions fail first, which next, and which find a way to survive on their own?

The idea of such an abandonment presumes a certain conceptual understanding of the notion “religion,” one which is both separable from the rest of lived experience and capable of being accepted or rejected by overt human (perhaps collective) agency. Though most writers see such an understanding as absent from traditional American Indian spirituality, there is abundant evidence that it is vividly present in this case. Ghost Dancers thought of their movement specifically as a religion, often conceived of in distinctively Christian terminology. (Sitting Bull, for example, was seen by some of his followers as “an apostle like St. Paul.”1) But this conception within a Native framework poses certain questions: to what extent was the Ghost Dance a ‘syncretistic’ movement (or at least a product partially of missionary influence)? To what extent can the category ‘religion’ be emptied of its meaning in one tradition and transposed into another (openly antagonistic) one?

In answering these questions, I will look primarily to the records of the Anadarko debate and the events surrounding it. The arguments of Apiatan and Sitting Bull themselves (inasmuch as I can discover and reconstruct them) will be my primary texts, and I will bring in historical background, anthropological data, and other theorists only as they are necessary to explicate and illuminate the arguments of my two principals. For example, Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, and Anthony Wallace will be helpful in translating the Kiowa arguments into the frameworks of religious theory, the study of culture, and social deprivation, respectively, but they will not be the ones who explain what the figure of Wovoka meant to the Kiowa. While some comprehension of the movement as a whole is obviously essential in any discussion of the Anadarko debate, it is not my intent to write a history or analysis of the entire Ghost Dance. This thesis is concerned with its two titular thinkers, their contemporary audience, and the religious, political, economic, social, factual, and demographic context in which they found themselves. The larger aims of the study of religion can be better served by a single close examination than by a cursory description which stretches itself too thin.

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1 Joshua Green [Given], interviewed by Maj. Wirt Davis. In National Archives R.G. 75 Special Case 188.
Working Bibliography of Works Consulted

MRL: From the collection of the McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming.

LDS: From the library and archives of the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

* : Indicates the ten sources which I expect to be most central to the thesis.
/ * : Indicates a source which has not yet been read, or needs to be re-read.

Primary Sources

Directly related:

* § Adams. Charles E. 1891. [Documentation relating to the council at Anadarko, Okla., 19 Feb 1891. A search is pending via the Smithsonian, the National Archives, the BIA, and the Okla. Hist. Soc.]


National Archives and Records Administration. Record Group 75, Special Case 188. The Ghost Dance Outbreak. 1890-1898. [Microfilm, 2 rolls].

Objects in the collection of the Plains Indian Museum, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyo.:

- NA 204.1: Ghost Dance Dress, Arapaho, S.Plains, c. 1885 [sic]
- NA 204.2: Ghost Dance Shirt [Sioux]
- NA 204.3: [Ghost Dance Dress, Sioux]
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**Miscellaneous:**


Constructing a Buddhist Judaism (or a Jewish Buddhism): Creating New Meaning Through Hybrid Religious Forms

Before services at his conservative Jewish synagogue, a San Francisco rabbi leads a daily meditation group. But the meditation is not an analytical reflection on the day's Torah portion, nor a mystical, kabbalistic type of Jewish meditation—it is zazen. And to this rabbi and his congregants, this combination of zazen and traditional prayer makes sense. In fact, each practice seems to enhance the other, to imbue each with a new meaning. Suddenly an awareness meditation from the Zen tradition is practiced in order to deepen the experience of the Jewish prayer service. The Jewish prayers, in turn, are re-understood as techniques for generating a certain kind of mindfulness. Linking zazen and Jewish prayer in this way articulates new relationships between Buddhism and Judaism: on the one hand, an element of Zen practice is appropriated in service of a Jewish experience; on the other hand, Judaism itself is re-interpreted as a kind "path," suggesting that Judaism, like Buddhism, is directed at the goal of Enlightenment. Such appropriation and interpretation constitute two projects through which a unique Buddhist Judaism (or Jewish Buddhism) emerges. A third enterprise through which such hybrid religious forms are constructed involves explicitly articulating equivalencies between discrete concepts, terms, practices, figures and goals. I want to look at the construction of a hybrid Buddhist Judaism through acts of appropriation, interpretation and articulation as a dynamic process of meaning-making. To borrow practices and language, to interpret, to articulate connections is to construct meaning, new meaning.

As odd as this may seem, these Jews are not alone in intermingling Jewish and Buddhist elements into hybrid religious forms. Jews ("by birth") are estimated to constitute 30% of the non-Asian American Buddhist population, compared to 2% of the American population at large, and many of these Buddhists still retain certain aspects of their Jewish identity or religious observance. Not included in this figure are also large numbers of American Jews who identify primarily as Jewish, yet who appropriate aspects of a Buddhist mindfulness or meditation practice into the context of their more-or-less-observant Judaism. The term "Jewish Buddhist" thus encompasses an incredibly varied lot, from those who identify primarily as Buddhists to those who identify primarily as Jews, and every shade of the spectrum in between; moreover, the ways in which they weave together Jewish and Buddhist elements are equally multifarious.
To undertake a comprehensive survey of these proliferating forms is beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, I am going to narrow my field of inquiry by picking particular case studies that are most relevant to a discussion of hybridity. The co-existence of many religious traditions in America has been traditionally understood in terms of pluralism, a tolerance for diversity that seems to say "you do your thing, and I'll do mine." By looking at Jewish-Buddhist hybridity, I hope to show another outcome of living in a pluralistic society -- a vivid illustration of how new religious and cultural forms are created through inter-religious contact. I anticipate that this discussion will also engage more tangentially with dialectics of modernity, globalization, the commodification of Buddhism in its mass-mediated presentation to America, and the construction of identity in a post-modern era.

My main focus, however, will center on constructing meaning through hybridity. Ninian Smart invokes three mutually shaping components of religion: activities, experiences and concepts, each of which gives rise to the others. I want to use this model to examine how meaning emerges in a hybrid situation. How are new meanings articulated through hybrid rituals/practice and through concepts/language?

In order to answer this question, I propose to draw on a few different kinds of primary sources: contemporary Jewish Buddhist spiritual autobiographies (e.g. Boorstein, That's Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist; Lew, One God Clapping; Fischer, Jerusalem Moonlight; etc.), supplementary interviews with some of these authors and with other Jewish Buddhists who interweave Jewish and Buddhist practices, and analytical articles and texts that articulate connections between Judaism and Buddhism, such as Zen and Hasidism. In interrogating these sources, I want to ask how new meanings emerge through combining ritual practices and through re-understanding Jewish and Buddhist concepts in terms of one another.

Specifically, in terms of ritual/practice, I want to know: what particular practices and ritual observances do Jewish Buddhists do (and not do) in order to enact this dual identity? Do they meditate, and if so, from what tradition(s) do their meditation practices predominantly derive? Do they observe Jewish holidays like Passover or Yom Kippur, do they observe the Sabbath, do they keep kosher? Do they recite mantras, make offerings, prostrate to images of the Buddha, receive transmissions and empowerments? Why or why not?
Partial Bibliography

While a few recent authors have explored the phenomena of Jewish Buddhists (e.g. Rodger Kanenetz, Judith Linzer), no one that I know of has looked at the encounters between Judaism and Buddhism explicitly in terms of hybridity, as a generative interface, a site not only of contact, but of the creation of new meanings and forms. Several people have written about Jewish Buddhists from a historical perspective, locating their discussion within a narrative of the spread of Buddhism to America. Many authors have also dealt with problemata of identity, specifically Jewish identity. For these reasons, I do not plan to deal with the historical context or issues of identity as a primary focus. A few works have done comprehensive comparisons between Eastern and Western traditions, the most relevant of which is Zen and Hasidism. Yet while this collection explores many angles of comparison, it does not directly address the assumptions which underlie the drawing of connections and correlations, which I plan to examine in order to illuminate their role in meaning-making. Linzer’s book, Torah and Dharma, is the off-shoot of her dissertation in clinical psychology, and accordingly employs the psychological literature to make sense of her subjects’ experiences of “crossing-over” to and from Jewish Orthodoxy and Buddhism. Because I will not be looking exclusively at the once- or newly-Orthodox, using psychological literature, or using a diachronic approach that traces individuals’ trajectories across time, my work should be sufficiently different from hers. Nonetheless, I hope her book can be a useful source. In terms of hybridity, I anticipate that the discourses in post-colonial studies will inform my discussion of religious hybridity, especially with regard to language and representation as crucial sites for constructing meaning, and in terms of exploring the context of diaspora and its implications.

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