

MODULE CODE: AHAN7023
TITLE: Astral Religion
DATED: 23/02/2012

MODULE AUTHOR: Nicholas Campion
LEVEL: 7
CREDITS: 20

TEACHING METHODS: Distance Learning via Electronic Media (90% on-line course work, 10% video conferencing tutorials, seminars and lectures).

JACS CODE: L600

AIM(S)

- To investigate theories concerning the nature and definition of religion.
- To explore modern on secularisation and the alleged decline of religion in the modern world.
- To examine the nature of astrology as religion.
- To investigate the relationship between cosmology and some of the world's major religions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this module successful students should be able to:

- demonstrate a critical understanding of the religious context of astronomical, astrological or cosmological belief;
- show a sophisticated awareness of the contested nature both of religious claims and of beliefs concerning the relationship between the stars and the numinous;
- critically evaluate debates concerning the nature of religion;
- critique contemporary debates concerning the implications of modern cosmology for religious beliefs;
- critically compare practices in astral theology in different cultures.

CONTENT

1. The function, nature and definition of religion,
 - 1.1 Inclusive and exclusive definitions of religion
 - 1.2 Functionalism
 - 1.3 The Religious experience
 - 1.4 Secularization and privatization.
2. Astrology and religion.
 - 2.1 Astrology's origins in religion
 - 2.2 Astrology's identity as a religion
 - 2.3 Cosmotheism
 - 2.4 Cosmogonies
 - 2.5 Salvation in the stars

3. The use of the stars in religion
 - 3.1 Celestial journeys
 - 3.2 The soul's origin in the stars
 - 3.3 Sacred calendars
 - 3.4 Angelic journeys and astral beings
4. Astral Religions
 - 4.1 Egyptian solar religion
 - 4.2 Hermeticism and Gnosticism
 - 4.3 Mithraism
 - 4.4 India
5. Cross cultural comparisons
Africa, Australia, the Americas
6. Cosmogonies
7. New Age, Theosophical and modern Pagan cosmologies

ASSESSMENT

Written Assignments: 5000 words of written work

One 2000 word assignment (40% of total marks).

Critical Review of a Chapter in a Book

Example assignment: 'Write a critical review of the Introduction (pp. xi-xvi) to Cumont, Franz, *Astrology Among the Greeks and Romans*, New York: Dover Publications 1960 [1911].'

One 3000 word assignment (60% of total marks).

Essay

Example assignment: 'Plato said that astronomy led to knowledge of the gods. Consider the consequences of this statement.'

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Essential

Blacker, Carmen and Loewe, Michael, *Ancient Cosmologies* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1975).

Bowie, Fiona, *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell 2006).

Campion, Nicholas, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's Religions* (New York: New York University Press, 2012)..

Campion, Nicholas, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2012).

Cumont, Franz, *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans* (New York: Dover Publications 1960 [1912]).

Hanegraaff, Wouter J., *New Age Religion and Western Culture* (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill 1996).

Thrower, James (1999), *Religion: The Classical Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

Recommended

Beck, Roger, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire: Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006).

Bell, C., *Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 1997).

Davie, Grace, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell 2003).

Ellis, George and Nancey Murphy, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Cosmology, Theology, and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

Braun W and McCutcheon R (eds) *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 1999).

Carrette, Jeremy and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: the Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge 2004).

Fitzgerald T *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Fowden, Garth. *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1986).

Halsberghe, Gaston H., *The Cult of Sol Invictus* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1972).

McCutcheon R *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London: Cassell, 1999).

Naydler, Jeremy, *Temple of the Cosmos: The Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred* (Rochester, Vermont.: Inner Traditions 1996).

Partridge, Christopher (ed.), *UFO Religions*, London: Routledge 2003.

Segal, R. (ed), *The Myth and Ritual Theory* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1998)..

Sharman-Burke, Juliet and Liz Greene, *The Astrologer, Counsellor & Priest* (London: CPA Press 2000).

Smart, Ninian, *The Science Of Religion And The Sociology Of Knowledge: Some Methodological Questions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1973).

Stark, Rodney and William Simms Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization. Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1985).

Turner, V., *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press 1967).

Weber, Max, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff, 4th edn. (Boston: Beacon Press 196