

**Department of Sociology & Anthropology, BGU**

**Syllabus: Christianities and Cultures**

**Level and status: 4 credit points M.A. elective seminar**

**Lecturer: Dr. Jackie Feldman**

**Taught: 2007/8**

**Course description:**

Christianity is the most widespread religion in the world. Christian concepts have shaped Western culture and understandings of modernity and progress. Christianity is actually one of the most important globalizing forces in human history. The first semester will provide a basis for understanding Christianity through readings of the New Testament and a historical and social analysis of major events in the history of Christianity, its expansion through the Roman Empire and the establishment of the Church.

Further sessions will analyze contemporary issues in Christianity in its contact with various cultures. We will focus on the relation between faith and practice in the colonial context, Christian mission, conversion to Christianity, links between Christianity and nationalism, and changes in Christianity in the modern global age. Finally, we will evaluate the contributions and limitations of the anthropological approach to Christianity.

The teaching will be accompanied by excursions to holy sites and meeting with Christian clergy and lay people.

**Course requirements:**

Attendance and participation (including in the excursions) is mandatory (10%). The major part of the grade will be based on a 20-25 page seminar paper to be presented in three stages: outline and working proposal (10%), class presentation of preliminary results (10%), and the final paper (70%).

**Reading list:**

**Fall Semester:**

Satran, David, "Qumran and Early Christianity" in *The Dead Sea Scrolls, Forty Years of Research*, Magen Broshi et al., Mosad Bialik, Jerusalem (Hebrew).

Kleniberg, Aviad, *Christianity from its Beginnings until the Reformation*, Universta Hameshuderet, Tel Aviv, 1995 (Hebrew).

Fredriksen, Paula. 1988. *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus*, Yale: New Haven and London, 1988

- Gager, John. 1975. *Kingdom and Community, Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Limor, Ora, *The Beginnings of Europe*, Volume 1, Open University, Raanana, 2005 (Hebrew).
- Pagels, Elaine. *The Gnostic Gospels*, New York: Vintage, 1981.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. *Map is not Territory*, Leiden: Brill, 1978, pp. 109-119.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. *To Take Place: towards Ritual in Religion*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987.
- Eliav-Feldon, Miri, *The Protestant Reformation*, Universita Hameshuderet, Tel Aviv, 1997, pp. 47-56; 87-92 (Hebrew).
- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in Michael Lambek, ed, *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Blackwell, 2003, pp. 50-60.
- Ruel, Malcolm. 2003. "Christians as Believers" in Michael Lambek, ed, *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Blackwell, pp. 99-113.
- Mauss, Marcel. 2003. *On Prayer*, Edited and with an introduction by W.S.F. Pickering, New York: Durkheim Press/Berghahn Books.
- Geertz, Clifford, "Religion as a Cultural System", in *Interpretations of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York, 1973.
- Saunders, George. 1988. "Transformations of Christianity: Some General Observations. In idem., *Culture and Christianity: The Dialectics of Transformation*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, pp. 179-194.
- Wolf, Eric R. "The Virgin of Guadalupe; A Mexican National Symbol." *Journal of American Folklore*. 71, 1958.
- Douglas, Mary. "The Bog Irish", in *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, London: Cresset, 1970, pp. 37-52.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 1998. *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Murphy, Michael. 1988. "The Culture of Spontaneity and the Politics of Enthusiasm: Catholic Pentacostalism in a California Parish", in George Saunders. *Culture and Christianity: The Dialectics of Transformation*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, pp. 159-178.

### **Spring Semester:**

- Harding, Susan. 1987. "Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion". *American Ethnologist* 14(1): 167-181.
- Luhrmann, T. M. (2004). "Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary U.S. Christianity." *American Anthropologist* 106(3): 518-528.
- Comoroff, John and Joan. 2003. "The Colonization of Consciousness", in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Michael Lambek, ed, New York: Blackwell, pp. 493-510.
- Dubisch, Jill. 1995. *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Turner, Victor, "Pilgrimages as Social Processes", in *Pilgrimage: Jes, Christians, Muslims*, Ora Limor and Elchanan Reiner, eds., Open University, 2005, pp. 19—64 (Hebrew).
- Robbins, Joel. 2003. "What is a Christian? Notes toward an Anthropology of Christianity". *Religion* 33(3).

Keane, Webb. 2007. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 59-82.

+ Presentation of student papers and discussions.