Course Description: Is the History of Religions still a viable discipline? Was it ever? How has it been conditioned by the historical circumstances out of which it emerged? Is it possible or worthwhile to refashion it in new context(s)? What is its object of study? How is this object constituted? What challenges does the field face in the contemporary moment and how can reflection on its history inform its response to these challenges? These and other fundamental questions of theory in the History of Religions will be explored through close reading and discussion of a number of recent contributions.

Prerequisites: HREL 32900/41500 (Classical) or HREL 50700 (Contemporary)

Course requirements:

1. Close, careful reading of the assigned works.
2. Regular attendance and attentive and/or active participation
3. Book reviews (ca. 1500 words) of four works covered in class
4. Alternatively, with permission of instructor, students may write at 20pp. final paper
5. No incompletes will be granted for this course, except on grounds of major life disruptions.

Books may be purchased from the Seminary Cooperative Bookstore (58th and University) or may be ordered online (see, e.g. www.bookfinder.com).

Schedule of Meetings:

27 September 2010: Organizational Meeting
   Reading(s): none

Part One: History

4 October 2010: An (i.e. One) Historical Perspective
   Reading(s): Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*

11 October 2010: Another Historical Perspective
   Reading(s): Preus, *Explaining Religion*

18 October 2010: Is ‘religion’ a Western construction?
   Reading(s): Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion*

25 October 2010: Encore une fois, or “Laissez les mauvais temps rouler”
   Reading(s): Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*
1 November 2010: The View from the East  
   Reading(s): Balagangadhara, ‘The Heathen in his Blindness…’ Parts I–II and IV; skim III  
   Part Two: Ideology  
8 November 2010: Crypto-theology?!  
   Reading(s): McCutcheon, Manufacturing Religion  
15 November 2010: Contra the Theologians…  
   Reading(s): Wiebe, The Politics of Religious Studies Parts I–II and IV; skim III  
22 November 2010: Ditto…  
   Reading(s): Fitzgerald, The Ideology of Religious Studies  
29 November 2010: What Next?  
   Reading(s): Smith, “Twice-told Tale”  
   and TBA  
**All written work due at latest by Wednesday 8 December 2010 in Swift 204 by 3:00PM**

Course Bibliography: