

Poetic Faith: An Imagined Seminar

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Ordinary Time, 2015

The purpose of this seminar is twofold: to guide me through an unwieldy, idiosyncratic bibliography in a compressed amount of time and to focus my reading and thinking on large topics I'm very interested in exploring during my sabbatical. Reading lists are subject to editing, and blogging will supplement note-taking as a way of processing and recording the learning I do over the coming weeks. By the end of the four weeks, I will have enough material compiled to give me plenty of food for thought while I spend the following three months traveling with my family on what we have dubbed "The Great Trek." Following that, I will return to a month of focused reading and writing before resuming my archival research.

Week 1: Secularism and Belief

Central questions: What definitions of secularism speak most to the faithful perspective today? How might those definitions contribute to literary criticism, particularly in poetry? What ways of articulating "post-secular" belief and spirituality are most promising? Where are the pitfalls in these discourses for the literary scholar? For the student of reading? For the believing scholar?

Readings

Asad, et al., *Is Critique Secular?*

Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*

Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*

Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption*

Hungerford, *Postmodern Belief*

Ricoeur, "Religion, Atheism, and Faith"

Week 2: Practice

Central questions: What are some of the major conceptualizations of practice theory in fields such as anthropology and sociology, and how do they relate to the study of lived religion, or the history of reading, or broader conceptions of social theory? How might literary studies and the history of reading more fully engage discourses of practice (and the various materialisms connected to practice theory)?

Readings

Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*

Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*

Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America*

Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*

Wenger, *Communities of Practice*
Taussig, "On Tactility and Distraction"
Shove, *The Design of Everyday Life*

Week 3: Poetry

Central questions: What are some of the most important recent studies in historical poetics and in the theory of poetry? How might they be put in dialogue with the studies from the first two weeks? How might we use Emily Dickinson's poetry as a case study for applying these studies to criticism?

Readings

Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery*
Jackson and Prins, ed., *Lyric Theory Reader*
Cohen, *The Social Lives of Poems*
Finch, *Tradition and the Individual Poem*
Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*
Martin, *The Rise and Fall of Meter*
Rivers and Wykes, eds., *Dissenting Praise*
Noonan, *Poetry and Prayer*
Dickinson, *Poems* (ed. Franklin)

Week 4: Possibilities

Central questions: What new questions do these readings develop from the previous weeks? What will be on the next reading list? What are some key questions to think about during the Great Trek?

Readings

Edwards, *Towards a Christian Poetics*
Kriner, *The Future of the Word*
Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading*
Eliot, *Religion and Literature*
Coles, *Rethinking Generosity*
Kort, *Narrative Elements and Religious Meanings*
Iser, *The Act of Reading*
Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*