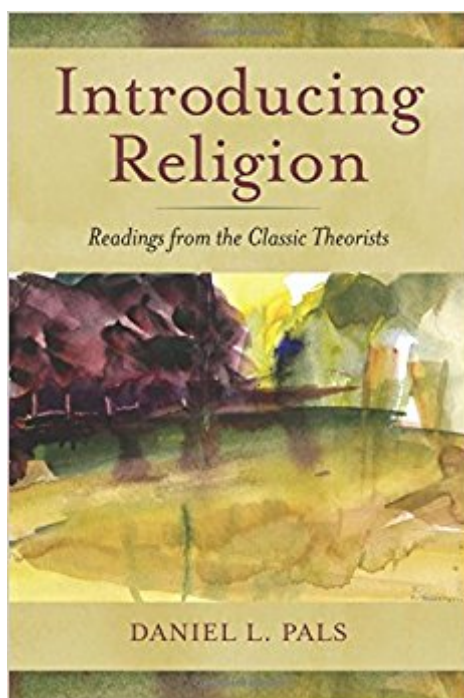


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# Introducing Religion: Readings From The Classic Theorists



## Synopsis

What is religion? How is it to be explained? Why do human beings believe in divinities? Why do the beliefs and behaviors we typically describe as religious so deeply affect the human personality and so subtly weave their way through human society? *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists* presents eleven key texts from influential theorists who played a pivotal role in the modern enterprise of explaining the phenomenon of religion. These writings seek to account for the origin, function, and enduring human appeal of religion by drawing on methods of scientific scholarship unconstrained by theological creeds or confessional commitments. An ideal companion to author Daniel L. Pals' textbook, *Eight Theories of Religion*, Second Edition, or other beginning texts, *Introducing Religion* opens with selections from the works of Edward Burnett Tylor and James Frazer--Victorian pioneers in anthropology and the comparative study of religion. It then offers entry into the provocative analyses of Sigmund Freud, Emile Durkheim, and Karl Marx, whose aggressive reductionist approaches framed the explanatory debate for much of the century to follow. Responses to reductionist theories--and new directions in explanation--claim a place in selections from the works of philosopher-psychologist William James, theologian Rudolf Otto, sociologist Max Weber, and comparativist Mircea Eliade. The volume ends with discussions drawn from the celebrated field studies of British anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard and the interpretive anthropology of American theorist Clifford Geertz, whose fieldwork took him to both Asia and the Middle East. Brief career portraits of the theorists at the outset of each chapter give context to the readings, and a general introduction features guiding questions designed to help students assess and compare the different theories. Offering an illuminating overview of this controversial and engaging subject, *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists* is ideal for introductory courses in religion as well as courses in method and theory of religion, world religions, and sociology, psychology, or anthropology of religion.

## Book Information

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (October 23, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0195181492

ISBN-13: 978-0195181494

Product Dimensions: 8.2 x 0.9 x 5.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #33,654 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Philosophy #47 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Sociology #52 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Linguistics

## Customer Reviews

Daniel L. Pals in Professor of Religious Studies and History, University of Miami

Bought it for a class and I had to read an essay out of the book. Got an A on my project! The teacher swears by this book that it's amazing, and I think it offers a good overview of different approaches to religion by a variety of theorists.

A great companion to Pals' Eight Theories of Religion. This really delves into the primary material of the classic theorists of religion

textbook

Good introduction to the differing ways writers have dealt with the subject, defined the subject, and tried to understand it.

This book is great for anyone who wants to know more about how religion might have originated. It was required for a class but I've referred to it many times. It was a long but very informational read!

I agree with one of the other review/difficult read. This is not a book that should be called "Intro", VERY misleading title. You need to have a lot of experience with critical thinking before you try to tackle this book.

A more accurate title would be Quaint and Curious Myths from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries That Once Passed as Serious Discussion of Religion. Tylor, Frazer, and Freud were simply spinners of tales and no one takes them seriously anymore. The religious theories of Dukheim and Marx have been debunked, though they raised important questions about the relationship between religion and society. James and Otto have interesting things to say but it in spite of their intentions to be more general they mostly represent forms of Christianity in Europe and

America a hundred years ago. Weber, Evans-Pritchard and Geertz still have important things to say. Eliade was a genius who described a mystical theology that largely existed in his own mind. As a history of the academic study of religion in Europe and America in the last hundred and fifty years, the book is excellent, with good selections from the usual white male suspects that were still in the discussion thirty years ago and a helpful introduction. The title suggests it is an intro textbook or way for a general reader to understand religion. That is not what it is. It would be a good text for a graduate level class entitled Mistakes You Do Not Have To Make Because Others Have Already Made Them. Some suggestions for reading that are more relevant for recent discussions are Okot p'Bitek's African Religion in Western Scholarship, recently reprinted as Decolonizing African Religions, Peter Berger's Sacred Canopy about the sociology of knowledge, and Harvey Whitehouse's Modes of Religiosity about cognitive theory. In spite of it's lapses, Vine Deloria, Jr.'s God is Red is a helpful antidote to the domination of religious studies by thinking based one way or another on Christian myths and modes of thought. Anthony Ephrim-Donkor's African Spirituality is a good introduction to James Fowler's stages of faith theory as well as presenting important aspects of the "religion" of one people from Ghana. Brent Nongbri's Before Religion is a good discussion of whether the concept "religion" has any coherent meaning outside of modern western cultures and the use of the term "religion" in the European colonial enterprise. Pamella Sue Anderson's Feminist Philosophy of Religion brings feminist thinking to bear on discourse about religions. The Yoga Sutras (or Yoga Aphorisms) of Patanjali with a good commentary is a reasonable place to start for a so-called "Hindu" philosophy of "religion." If you are interested in the history of the study of religion in Europe, Ludwig Feuerbach's The Essence of Christianity has stood the test of time better than most of the theorists in this reader.

haven't used it yet, but much cheaper than making a purchase through the bookstore. good condition. good price. arrived in a timely manner. would buy from this seller again.

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