

Courses & Curricula

Methodology in the Study of Religion: A student has the last word

The range of subjects offered by the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland includes one with the title 'RE498: Departmental Seminar'. In the words of the RE498 course outline, 'This subject, for Honours M.A. Qual., and M.Lit. Stud. students, is designed to provide a broad overview of research methodologies and issues in the study of religion and religions.'

Offered in the first semester of each year RE498 has as one of its main objectives, 'to enable students to locate their own thesis work or independent study projects within the larger methodological/historical context.' This is achieved by examining, in historical sequence, some of the major scholars of religion (17 altogether in this year's course), and discussing their methods and approaches.

This year the convenors, Rod Bucknell and Richard Hutch, adopted a division of the course into two sections: Module 1 'Development of the Discipline', and Module 2 'Current Issues: The Cutting Edge'. Each of the ten students participating presented two papers (one in each module), which then formed the basis for discussion of the issues involved.

Despite the weighty subject matter, the course had many lighter moments, and the lightest by far came, appropriately, toward the end of the thirteenth and final session. Unlike earlier sessions, this consisted of 'a 5 to 10 minute statement by each participant, summarizing issues raised during the semester and expressing any misgivings, personal reactions, etc.' The summaries presented varied widely in scope and quality; but, judging by the volume of the laughter and applause, top marks must definitely go to the following

unconventional contribution by M.Lit. Stud. student, Delroy Oberg.

Summing Up of Course (An Example of Innovative Methodology!)

Our Departmental Seminar is drawing to a close.

To sum up RE498 is what we now propose.

We've spent twelve weeks examining the methodologies

Of learned scholars who propound profound philosophies.

Our study is Religion or Religions — it's all one.

Denominationalism's banned; theology — there's none!

And God, if he exists at all, is viewed historically,

And by the latest theories killed off scientifically.

With FRAZER and his *Golden Bough*, and TYLOR's Animism

The primitive intelligence progressed to modernism.

Our evolutionary path, both physical and mental,

Was linear and uniform, and not coincidental.

Their methodologies were weak! When faced with a decision

Our armchair anthropologists took the missionary position!

Though Frazer passed from Magic to religion, then to science,

On research without field work it's unwise to place reliance.

So MARRETT tripped around the globe
and studied 'simple folk',
Concluded Tylor's Animism theory was a
joke.

He postulated Mana in Preaminist
Religion,
With 'supernatural power' as its
minimum definition.

However, in these works we must admit
that we are seeing
A definite conception of some
supernatural being.
So with the Evolutionists God was alive,
not dead...
Until the Functionalists emerged and
knocked that on the head!

With DURKHEIM there was still some
kind of deity to hope in:
The Sacred and Society united in the
Totem.
Religion with collective imagination was
equated;
So long as all the group agreed, God fairly
highly rated.

FREUD didn't care for this idea. He, as a
real professional,
Could demonstrate religion was neurotic
and obsessional.
Reductionism was one way of clearing up
confusion:
The 'sacred' was a product of neurotic
man's Illusion!

Freud's Oedipus, so infantile, proves that
religion's *bad!*
If any God exists at all, he's like a nasty
Dad.
Monotheism's only the Return of the
Repressed.
Oh dear! Freud's pessimism leaves me
feeling quite depressed!

KARL MARX agreed with Freud that all
religion's an illusion,
The Opiate of the People, and an Alien
Delusion.

A Scientific Communist, his method
analytical
De-emphasized the sacred and
highlighted the political.

Materialist ideology made everything look
sunny.
The masses won't want God *at all*, if they
have lots of money!
And if these economic tactics aren't the
right solution,
Eliminate dissenters with a little
persecution!

MAX WEBER, also German, was a bit
more democratic.
His organizing method was entirely
bureaucratic.
His enterprising economic doctrine of
salvation
To the Protestant Work Ethic gave a *capital*
foundation.

There had to be a God, of course; there
had to be a heaven.
Why else to money-making would good
Christian souls be driven?
Increasing profits guaranteed that God
was on their side,
And businessmen whose markets crashed
to hell went when they died.

Phenomenologists, we learnt, were quite a
different breed,
Distinguishing the purely motivated from
pure greed,
Accepting that the Sacred was indeed
reality,
Transcending apprehension and
expressed symbolically.

With OTTO came the Numinous, non-
rational but serious,
Tremendous, fascinating, wholly other,
and mysterious,
Evoking creature-feeling or a sense of
creaturehood,
The awe-ful, holy, majesty; irrationally
good.

Man's symbol-forming power ELIADE
 clearly sees
 Is manifest in many forms he calls
 Hierophanies;
 Though humanist agnostic, he perceives a
 mystic plane,
 Propounds in supernatural terms the
 Sacred and Profane.

In keeping with phenomenologists'
 methodology
 Dutch VAN DER LEEUW followed on
 with his distinct morphology.
 His symbolism signified what many faiths
 express:
 The Subject/Object interact in common
 sacredness.

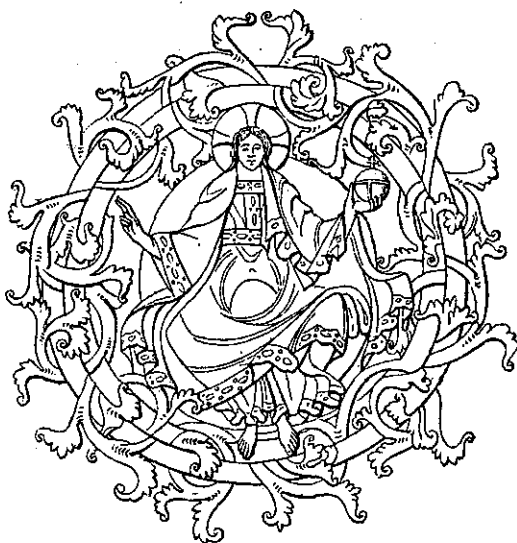
It seems the experiential was a lack in
 WILLIAM JAMES.
 Was he a mere psychologist dabbling in
 mystic games?
 Indeed for most religious things he shows
 no real aversion.
 Perhaps his own life simply lacked a
 genuine Conversion?

From there, in RE498, religion came to
 grief,
 For Module 2, 'The Cutting Edge',
 suspended our belief.
 Could we be academics true, and still
 profess a creed?
 Could science prove religion's more than
 just neurotic need?

With SMITH and SMART and WIEBE and
 WILSON, STARK and BAINBRIDGE
 too,
 We found our nerve was failing fast. How
 can we say what's true?
 To satisfy Wiebe's theory, we must
 certainly resist
 Dogmatical assumptions that God even
might exist.

So how do we sum up this course? And
 how can we assess
 The future of religion in this secular
 wilderness?
 If Wiebe and Wilson win the day, we can't
 be overjoyed.
 We'll soon see this Department closed,
 Rod and Richard unemployed!!

— Rod Bucknell
 University of Queensland



Community Education: An Opportunity for Religion Studies?

Imagine a course of study for which students enrol purely out of interest, knowing all the while that the employment outcomes are insignificant. Moreover they pay for the privilege! From the teacher's point of view there are no assignments or exams to assess, just the pleasure of introducing a group of people to an area of human culture which fascinates them.

Such is the situation in courses conducted by the W.E.A. — the Workers' Education Association of South Australia. This is a non-profit making, adult education institution. In any one year it offers over 1600 courses, ranging from a full day in length, to eight or more evening sessions. The range of subjects is extraordinary, including computing, crafts, music, liberal studies and many more. It is in the liberal studies area that courses of religion are frequently taught.

Years ago my colleague Robert Crotty and I became involved in offering a course in Middle Eastern Archaeology. This proved popular and eventually expanded into courses on Middle Eastern Archaeology, Greece, and Crete offered by Robert, and Ancient Egypt which I offered.

Eventually the W.E.A. decided that since the Ancient Egypt course had proven so popular over such a long period, it would offer a study tour of Egypt, and it offered me the role of accompanying tutor. The response was extraordinary and eventually nearly 200 people went on five tours. This involved a considerable commitment on their part, since the tour was of twenty days and cost \$3,500. It resulted in giving me the undreamt of opportunity of visiting Egypt twice! This launched the W.E.A. into the international study tour business and now similar tours are offered to Greece and Crete, Turkey, Kenya and Peru. The results have not only been of benefit to the

study-tourists, but also the W.E.A. which is required to be largely self-funding.

Who undertakes all of these courses and tours? The student population is as varied as could be imagined. Among the attenders may be found retired people, professionals, self-employed, office workers and unemployed people. The age range is equally diverse, from school students to those in their ninth decade. The full range of educational attainment is also represented. It is clear that the lack of any threat of assessment draws many people who unfortunately have very negative images of themselves as learners, gained from previous formal learning situations. Sometimes the W.E.A. seems to function as a bridge for those unsure about returning to formal study.

As for numbers attending, these vary for different courses, but Ancient Egypt regularly fills with forty people a term, three times a year. During the lead up to the tours over 100 people attended in some terms. An hour and a half evening session on Tutankhamun's tomb has been attended by sixty people both times it has been offered this year.

These numbers make it difficult for the sessions to be other than lecturer-directed, but with encouragement many are willing to raise questions, interrupt, and offer ideas. I am continually impressed with people's ability to sustain concentration for 1 1/2 hours after a day's work (most courses are from 7:30 pm - 9:00).

But how do you know if anything is being learnt? Really only by informal means, but perhaps more importantly the people attending feel that they are achieving their own learning goals. The W.E.A. consistently carries out evaluations of student reactions to courses and their responses guide the development of new courses as well as the modification of existing ones.

Although my course is on Ancient Egypt in general, rather than on Egyptian religion specifically, religion features substantially in all of the ancient cultures courses offered. But other religion study courses are also offered. The Eastern Religions course is always popular, filling with 35 participants on each of the two occasions it is offered each year. Another general survey course on religion has also proven popular.

What do the teachers (or tutors as the W.E.A. designates them) gain from teaching for the W.E.A? Well, the money isn't the major incentive. I believe, from W.E.A. education officers, that this is one reason why many lecturers from the tertiary sector are not involved in W.E.A. teaching.

It is really the sense of sharing an enthusiasm with people who are genuinely interested that is the most compelling motivation. Interestingly enough the South Australian College of Advanced Education has as part of its mission statement, the support of community education, and has lived up to this by allowing some leave with pay so that I could lead the study tours of Egypt. Perhaps this is one way in which the tertiary sector can contribute to wider community education.

As for the study tours themselves as an educational process, I must admit I have

not thought through evaluating the learning of people from the Egypt study tours, since they were not for credit towards any award. But, again informally, the learning seemed significant. It was particularly noticeable that, although those on the tour did not have as a major focus the study of religion, never-the-less, being continually confronted with modern Egypt soon required an appreciation of Islam and the Coptic Church ("Are the Copts Christians?!"). I am not sure how extensively tours are used as part of formal studies in this country, although I believe that in the United States they are a significant educational enterprise. Tom Atherton of S.A.C.A.E. Religion Studies, is planning a study tour of Greece and Crete which may be used for credit in some S.A.C.A.E. courses. It would be interesting to hear from others who have used study tours as part of an educational package at tertiary level.

Perhaps the A.A.S.R. should look into sponsoring tours which focus on religious cultures. These tours could be credited towards Religion Studies courses in the various institutions.

—Michael O'Donoghue
Religion Studies
SACAE

Religious Studies in Tasmanian Schools

Very few people teach Religious Studies in the schools in Tasmania and at least half of them are in for a very busy time indeed over the next two years. Why so? Because all syllabuses taught in secondary schools in this state are subject to a review as an Education Department policy document, called "Secondary Education: The Future" (S.E.T.F.) requires it.

All syllabuses, beginning with Grade 9 syllabuses in 1990, are required to fit a series of goals and recommendations suggested by the document; some of these recommendations are briefly outlined

below. Not only is the Education Department seeking change, but so too is the Schools Board of Tasmania which is presently trying to design a single certificate to recognise student achievement from Grades 9 to 12. This document will be a record of all that a student has achieved academically and will be based on methods of assessment which are fundamentally different from those which apply at present.

The new form of assessment is "criterion-based" and it is going to give syllabus writers some headaches — it too will be commented on briefly below.

Secondary Education: The Future

The Tasmanian Education Department, with the backing of the Minister for Education, published this document last year. It wants major changes in the curriculum and in the methods by which it is taught and assessed to enable Tasmanian students to cope with the effects of... "change in the economy and in employment patterns, developments in technology, changes in the roles of women and the family, and Tasmania's increasing cultural diversity"!

Unlike other reviews of the state's educational system made in recent years, this one will have a direct impact on schools as the major recommendations of the document are meshed-in with syllabus reviews demanded by the Schools Board (after reassessment of its role and its certification process). In other words, teachers are required to re-write syllabuses, assess students in a different way from that which they are accustomed to at present and to alter their teaching methods so that the changing nature and needs of the student population are taken into account.

A few quotations from S.E.T.F. will indicate the sorts of recommendations made. All new syllabuses should provide students with opportunities to develop "competencies". The document explains the meaning of this piece of jargon:

"Competencies" are the broad groupings of skills that cross subject boundaries. The competencies are at least as important as knowledge itself. If they are not developed and used, knowledge will remain inert, and cannot be developed.¹

And what are these broad groupings of skills? These too are laid down by the document: they involve the ability to calculate, read, write, converse, acquire and convey information, apply logical processes, undertake practical tasks as an individual or as a member of a group, make

judgments and decisions, and work creatively to solve problems. One sincerely hopes that teachers in the past have not neglected all these "competencies".

S.E.T.F. also expects syllabuses to be written in such a way that they will develop what is called "characteristics" in students — and one hopes again, that these have not been neglected by teachers in the past. These characteristics are: acting autonomously, responsibly, with care and consideration for others and with concern for beliefs and values. Quite how all this is to be accomplished by syllabus writers and teachers remains to be seen.

Another line, redolent with implication for teachers and syllabus writers is this one:

Deliberate action must be taken to improve students' self-image by providing opportunities for success at meaningful and achievable tasks.²

That is, if all students are to succeed, syllabuses which will enable them to do so must be drawn up.

Syllabus writers must also keep in mind these lines about assessment:

It is very easy for students to become discouraged by assessment procedures, particularly those methods that place undue emphasis on comparing one student with another. Where this occurs many students experience failure for much of their time in school. Assessment must not discourage students.³

And:

One of the most powerful aids to learning is assessment that is undertaken systematically by the students themselves. Self-assessment is a skill that should be taught and used to complement the assessments made by teachers.⁴

The Schools Board Handbook for Syllabus Development

For many years the Schools Board of Tasmania has considered issuing Tasmanian students with a single certificate of education which records their accumulated achievements in their study of secondary courses from Year 9 onwards. The Board has now drawn up its guidelines for change and the first of the new syllabuses and certificates will appear in 1990. The Tasmanian Certificate of Education (T.C.E.) will eventually replace the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate.

The T.C.E. will:

- record a student's achievement.
- include any subject in which the student has achieved success, so long as the subject and its assessment procedures have been accepted by the Board.
- *not* include any statement of failure to achieve the minimum requirement in any subjects.

These requirements clearly support those quoted above from S.E.T.F. The Handbook in its opening page says that any student:

...regardless of academic ability, is eligible to seek a certificate from Schools Board.⁵

To enable *any* student to have the chance to obtain a T.C.E. means that those writing syllabuses are going to have to produce several for each subject for each year of secondary school. Each syllabus will also have to be accompanied by very clear guidelines for assessment and leave room for a significant component of student self-assessment.

Syllabuses will be of three basic types. The first, "A" syllabuses will be largely "school-based". In Grades 9 and 10 they will be designed for twenty five hours study; in Grades 11 and 12, fifty hours. They are intended as "stand-alone" short courses or possibly as units of the longer

"B" or "C" syllabuses. "B" syllabuses will occupy one hundred hours of classroom contact and will be specially devised for each Grade between 9 and 12. The "C" syllabuses occupy one hundred and fifty hours and are for students in Years 11 and 12. They are mainly for students going on to tertiary study. The degree of difficulty of these syllabuses is determined by the assessment criteria applied to them.

Unlike the present forms of assessment, which are competitive and involve the ranking of students against their peers, the new T.C.E. will have only four awards:

C.C.	course completed
S.A.	satisfactory achievement
H.A.	high achievement
O.A.	outstanding achievement

These awards will be based upon the degree to which a student satisfies a number of assessment criteria (a number no greater than thirty for any one syllabus). The criteria must reflect three types of learning:

- knowledge: facts, ideas and principles
- skills: skills specific to a subject
- competencies

These criteria will, of course, need to take into account the sorts of students who will be studying the syllabus.

So, Religious Studies teachers have a massive task ahead of them. Let us assume that syllabuses are drawn up for Years 7 to 12, and that C type syllabuses are offered only in Years 11 and 12. At the least, a small band of writers, who are also full-time teachers, will have to devise a minimum of fourteen syllabuses to replace the two presently used. There is no doubt that the task is possible but good will and energy reserves will probably be at a low ebb at the end of the exercise. The situation is complicated by the fact that only church-based schools offer Religious Studies between Grades 7 - 10 at present and the teachers at these schools do not

want to draw up any syllabuses which deny them the opportunity to teach in a "confessional" fashion. This has already placed the Schools Board in a quandary as its Religious Studies Subject Committee is very reluctant to offer state certification to confessionally-oriented courses. Meetings have been held between those who wish to draw up confessionally-based syllabuses and those who wish Religious Studies to be assessed as any other subject is — a workable compromise is barely possible. Those who wish to write confessionally oriented courses will have to keep in mind the fact that the Religious Studies Subject Committee last week refused to accept:

Christian Prayer
 Person-Hood: A Christian Perspective
 Peace and Justice
 A Christian Perspective of Death and Dying
 Freedom and Responsibility: A Christian Perspective
 Marriage and the Family: A Christian Perspective

as legitimate units of an existing Religious Studies syllabus because of the confessional intent of the units which clearly could not be taught in the state system. Clearly, syllabus writers will need to draw up syllabuses which can be taught and assessed at *any* school.

There is a lot of work and debate ahead of Religious Studies teachers in Tasmania, and it will be very interesting indeed to report on progress in a year's time.

—Andrew Webber
 The Hobart College
 Mt. Nelson

Notes

1. *Secondary Education: The Future*, Education Department, Tasmania, Australia, 1987, p. 16.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
5. *Handbook for Syllabus Development*, Schools Board of Tasmania, April 1988, p. 1.

Religious Education in State Schools in South Australia

It is now more than thirteen years since Religious Education courses were introduced on an experimental basis into state primary and secondary schools in South Australia. This was in accordance with the recommendations of the Report of Religious Education in State Schools 1973, more commonly known as the Steinle Report and with section 102 of the Education Act 1972-74.

The Steinle Report was produced by a committee consisting of educational administrators, teachers, parents, representatives of colleges of advanced education and church leaders. Its basic recommendations were "that religious education should become part of the curriculum of every child in the state schools and should be taught in regular class

grouping by registered profession teachers and be based on a syllabus that was soundly educational, covering a broad spectrum of religions."¹

In light of historical controversy on religious teaching in schools in South Australia it was not surprising that the introduction of Religious Education into state schools became the centre of debate. In March 1975 one edition of the ABC programme *Monday Conference* was devoted to the issue. That same year the organization KOSS — Keep Our State Schools Secular mounted a campaign to have the subject discredited and the State Labour Party Conference had a number of items on its agenda which could quite well have led to the end of the project.

One of these however, an evaluation of materials produced, assisted the cause, as the evaluation gave positive approval of the trial courses and syllabus being used.

The Religious Education Project Team which began operating in February 1974 was optimistic about the future of the course. In an article written in 1976, the co-ordinator, Alan Ninnes, was confident enough to infer that within ten years the majority of students in state schools in South Australia would have studied a significant portion of the total Reception to Year 12 course. He believed there would be sufficient exposure to the course to assess its general impact.²

Despite considerable time, money and energy spent on the development of a syllabus and support materials for years R-12, inservice for teachers and interpretation of various aspects of the programme to parent and community groups as well as many other interested parties, this aim was not achieved. This was disappointing, for the course has much to offer students in terms of self-awareness, relating to others and understanding people, beliefs, values and ideas different from their own.

Although much of the controversy had died down and there was less negativity than in earlier years, Ninnes wrote in 1985, "In 1976 the crystal ball seemed very cloudy as we looked into the future, now it seems no clearer, but we live by hope, never certainty, so let's press on."³

What then of Religion Education in 1988? The entire R-12 course has now been completed. A comprehensive set of curriculum materials — a syllabus, teachers' guides, resource booklets, student materials and audio-visuals — is now available and held in esteem both in South Australia, interstate and overseas. The last document, a teachers handbook "An Introduction to Aboriginal Religion" was launched this year and has been a tremendous effort in cooperation between the Aboriginal Education and Religious Education Project Teams. An accredited matriculation course in Religion Studies in

both school assessed and publically examined levels is also offered at Year 12.

Unfortunately, however, no state school has as yet, been successful in having the Year 12 course taken up and it is taught in either Catholic schools or Colleges of Technical and Further Education. While there has been steady progress in other year levels with approximately 64% of state schools having religious education in some form, the subject is still not given a high priority.

At the primary level Religious Education is mainly taught as a small component of Social Education, Social Studies or Environmental Studies. Although in some cases it is classed as a core part of the school curriculum it is more often left to the discretion of individual teachers and can be overlooked. Competition with other subjects viewed as more essential, changes of staff and pressures of other departmental priorities all have detrimental effects on the status of the subject. In secondary schools there are only a few who have Religious Education as a separate subject in the years of non-compulsion and it is mainly taught as an integrated part of the humanities.

What then of the future of Religious Education in state schools in South Australia? I believe there is still room for optimism. Annual state conferences in Religious Education are still fully subscribed and requests for curriculum inservice from schools and community/parent groups still received. A few secondary schools are hoping to offer courses at Year 11 which may lead to student interest in Year 12.

The most promising factor however may be the development of an R-10 framework-for-learning and unit guidelines, in the area referred to in departmental policy statements as Human Society. Based on a selection of essential understandings, some of which are in a values/beliefs strand, the Human Society framework document has been extensively inserviced since its publication in late 1987.

Under the leadership of Dr. Malcolm McArthur, Superintendent of Studies for the Humanities and Environment, who has enthusiastically supported Religious Education from its inception, the framework was written by a committee of representatives from related Curriculum Committees including Religious Education, school based teachers and personnel from Colleges of Advanced Education. The Junior Secondary Curriculum Guidelines are now being trialled and three of the Religious Education Facets of Faith series are listed as key resources. The Reception to Year 7 guidelines are currently being written and these will also contain a significant number of elements of the Religious Education course. This integrated approach seems to be the most successful way of overcoming the problem of coping with the number of curriculum demands made on teachers and schools.

It is to be hoped that despite many changes in departmental structures and uncertainty about advisory support, Religious Education will continue to make

steady progress and become an essential part of the education of students in their search for meaning and purpose for life.

Notes

1. Ninnes, A.H. (1976), 'Religious Education and the Schools' in *Soundings*, Religious Education Project, Education Department of South Australia, p. 3.
2. Ninnes, A.H. (1976), 'Look into my crystal ball' in *Soundings*, Religious Education Department of S.A., p. 51.
3. Ninnes, A.H. (1985), '1985 and Beyond — where are we heading in Religious Education?' in *The Guru*, S.A. Education Department of S.A., No. 48, February.

—Marlene Hitchcox

*Project Officer Religion Studies R-12, S.A.
Education Department
Primary convener Human Society Curriculum
Committee,
Editor of The Guru (S.A. Education
Department magazine on R.Ed.)*

Religion Studies at Year 12 level in South Australia

There are two courses in Religion Studies currently available in the range of subjects offered to South Australian Year 12 students. Both of these developed out of Religious Education, a subject introduced into state schools in 1972 after the old 'Religious Instruction' (weekly sessions of thirty minutes conducted along Christian denominational lines by ministers of religion or their proxies) finally proved to be too inefficient and educationally unworkable. This Religious Education course involved an objective study of religion and religions, and stressed concepts such as tolerance and understanding of the role of religion in the world; its focus was clearly on the phenomena of religions. Then, in 1979, planning began for the introduction of two Religion Studies courses for Year 12

students; during this developmental period, some of the ideas were 'trially' in a Senior Secondary Course in Religion Studies, offered to year 12 students who did not want to study publicly examined (i.e. 'matriculation') subjects. This led, in 1984, to Religion Studies being offered in two forms for the first time at Year 12 level under the auspices of SSABSA, the newly formed Senior Secondary Assessment Board of S.A. — as *Religion Studies P* (for 'publicly examined'), and as *Religion Studies*, a school assessed and moderated subject.

Religion Studies P is an historical phenomenological study of religion. There are no formal pre-requisites, and the aims of the course are to assist students to:

- increase their understanding of the nature and significance of religion through a study of religions and of major issues in religions
- develop their skills of critical inquiry
- gain an empathy towards people, nations and cultures different from their own.

The syllabus is structured in such a way that students study at least two different religious traditions, which must be chosen from two of the following three different sub-sections of the course:

1. Australian Aboriginal Religion
Melanesian Religion
2. Hinduism
Buddhism
3. Judaism
Christianity
Islam

While it is assumed that the basis of these studies will be both historical and descriptive, the syllabus also demands that the students 'undertake studies which involve them in discerning the nature of religion, and in evaluating its claims, taking into account the more critical perspective on religion which has come through such disciplines as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and anthropology'. Thus they are required to investigate the general nature and significance of religion by studying one of the topics:

Phenomena of Religions
Philosophy of Religions
Critical Issues in Religion

Another feature of the course is the requirement for students to undertake an Individual Study, which is an extensive case study of a particular and limited aspect of religion which may or may not relate to other topics covered in the course; the suggested teaching method for this aspect of the course in one of 'guided supervision', and a detailed handbook for students has been prepared that outlines

investigative procedures, research skills, ideas for presentation etc. that the study requires. The final assessment is based on an external three hour examination which counts for 50%, a moderated school assessment of the Individual Study (25%), and a moderated school assessment of the other sections of the course (25%). The moderation tool, in both cases, is the external examination.

In the five years since the course was introduced, it has been taught in three Catholic Colleges, and in three TAFE Colleges which have schools of Adult Matriculation. It has not yet been picked up by any government schools, although a number of state school Year 12 students who have wanted to include it in their course have attended night classes offered by the TAFE Colleges. This year it has also been introduced into the range of external studies courses being offered by TAFE, and three state schools are considering introducing it into their Year 12 subject offerings in 1989.

Student feedback on the course has been singularly positive, not only from those who found its content to be of direct relevance to subsequent tertiary studies (particularly in Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work), but also from others who appreciated the personal benefit they derived from it, and those who valued the research skills they developed as a result of the Individual Study requirement (a number commenting that the Individual Study Handbook was eagerly sought by other tertiary students who found themselves faced with similar tasks in various subject fields). Similarly, teachers have found the course, as one said, 'not easy but very do-able', and student interest to be high, perhaps as a result of the fact that it allows them to consider 'questions they have often asked, but have never been able to logically work through'.

The second course, the *school assessed and moderated version of Religion Studies*, has as its focus the variety of religious expressions in Australia; its aims therefore are:

- to help students gain an understanding of a variety of religious traditions in Australian society, and to enhance students' capacity to relate sensitively to different religious traditions
- to enhance students' capacity to relate sensitively and with understanding to people from a variety of religious backgrounds in Australian society by encouraging them, as far as possible, to encounter people of different traditions.

These underline the sociological and inquiry based approaches upon which the course is posited, which encourage students to begin with religious groups they might meet in their local community. Again, there are no formal pre-requisites for the subject, which is offered both as a four unit (full year) or 2 unit (half year) course. In the 4 unit course, students are expected to explore four of the following topics, examining at least two strands of religious tradition within each one:

Religions of Aboriginal People
 Religions of Australians of European Descent
 Religions of Australians of Asian or Middle Eastern Descent
 Religions in Australia: Religions and Issues in Australian Society

In the two unit course, two of the above topics are covered. In both courses, a research assignment is demanded. Assessment is based on a consensus moderation model used for all school assessed subjects at this level, which entails a moderator being assigned to each school to negotiate the details of the course with the teacher, and then, on subsequent visits, to monitor students' progress, share ideas, discuss problems, etc. The final moderation exercise involves the forwarding of folders of students' work, along with a detailed report on the year's course by the teacher for purposes of examination and comparison by a team of moderators.

Unfortunately, the course has been offered in only one school — a Catholic girls' College — mainly because of the competition for students from the extensive range of courses being offered at Year 12 level. However, with wide ranging change in the whole Year 12 structure imminent, the hope is that schools will give it the support and attention it deserves.

—John Althorp
 Lecturer in Kingston College of Technical and Further Education, Adelaide

