



A Historical and Theoretical Guide to Studying Religion

By Wesley Kort

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This insightful book delves into the complexities of religious studies, exploring its historical evolution and the intricate challenges it faces today, and sheds light on the multifaceted nature of the academic study of religion, its origins, and its current uncertain position in contemporary academia.

This book, a guide to studying religion, has two parts. The first or historical part traces the rise of the academic study of religion from the early nineteenth century to the present day. Primary attention is given to the relation of studying religion to Romanticism and to its contrary relations to principal characteristics of Western modernity, especially its rational and materialist emphases. The second part of the book addresses matters that present uncertainties, problems, and even tensions within the field, such as, what is or should be meant by referring to some persons or groups as religious, why religion is so often a cause of tensions and even conflicts both within and between religious groups and between them and the increasingly nonreligious or secular quality of modern Western culture, and the problem that arises for the field by reason of scholars who, on one side, are themselves religious and who, on the other side, are nonreligious or secular. The book places this final difficulty, the difference and often the tension between religious and nonreligious approaches to the study of religion, in the role of a unifying theme of the book and offers a way by which this problem can be addressed and to a considerable degree reduced.

Key selling points

Explores the nuanced definition of religion, providing insights into what constitutes religious identification

Examines both the benefits and challenges associated with religion, shedding light on its complex role in human well being and societal dynamics

Offers a pathway to bridge the gap between religious and nonreligious approaches to the study of religion, fostering a more cohesive and integrated field

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Wesley A Kort is Professor Emeritus of Religion at Duke University.

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