**Thesis and In-text citation checklist Rel St. 110w**

My thesis:

\_\_\_\_ is not a fact [“Emile Durkheim is a well-known theorist in the sociological study of religion.”]

\_\_\_\_is not an opinion [“Black liberation theology is the most interesting of all religious studies methods.”]

\_\_\_\_is not a question [“What substantive views of religion was Karl Marx arguing against?”]

\_\_\_\_is specific

\_\_\_\_is capturing an interesting central assertion

\_\_\_\_is previewing what the paper will address (doesn’t “reveal” a mystery at the end)

\_\_\_\_can be supported with evidence and refuted by others

For greater clarity, read *A Guide to Writing in Religious Studies* (p. 13-18) regarding a second-level thesis that is original, arguable, and interesting, as ours should be in this class. A second-level thesis:

\_\_\_\_is an **original** answer to a question, emerging from a lengthy analysis

\_\_\_\_is **arguable** without needing years of research or piles of data

\_\_\_\_could be **refuted** by another who offers counter-evidence

\_\_\_\_is **interesting** because it (a) is not immediately true but has to be argued and supported, (b) casts fresh

light on a topic, (c) may challenge or modify an existing perspective, (d)

\_\_\_\_has a **motive**, that is, the thesis asserts something that matters, may provide a new or counter perspective on a conventional understanding, and draws people in.

**Good examples from Halpern, et al., 14 (of second-level theses)**

* Thesis: “In his 1968 encyclical on contraception, the Pope rejected artificial contraception based on a particular understanding of ‘natural law.’ However, this understanding both contradicts other Church rulings on medical technology and ignores certain modern understandings of sex. This paper will not claim that artificial contraception must be accepted, but that this understanding of ‘natural law’ does not provide the justification to ban it.”
* “Despite the compelling case Alvin Plantinga makes for religious exclusivism, I argue that we must accept religious pluralism as the better position since it allows our beliefs to remain consistent.”

**Good examples from Halpern, et al. , 16 (of demonstrating motive)**

* “Although we might initially find it puzzling that Durkheim relies so much on dichotomies to advance his argument, there is a deliberate method he pursues here,” which . . .
* “Mitchell detects a strain in Congregationalism caused by the different views within the congregation about religious sacraments, but if we look closer, we realize that these seemingly opposed views on the sacraments share a set of common assumptions,” namely . . .

**IN-TEXT CITATIONS**

Please see *The Bedford Handbook* (in the digital syllabus), p. 4ff