

Documenting how little has changed in the study of religion over the decades, this collection of essays offers practical advice for those interested in redescribing their work, their teaching, and, importantly, their departments, by studying those things designated as religious as examples of far wider, socially formative processes. Freed from the weight of asserting its subject to be uniquely meaningful, studying religion turns out to be but one way into examining how groups are established and authorized – and, inevitably, contested and reinvented.

“Russell McCutcheon’s groundbreaking contribution to the study of religion is this: the world is comprised of claims made by situated social actors, and religion is the name we give to one type or series of claims. This recognition upends the highly popular notion that there remains something of religion beyond the scholar’s reach.”

Dr. Leslie Dorrough Smith, Avila University

“This volume provides the *why* for a critical study of religion followed by the *how*. McCutcheon addresses persistent problems in the field and then the shift toward an alternative approach which he and his colleagues have applied successfully in creating a vibrant department for the study of religion at the University of Alabama.”

Dr. Suzanne Owen, Leeds Trinity University

“Across nearly three decades of scholarly leadership, Russell McCutcheon has advocated for critical self-awareness in the field of religious studies. In this lively collection of recent polemics and advisory talks, he again demonstrates the continuing vitality of, and need for, a self-reflexively critical study of religion in culture.”

Dr. Matthew Baldwin, Mars Hill University

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