

**The College of the Humanities: Religion Program  
RELI 5801F: Seminar in the Discipline**

Professor Ash Geissinger

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Office Hours: Thursdays 3-4 pm, or by appointment

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**Classes:** Mondays (bi-weekly), 2:35 am-5:25 pm in PA 2A46

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### **Course Description**

This mandatory course is a proseminar, which is designed to introduce MA students to graduate level work in Religious Studies, particularly in the disciplinary sub-field “religion and public life.” Students will explore some of the challenges of scholarship in this sub-field by reading and discussing selected works together, with a particular focus on the study of religion and public life in Canadian contexts. Students will also learn about common practices of academic scholarship in the field of Religious Studies in conversation with a range of scholars on faculty at Carleton.

Two key points to note:

- This is a seminar course, not a lecture course
- The academic study of religion differs significantly from confessional apologetics and pastoral theology

This course is designed to foster the further development of students’ understanding and appreciation of these two points.

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

This course is designed to enable you to further develop your ability to:

- Engage critically with the intersection of “religion” and “public life”
- Apply the core Religious Studies principles of outsider discourse and methodological atheism

### **Course Evaluation**

This course is a seminar course. Each student is expected to come to class having already done the readings and prepared to participate actively, constructively, and in an informed manner in class discussions. Students will also take turns leading the seminar discussion. The evaluation of student performance in this course is based **entirely** on (1) engaged participation in seminar discussions, (2) leading seminar discussions, and (3) an oral report given on Oct. 6 in class.

Students will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis. Therefore, regular and punctual attendance is mandatory. Missed seminars cannot be made up in any way. Any student who joins a meeting more than 15 minutes late or leaves more than 15 minutes early will be considered absent. Any student who is absent from more than 2 classes will not receive course credit.

## Course Readings

- Fall semester course readings are listed below. Most are library resources, and you will need to be signed into the library website or on campus in order to access these.

## Intellectual Property

All course materials (including lectures, outlines, PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and similar materials) are protected by copyright. I am the exclusive holder of copyright and other intellectual property rights for all course materials. Students may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use, but may not reproduce or distributed lecture notes and course materials publicly for any purpose, commercial or otherwise, without my express written consent. Student work in this course remains the exclusive intellectual property of the student(s) who produced it, and will not be shared with anybody without their permission, except in accordance with Carleton University policies.

## Academic Integrity

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as *“presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.”* This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, artworks, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, **including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)**;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course.

## Email Policy

The Carleton communications policy states that faculty must conduct email communications with students only through Carleton email accounts. Therefore, be sure to send any emails to me through your Carleton email; I cannot respond to messages sent through any other account.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Fall Term Meetings

**SEPT. 18**—Introduction to the course and discussion

- Getting the most out of our library
  - What is a proseminar?
  - What is the discipline of Religious Studies?
  - In what ways does the present state of universities shape graduate studies, particularly in our field?
  - How do the past as well as the present shape Religious Studies in Canada? (this will be an ongoing theme...)

#### Readings:

- Bruce Lincoln, “Theses on Method” [Method in Religious Studies - Religion and Public Life \(carleton.ca\)](#)
- Mary Churchill, “Adjunctification—The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35.2 (Fall 2019): 73-77.
- Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, “The Affective Allure of Authoritarianism” [The affective allure of authoritarianism – The Immanent Frame \(ssrc.org\)](#)
- Ira Chernus, “Reflections on the Study of National Myths,” *Implicit Religion* 20.1 (2017): 90-104.

**OCT. 2**—Studying “religion”

- Applying for funding: Why it matters and how to go about it
  - How is “religion” studied in Religious Studies, and why?
  - What are we studying when we study “religion”?

#### Readings:

- Samira Mehta, “Asian American Jews, Race, and Religious Identity,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (Sept. 2021) 89.3: 978-1005.
- Janet McIntosh, “Polyontologism: When “Syncretism” Does Not Suffice,” *Journal of Africana Religions* 7.1 (2019): 112-120.
- (recommended: Kevin Schilbrack, “Religions: Are There Any?” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78.4 (Dec. 2010): 1112-1138.)

**OCT. 16**—Why “religion and public life”?

**\*Before this class meeting, visit the [National Gallery of Canada](#) (380 Sussex Drive, Ottawa K1N 9N4). Come prepared to present an oral report on an exhibit that addresses an intersection of religion and public life. More detail on this will be provided in class.**

- Introducing Religious Studies academic journals
- What is the function of the “and” in “religion and public life”?
- What is “public life”, how does it relate to the academic study of religion—and what functions do such categories serve in particular contexts?

Reading:

- Louis Arthur Ruprecht, “Curating the Profane: Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Neoclassical Art Historian and First Curator of a Public Art Museum, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 90.1 (March 2022): 176-217.

**OCT. 30**—Religion and public life in Canada: the case of residential schools and their aftermath

- Academic conferences: What they are and why they matter
- In what ways has religion shaped Canadian public life in the past?
- What roles does religion continue to play in Canadian public life?

Readings:

- *The Survivors Speak: A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015). Be sure to read the Preface. Pay particular attention to pp. 47-58 (“Language and Culture”). [Survivors Speak English Web.pdf \(exactdn.com\)](#)
- *Canada’s Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials. The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2016), vol. 4, pp. 35-123 (Chapter 2: “Operational Policies and Custodial Care”).  
[Volume 4 Missing Children English Web.pdf \(exactdn.com\)](#)
- [KUPER ISLAND: Transcripts | Listen | CBC Radio](#)

**NOV. 13**—Civil religion and implicit religion

- Citation and approaches to citation management
- What is “civil religion”? What is “implicit religion”?
- What do these things have to do with the study of religion and public life?

Readings:

- David Lê, “‘Monuments of Folly’: Frederick Douglass, Charlottesville, and the National Religions of America,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88.3 (Sept. 2020): 749-778.
- George Sanders, “An Implicit Religion of Control: Corporate Mindfulness Meditation Programs,” *Implicit Religion* 21.1 (2018): 70-92.
- (recommended: Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96.1 (Winter 1967): 1-21)

**NOV. 27**—Authenticity, legitimacy, and religious authority

- How do Religious Studies scholars analyze claims (and counter claims) about religious authenticity and religious authority?
- To what extent are “orthodoxy” and “heterodoxy” useful terms in Religious Studies?
- Why and in what ways do assertions about religious legitimacy and religious authority matter when studying religion and public life?

Readings:

- Alyson Prude, “A Reexamination of Marginal Religious Specialists: Himalayan Messengers from the Dead,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88.3 (July 2020): 779-804.
- Samuel Perry, “Whitewashing Evangelical Scripture: The Case of Slavery and Antisemitism in the English Standard Version,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 89.2 (June 2021): 612-643.

**Winter Term Meetings**

Class meetings during the Winter Semester will focus on two main themes:

(1) introducing students to a sample of the breadth of research topics and methods used by Religious Studies scholars, through presentations by Religion Program faculty, and

(2) considering some academic approaches to studying populism, religion and public life, including events such as the January 6th Capitol Riots in Washington DC in 2021 and the Convoy Protests in Ottawa (Jan. 28-Feb. 20, 2022). Questions to be considered include: What kinds of religious myths, symbols, ideas, rituals, and aspirations were present? What roles did they play in these events? How do they relate to social, economic, political, and other factors? What do they indicate about religion and public life today in the US and Canada?

**JAN. 15**—Religion faculty presentation TBA; approaches to studying the roles of religion in public life in Canada and the US

Readings:

- Presenter’s article (on Brightspace)
- Alastair Hay, “Canadian and American Religion Redux: Revisiting America’s Religious Exceptionalism and Persistence Compared to Canada,” *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 51.1 (2022): 69-90.

**JAN. 29**—Religion faculty presentation TBA; studying religion, media representations, the events of Jan. 6... and the aftermath

Readings:

- Presenter’s article (on Brightspace)
- “Uncivil Religion: January 6, 2021” [Home \(uncivilreligion.org\)](http://Home(uncivilreligion.org)) [start with the Table of Contents in the upper left-hand corner]

**FEB. 12**—Religion faculty presentation TBA; “Christian nationalism” and the category of “religion”

Readings:

- Presenter’s article (on Brightspace)
- Daniel Miller, “American Christian Nationalism and the Meaning of ‘Religion,’” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 34.1-2 (2022): 64-85.

**FEB. 26**—Religion faculty presentation TBA; political mobilization and myths old and new

Readings:

- Presenter’s article (on Brightspace)
- Hanne Amanda Trangerud, “The Trump Prophecies and the Mobilization of Evangelical Voters,” *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 51.2 (2022): 202-222.

**MARCH 11**—Religion faculty presentation TBA; studying religion at the Convoy protests

Readings:

- Presenter’s article (on Brightspace)
- Brett Popplewell, “What Happened in Ottawa? Separating the Discontent from the Darker Elements,” *The Walrus Magazine*, March 3, 2022.  
[What Happened in Ottawa? Separating the Discontent from the Darker Elements | The Walrus](#)
- Christine Mitchell, “How White Christian Nationalism is Part of the ‘Freedom Convoy’ Protests” (Feb. 16, 2022)  
[How white Christian nationalism is part of the 'freedom convoy' protests \(theconversation.com\)](#)
- Thomas Lecaque, “Leaked ‘Freedom Convoy’ Donor Documents Clearly Demonstrate Christian Nationalist Presence” (Feb. 20, 2022). [Leaked ‘Freedom Convoy’ Donor Comments Clearly Demonstrate Christian Nationalist Presence | Religion Dispatches](#)

**MARCH 25**—Religion faculty presentation TBA; studying religion and conspiracy theories

Readings:

- Presenter’s article (on Brightspace)
- Brooklyn Walker and Abigail Vegter, “Christ, Country, and Conspiracies? Christian Nationalism, Biblical Literalism, and Belief in Conspiracy Theories,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 62.2 (2023): 278-292.

**APRIL 8**—Religion faculty presentation TBA; course conclusion

Readings:

- Presenter’s article (on Brightspace)

## **University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses** (Updated August 20, 2024)

### **Academic Dates and Deadlines**

[This schedule](#) contains the dates prescribed by the University Senate for academic activities. Dates relating to fee payment, cancellation of course selections, late charges, and other fees or charges will be published in the [Important Dates and Deadlines section](#) of the Registration Website.

### **Copies of Written Work Submitted**

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

### **Online Learning Resources**

[On this page](#), you will find resources collected by Carleton Online to help you succeed in your online courses; Learning Strategies and Best Practices, Study Skills, Technology and Online Interaction and Engagement.

### **Academic Integrity Policy**

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diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous [process for academic integrity allegations](#), including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of "F" for the course.

### **Co-operation or Collaboration**

An important and valuable component of the learning process is the progress a student can make as a result of interacting with other students. In struggling together to master similar concepts and problems and in being exposed to each other's views and approaches, a group of students can enhance and speed up the learning process. Carleton University encourages students to benefit from these activities which will not generally be viewed as a violation of the Policy. With the exception of tests and examinations, instructors will not normally limit these interactions.

Students shall not co-operate or collaborate on academic work when the instructor has indicated that the work is to be completed on an individual basis. Failure to follow the instructor's directions in this regard is a violation of the standards of academic integrity. Unless otherwise indicated, students shall not co-operate or collaborate in the completion of a test or examination.

**Group Work:** There are many cases where students are expected or required to work in groups to complete a course requirement. Normally, students are not responsible for violations of this policy committed by other members of a group in which they participate.

**More information on the process** [here](#).

## **Academic Accommodations**

Academic accommodation refers to educational practices, systems and support mechanisms designed to accommodate diversity and difference. The purpose of accommodation is to enable students to perform the essential requirements of their academic programs. At no time does academic accommodation



undermine or compromise the learning objectives that are established by the academic authorities of the University.

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the *Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances*, are outlined on the [Academic Accommodations website](#).

### **Requests for Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes can be [found here](#).

### **Addressing Human Rights Concerns**

The University and all members of the University community share responsibility for ensuring that the University's educational, work and living environments are free from discrimination and harassment. Should you have concerns about harassment or discrimination relating to your age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, place of origin, race, sex (including pregnancy), or sexual orientation, please contact the [Department of Equity and Inclusive Communities](#) at [equity@carleton.ca](mailto:equity@carleton.ca).

## **Grading System at Carleton University**

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

[The system of grades used](#), with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion can be found [here](#).

## **Course Sharing Websites and Copyright**

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

[More information](#)

## Student Rights and Responsibilities at Carleton

Carleton University strives to provide a safe environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, free of injustice and characterized by understanding respect, peace, trust, and fairness.

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students. Carleton University is committed to building a campus that promotes personal growth through the establishment and promotion of transparent and fair academic and non-academic responsibilities.

## Deferred Term Work

In some situations, students are unable to complete term work because of extenuating circumstances beyond their control, which forces them to delay submission of the work. Requests for academic consideration are made in accordance with the [Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical or Other Extenuating Circumstances](#).

Students who claim short-term extenuating circumstances (normally lasting up to five days) as a reason for missed term work are held responsible for immediately informing the instructor concerned and for making alternate arrangements with the instructor. If the instructor requires supporting documentation, the instructor may only request submission of the University's self-declaration form, which is available on the [Registrar's Office website](#). The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule.

1. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of term. In all cases, formative evaluations providing feedback to the student should be replaced with formative evaluations. In the event the altered due date must extend beyond the last day of classes in the term, the instructor will assign a grade of zero for the work not submitted and submit the student's earned grade accordingly; the instructor may submit a change of grade at a later date. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.
2. In cases where a student is not able to complete term work due to extenuating circumstances lasting for a significant period of time/ long-term (normally more than five days), the instructor and/or student may elect to consult with the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses) or Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) to determine appropriate action.
3. If a student is concerned the instructor did not respond to the request for academic consideration or did not provide reasonable accommodation, the student should follow the appeals process described in the [Academic Consideration Policy](#).
4. If academic consideration is granted, but the student is unable to complete the accommodation according to the terms set out by the instructor as a result of further illness, injury, or extraordinary circumstances beyond their control, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses). Please note, however, that the course instructor will be required to submit an earned final grade and further consideration will only be reviewed according to established precedents and deadlines. (More information: [Undergraduate](#) | [Graduate](#)).

## Deferred Final Exams

Students who are unable to write a final examination because of extenuating circumstances, as

defined in the [Academic Consideration Policy](#), may apply for accommodation. Normally, the accommodation for a missed final examination will be granting the student the opportunity to write a deferred examination. In specific cases when it is not possible to offer a deferred examination, and with the approval of the Dean, an alternate accommodation may be made.

The application for a deferral must:

1. be made in writing to the Registrar's Office no later than three (3) working days after the original final examination or the due date of the take-home examination; and,
2. be fully supported by appropriate documentation. In cases of short-term extenuating circumstances normally lasting no more than five (5) days, students must include the University's self-declaration form, which can be found on [the Registrar's Office website](#). Additional documentation is required in cases of extenuating circumstances lasting longer than five (5) days and must be supported by a medical note specifying the date of onset of the illness, the (expected) date of recovery, and the extent to which the student was/is incapacitated during the time of the examination. The University's preferred medical form can be found at the Registrar's Office [here](#).

### 3. **Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal**

Make sure that you are aware of the separate deadlines for Financial and Academic withdrawal!

Making registration decisions in Carleton Central involves making a financial and academic commitment for the courses you choose, regardless of attendance. If you do not attend, you must withdraw in Carleton Central within the published deadlines to cancel your registration. A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load. A course dropped after the deadline for financial withdrawal will receive a grade of Withdrawn (WDN), which appears on your official transcript.

Even if you miss the deadline for financial withdrawal, you might decide to drop a course to avoid a failure or a poor grade showing up on your student record and bringing down your CGPA. It is your responsibility to drop the course via Carleton Central within the published [deadlines](#) (see Academic Withdrawal).

If you are considering withdrawing from a course, you may want to talk to an advisor first. Course withdrawal may affect your student status, as well as your eligibility for student funding, immigration status, residence accommodation and participation in varsity sports, etc. Additionally, remember that once you choose your courses, you must use the "Calculate amount to pay" button to determine the correct amount of fees to pay.

Carleton Central is your one-stop shop for registration activities. If you are interested in taking a course, make sure to complete your registration. Simply attending a course does not mean you are registered in it, nor is it grounds for petition or appeal.

## Mental Health and Wellness at Carleton

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>"

### Emergency Resources ([on and off campus](#))

- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

### Carleton Resources

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

### Off Campus Resources

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me Counselling Service: call 1-844-741-6389 or connect online at <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service <https://walkincounselling.com>

## The Centre for Indigenous Support and Community Engagement

The Centre for Indigenous Initiatives is proud to offer culturally centered individual counselling to students who self-identify as First Nation, Metis or Inuk. Through this service, Indigenous students [can access confidential, individual sessions for support with personal, mental health or academic challenges.](#)

### Department Contact Information

Bachelor of the Humanities 300 Paterson Hall  
[CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca)

Greek and Roman Studies 300 Paterson Hall  
[GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca)

Religion 2A39 Paterson Hall  
[Religion@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:Religion@cunet.carleton.ca)

Digital Humanities (Graduate) 2A39 Paterson Hall  
[digitalhumanities@carleton.ca](mailto:digitalhumanities@carleton.ca)

Digital Humanities (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall  
[digitalhumanities@carleton.ca](mailto:digitalhumanities@carleton.ca)

MEMS (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall  
[CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca)