

Carleton University

Winter 2025

**College of the Humanities
Religion Program: RELI 1731
Religion and Culture**

Instructor: Dr. Robert Michael Edwards

Email: robertedwards3@cunet.carleton.ca **Office hours:** Virtual over Zoom, Time TBD

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

Interpreting how religion is represented and expressed by great works of literature, film, art, music, and popular culture. Topics include myth and ritual, community and identity, body and sexuality, sacred space, creativity and imagination.

COURSE CONTENT

Religion permeates virtually all aspects of the world we live in, from politics to popular culture. This course is concerned with the intersection of religion, culture, politics, and the popular consciousness. Throughout the semester students will engage with key issues in the study of religion from a historical and contemporary perspective. The first part of the course is focused on the influence of religion on the politics and cultural development of the ancient world, both east and west. The second part of the course will be centered on contemporary issues, including politics, conversion, and new religious movements, through the lens of popular culture case studies.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should:

- Be able to think and write critically, at a first-year university level, about the themes examined in the lectures, as well as in the assigned texts, listening, and viewing.
- Develop a strong understanding of the interaction of religion and various forms of culture and cultural expression.
- Be able to engage critically with religious texts as primary source material.
- Have developed an understanding of the different types of inquiry that are common to the field of religious studies.
- Be able to conduct research on topics within the field of religious studies
- When reading, be able to distinguish a paper's argument from its subject matter
- Construct a solid argument and support it with evidence
- Be able to recognize acceptable scholarly primary and secondary research sources for the study of religion and distinguish these types of sources from each other.

- Demonstrate first-year undergraduate-level research skills, and proper citation using the Chicago Manual of Style
- Recognize personal situated-ness and personal bias in confronting religious phenomena
- Recognize and use key theoretical religion concepts, terminology, and thematic frameworks covered in the lectures and readings

PRECLUSIONS

Precludes additional credit for RELI 1205, RELI 1206, RELI 1402, and RELI 2002.

REQUIRED TEXTS, READING, AND VIEWING

There is no required textbook for this course. Readings and multimedia material will be posted or linked through D2L throughout the semester. No additional costs will be incurred by students for class materials.

EVALUATION

Research Proposal: 10% (Week 5 – Due February 7th)

Mid-Term Exam: 30% (Week 6 – Take-home – Due February 15th)

Research Paper: 30% (Week 12 – Due April 8th)

Guidelines for assignments will be discussed in class and posted on Brightspace

Please note that I do not deduct marks for late assignments if students contact me as soon as possible with a plan for the submission of outstanding work.

Final Exam: 30% (Take-Home, Due during final exam period)

COURSE TEACHING METHODS

Course lectures will be delivered in-person throughout the semester. During each lecture we will be discussing a particular tradition or concept, and related texts in-depth. As such, students will be expected to have done the assigned reading prior to class each week. Please note that, while students are not being evaluated on their class participation, respectful discussion is encouraged as an important element in the learning process.

OFFICE HOURS AND MEETINGS WITH STUDENTS

Office hours are provided for one-on-one consultation with the instructor. You are all encouraged to visit my office hours if you have questions, comments, concerns, or suggestions about any aspect of RELI 1731. This term, my office hours will be held via Zoom -Time TBA.

EMAIL AND COMMUNICATION POLICY

I typically respond to email correspondence within 24 hours (Monday to Friday). This time may increase during high volume periods. Please note that this may mean a wait of up to 48 hours for a response. It is required that all electronic communication between students and faculty about course matters will be conducted through the Carleton University email system.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND THE PAUL MENTON CENTRE

Should you require accommodations for a disability or other health condition, and have not already made arrangements with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities, please be sure to contact them as soon as possible at 613-520-6608 or via email at pmc@carleton.ca. (Visit their web site at: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>) I will work with them to ensure that you receive the accommodations you require throughout the academic year.

CLASS DATES AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Part 1: Religion and Culture in the Ancient World

1-Jan 6, 8	Introduction to the course, syllabus, and modes of evaluation Background in the field Overarching questions: What is Religion? How do we study religion? Required Reading: N/A
2-Jan 13, 15	Religion and ancient cultures Ancient cultures in contact and communication. Required Reading: Rowe Chapter 1
3-Jan 20, 22	Ancient Near Eastern Stories, Worldviews, and Impacts. The evolving stories of gods and kings. Required Reading: Enuma Elish The Tale of the Huluppu Tree Genesis 1-2
4-Jan 27, 29	Ancient Chinese Culture, Philosophy, and Religion Sage Kings, Pyromancy, and the dawn of Confucian thought Required Reading: Poceski Ch. 1 (pp. 1-25)

5-Feb 3, 5	The Apocalypse – bridging ancient and contemporary culture Research Proposal Due Required Reading: Himmelfarb Ch. 1, 8
6-Feb 10, 12	Politics, paranoia, and religion. The impact of conspiracy theories on contemporary culture. Mid-Term Exam – Take-Home Required Reading: TBA
Feb 17-21	Statutory Holiday; Winter Break, No Classes
7-Feb 24, 26	Conversion – theories of religious conversion and popular music (hip-hop as a case study) Cults and the popular consciousness: Understanding the impact of New Religious Movements Required Reading: Woods and Edwards (2021)
8-Mar 3, 5	Religion and film Required Reading: Santana and Erickson Ch. 5 (pp.112-139) Reinhartz (optional)
9-Mar 10, 12	Guest Lecture by Doctor Henry Edwards Topic TBA
10-Mar 17, 19	The Taylor Swift Effect: The impact of popular music on worldviews Required Reading: TBA
11-Mar 24, 26	Religion and the practice of martial arts Reading: TBA Greve (optional – pp. 1-46)

12-Mar 31, Apr 2 Cultural Appropriation and the Commodification of Religion

Required Reading: TBA

13-April 8

Review

Final paper due.

University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses (Updated November 22,2024)

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

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, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, 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.

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](#).

Academic Consideration Policy

As per the [Academic Consideration Policy](#), if students encounter extenuating circumstances that temporarily hinder their capacity to fulfil in-class academic requirements, they can request academic consideration. The Academic Consideration for Coursework is only available for accommodations regarding course work. Requests for accommodations during the formal exam period must follow the [official deferral process](#).

NOTE: As per the Policy, students are to speak with/contact their instructor before submitting a request for Academic Consideration. Requests are not automatically approved. Approving and determining the accommodation remains at the discretion of the instructor. Students should consult the course syllabus about the instructor's policy or procedures for requesting academic consideration. [More information here](#).

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

Greek and Roman Studies 300 Paterson Hall

GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca

Religion 2A39 Paterson Hall

Religion@cunet.carleton.ca

Digital Humanities (Graduate) 2A39 Paterson Hall

digitalhumanities@carleton.ca

Digital Humanities (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall

digitalhumanities@carleton.ca

MEMS (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall

CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca