

The College of the Humanities
Religion Program: RELI 2713A Fall Term
Mystical and Contemplative Traditions

Instructor: Professor Mohammed Rustom **Office:** PA 2A61, 520-2600, ext. 1954
Email: mohammed.rustom@carleton.ca **Office hours:** Mon. 12:00-2:00
Lecture: Zoom; Tues. 8:35-11:25

Course Description

This course offers an in-depth investigation into mystical, philosophical, and contemplative traditions. We shall explore such key topics as the nature of being and consciousness, the role of meditation and the cultivation of virtue in the quest for wisdom and understanding, the debate surrounding PCEs or “Pure Consciousness Events,” and the relationship between empiricism and ineffability.

Learning Outcomes

By the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- ❖ Engage with primary texts and analyze secondary texts
- ❖ Understand the main contours of the academic study of what is commonly referred to as “religious experience” in general, and “mysticism” in particular
- ❖ Distinguish descriptive, explanatory, and prescriptive modes of discourse
- ❖ Critically analyze a wide range of materials from different traditions
- ❖ Properly cite references in a paper

Required Texts

Readings in Mysticism = RM (course site)
Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (bookstore)
Perry (ed.), *The Spiritual Ascent* (bookstore)

Requirements

/25 Assignment 1
/30 Assignment 2
/30 Assignment 3
/15 Active Participation

Academic Accommodations

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. For details on the processes for academic accommodations requests, please see the following link: <https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

- Sep. 13** **The Subject Matter of Mysticism**
Readings
Perry, "Separation—Sin" (pp. 53ff.) and "Faith" (pp. 499ff.)
James, "Mysticism" in *RM*
- Sep. 20** **Mysticism and Modes of Thought**
Readings
Perry, "Renunciation—Detachment" (pp. 135ff.)
Russel, "Mysticism and Logic" in *RM*
- Sep. 27** **Illusion vs. Reality**
Readings
Perry, "Illusion" (pp. 83ff.) and "Reality" (pp. 771ff.)
Price, "The Objectivity of Mystical Truth Claims" in *RM*
- Oct. 4** **Knowledge and the Sacred**
Listen
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPV0RC9CDIs>
- Oct. 11** **The Problem of Mystical Experience**
Readings
Perry, "Charity" (pp. 595ff.) and "Ecstasy" (pp. 634ff.)
Prigge/Kessler, "Is Mystical Experience Everywhere the Same?" in *RM*
- Oct. 18** **Mysticism and Modern Epistemology**
Readings
Perry, "Knowledge" (pp. 731ff.)
- Oct. 25** **Reading week; no class**
- Nov. 1** **Interpreting the Data of Mysticism**
Readings
Perry, "Metanoia" (pp. 479ff.) "Love" (pp. 612ff.)
Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" in *RM*
- Nov. 8** **Pure Consciousness Events (PCEs)**
Readings
Forman, "Mysticism, Constructivism, and Forgetting" in *RM*
Ogunnaike, "An Akbari Approach to the Problem of Pure Consciousness"
- Nov. 15** **The Critique of Reductionism**
Readings
Perry, "Grace" (pp. 550ff.) and "Realization and Identity" (pp. 855ff.)

Shah-Kazemi, "Against the Reduction of the Transcendent" in *RM*

Nov. 22 Apophysis and the Limits of Language

Readings

Perry, "Mysterium Magnum" (pp. 971ff.)

Sells, "Unsayings" in *RM*

Nov. 29 Final Paper Workshop

Dec. 6 Contemplative Practices

Readings

Perry, "Prayer—Meditation—Contemplation" (pp. 520ff.)

Assignment 1

Instructions

Carefully read Seyyed Hossein Nasr's book, *Knowledge and the Sacred*. The first part of the paper must thoroughly summarize the book's content (but not chapter-by-chapter). The second part must offer an analysis of the author's underlying argument.

Value

The paper is out of 25, and is worth 25% of the total course mark.

Due Date

Papers are due via email submission at **8 am on October 11th**.

Late Assignments

Papers submitted late due to medical or other compassionate reasons must be accompanied by relevant documentation.

Form

1. Your paper should be **six** full pages in length, double spaced, and written in Times New Roman font (size 12).

2. Diction is to be formal, and each piece is to be written in Canadian English. Grammar, syntax, spelling, and style must be impeccable. You may write in the first person.
3. At the top right of the first page of your paper, include the course code, your full name, and the assignment's due date. This should be in Times New Roman font (size 12).
4. When citing materials, please follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Assignment 2

Instructions

Address **one** of the following topics/questions:

1. Why is the love of God so central to Sufism? If you choose to work on this topic, see course site for the main text and article.
2. Explain the notion of non-duality in Advaita Vedanta. See course site for the main text.
3. How does the Jesus Prayer function in Eastern Orthodox Christianity? See course site for the main text.

Value

The paper is out of 30, and is worth 30% of the total course mark.

Due Date

Papers are due via email submission at **8 am on November 8th**.

Late Assignments

Papers submitted late due to medical or other compassionate reasons must be accompanied by relevant documentation.

Form

1. Your paper should be **eight** full pages in length, double spaced, and written in Times New Roman font (size 12).

2. Diction is to be formal, and each piece is to be written in Canadian English. Grammar, syntax, spelling, and style must be impeccable. You may write in the first person.
3. At the top right of the first page of your paper, include the course code, your full name, and the assignment's due date. This should be in Times New Roman font (size 12).
4. When citing materials, please follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Assignment 3

Instructions

Drawing on the texts in *The Spiritual Ascent*, answer **both** of the following questions. Use appropriate examples to illustrate your points.

1. Explain the mystical doctrine of the Absolute and the relative (i.e., the Principle and Its manifestation).
2. Describe the manner in which mystics envision the true nature and fallen state of the "self." Then, explain the relationship between doctrine and method as the self treads the spiritual path in an attempt to recover its primordial state.

Value

Each question is out of 15 and is worth 15% of the total course mark. Thus, your entire paper is out of 30 and is worth 30% of the total course mark.

Due Date

Papers will be due via email submission at **8 am on December 6th**.

Late Assignments

Papers submitted late due to medical or other compassionate reasons must be accompanied by relevant documentation.

Form

1. **Each** of your answers should be **four** full pages in length, double spaced, and written in Times New Roman font (size 12). So the total number of pages for this assignment is **eight** pages.
2. Diction is to be formal, and each piece is to be written in Canadian English. Grammar, syntax, spelling, and style must be impeccable. You may write in the first person.
3. At the top right of the first page of your paper, include the course code, your full name, and the assignment's due date. This should be in Times New Roman font (size 12).

4. When citing materials, please follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*.



Humanities

University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses

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.

Online Learning Resources

While online courses offer flexibility and convenience, they also present unique challenges that traditional face-to-face courses do not. [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.

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.

Academic Integrity Policy (updated June 2021)

Plagiarism is presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of others as one's own.

Plagiarism 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, art works, 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;
- 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; and
- 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.

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Academic Integrity Process](#)

Academic Accommodation Policy

Carleton University is committed to providing access to the educational experience in order to promote academic accessibility for all individuals.

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.

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](#).

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your [academic obligations](#) during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Religious Accommodation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, please review the [Student Guide to Academic Accommodation](#).

Pregnancy Accommodation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of

class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. . For more details, please review the [Student Guide to Academic Accommodation](#).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit the [Equity and Inclusive Communities website](#).

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, see the [Senate Policy on Accommodation for Student Activities](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the [Paul Menton Centre website](#).

Grading System at Carleton University

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion can be found [here](#). Grade points indicated are for courses with 1.0 credit value. Where the course credit is greater or less than one credit, the grade points are adjusted proportionately.

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 illness or other circumstances beyond their control, which forces them to delay submission of the work.

1. Students who claim illness, injury or other extraordinary circumstances beyond their control as a reason for missed term work are held responsible for immediately informing the **instructor** concerned and for making alternate arrangements with the instructor and in all cases this must occur **no later than three (3) working days after the term work was due**. The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule. 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 illness or injury for a significant period of time/or long term, 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 accommodation or did not provide reasonable accommodation, the student should consult with the department/school/institute chair/director. If a mutually agreeable accommodation to complete course requirements prior to the course grade submission deadline cannot be achieved, the Associate Dean will become involved. If academic accommodation is not granted, and the student receives word **after** the academic withdrawal deadline, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) for a final grade of WDN (Withdrawn) in the course(s). If academic

accommodation is not granted, and the student receives word **prior** to the academic withdrawal deadline, the student may elect to withdraw from the course(s).

4. Furthermore, if academic accommodation 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 of deferred Term Work](#)

Deferred Final Exams

Students who are unable to write a final examination because of a serious illness/emergency or other circumstances beyond their control 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 working days after the original final examination or the due date of the take-home examination**; and,
2. be fully supported by appropriate documentation and, in cases of illness, by a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination, or by appropriate documents in other cases. Medical documents must specify the date of the 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](#).

[More information on Final Exam Deferrals Registrar's Office "Defer an Exam" page](#)

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.

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