

ANTH 2550/RELI 2736 F

Religion and Society



Instructor: Dr. Kara Brisson-Boivin

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Office Loeb C761

Office Hours Friday's 9:30am-10:30am
or by appointment

Class Time Friday 11:35am – 2:25pm

Class Location Residence Commons
372

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Course Website [CuLearn](#)

**“I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.”
-Robert Browning**

**“I go to seek a great perhaps.”
-François Rabelais**

**“...but it is the nature of stars to cross, and
never was Shakespeare more wrong than
when he had Cassius note, ‘The fault, dear
Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.’
Easy enough to say when you're a Roman
nobleman (or Shakespeare!), but there is no
shortage of fault to be found amid our stars.”
-‘Peter Van Houten’ in John Greene**

Course Description

Throughout human history religion has played a central role in the organization of political, economic, and social relations. Religion has served as a powerful political tool and a mechanism of social control; but it has also served as a popular source of resistance, social cohesion, meaning making, and social change. This course will primarily examine whether or not religion remains a dominant social institution today. Students will be introduced to various theoretical and empirical approaches to the Anthropological study of religion. Students will undertake a diverse and cross-cultural study of religious organizations, institutions, and sacred power as they intersect with major elements of the global religious landscape including: culture, secularity, questions of evil and morality, diversity, new religious movements, technology, pop culture, and politics. This course offers students a valuable opportunity to observe theory in action as it unfolds in the religious case studies they will encounter in readings, in-class activities, and assignments. Students will ask themselves how what they are learning in the classroom will help them in their 'everyday' encounters with religion.

Some key questions students will examine in this course:

- What is the nature of religious expression today?
- What is the function of the relationship between religion and society? culture? technology? politics?
- Does religion help human societies confront questions of our existence or purpose? How so?
- How or why is the anthropological study of religion valuable today?

Required Texts:

[Kessler, G. \(2008\). Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases. 3rd Edition.](#)

[Kessler Text Available at Haven Books](#)

[All other course readings are available on Ares](#)



Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the major dimensions of sacred power, religious organizations and institutions, non-belief and secularity, as well as key stakeholders and practices of religion in Canadian and global society.
- Apply course materials (anthropological concepts and theories) to analyze the relationship between religion, culture, social relations, and politics.
- Utilize examples from their social environment to identify and assess contemporary religious issues that impact individuals, specific groups, or entire societies.
- Develop critical thinking skills and share opinions on religious issues in a respectful, constructive, non-judgmental and non-confrontational manner.

Requirements

Participation (10%)

Participation in this course is important since the course is not designed in the typical lecture format. I will begin each class with an overview of the week's topic, as well as a discussion of the main concepts and ideas from course readings, however the majority of class time will be spent in discussion or engaging in learning activities. Students will actively work through course content and case studies to apply what they have read to contemporary religious issues. As such, it is important to prepare for class by completing all of the weekly readings and attending all classes.

Critical Reflection Papers (or CRPs

15%) CRPs are intended to assess students' ability to think critically about a particular week's topic and readings. A critical reflection is **NOT** a summary of the assigned readings. Instead, students will submit a 2 page max (double-spaced) reflection that incorporates their understanding of the main concepts, theories, and ideas from a particular week's topic or readings. As well as **provide one example**, illustration, or practical application of that week's topic as found in contemporary encounters (news articles, social media posts, podcasts etc.) with religious issues or practices.

Students may select which in-class days they would like to submit their CRPs based on their own interests, schedule, and commitments. There are a total of **3 CRPs** (valued at **5% each**) that students must submit to obtain the full 15%. CRPs are due **at the beginning** of the class for which that particular week's topic/readings are scheduled. For example, if a student chooses to submit a CRP on mediated religion, technology, and pop culture this CRP is due in class on November 16th (week 10)—the day on which we will cover the topic of mediated religion, technology, and pop culture. As a contemporary example, students might choose to examine the intersection of religion, faith, and Facebook: [If Facebook was a religion](#). Every effort will be made to return CRPs, with detailed feedback, within one week of submission.

Wherever possible students should reference (in-text) assigned readings for the week and submit a reference page in APA format at the end of their assignment (not included toward the 2 page requirement). Students **must** include references for outside materials (news articles, web resources, videos, podcasts, social media posts, etc.). This will allow students to practice their citation skills, and receive feedback ahead of their final paper.

Methods of Evaluation

Participation	10%	Ongoing
Critical Reflection Papers (CRPs)	15% (3 X 5% each)	Ongoing
Observation Assignment	35%	DUE: October 12
Final Paper Questions/Thesis	Approval	BY: November 2
Final Paper	40%	DUE: November 30

Observation Assignment (35%) DUE October 12th

Working individually students will choose a sacred space/place to observe sacred power in action. While the site of observation does not need to be a traditional or typical religious institution it should meet the basic tenets of our course definition for religion/ religious organization. Students are encouraged to choose a sacred space/place that they are not familiar with or that is different from their own religious affiliation, if they have one, so that they can expand their religious knowledge base. It is strongly recommended that you have either the instructor or the T.A. approve your site of observation before conducting your observations.

Observations **MUST** consist of at **least one** site visit for a couple of hours. However, students may choose to visit the site more than once. The site visit should occur during 'open or public' hours. If possible students should attend a service, celebration, or practice of ritual (for example, a church service or meditation session). Following the observations students will record written field notes of their observations and write their reflection paper based on these notes.

Students will submit a **5-7 page reflection paper** based on their observations. Reflections will include any basic information regarding the religious organization that students observed (for example, the type and name of institution if applicable, where it is located, and if a particular service, rite, or ritual was observed). Students will then address a series of **reflection questions** found in the **detailed assignment instructions** provided on [CULearn](#) under course announcements. Reflection papers should be 12 point font, and double-spaced. There is no reference page needed for this assignment as it is based on your observations. Students **must** submit their rough field notes along with their reflection papers.

Final Paper (40%) DUE November 30th (Last class)

The final paper will be a summative evaluation for this course which means that it is **cumulative**— covering all course material. Drawing on course material (readings, theories, approaches, concepts, in-class activities etc.) and a contemporary case example, students will answer **one** of the following essay questions:

- I) Is religion a relevant social institution today? Why or why not?
- II) How does religion help human societies confront moral or ethical dilemmas? Utilize a contemporary case example in your response (for example, doctor assisted suicide).
- III) How has religion adapted to processes of globalization such as modernization, urbanization, pluralization, and technicization? Has institutional religion been successful in this adaptation?

Note: the instructor may add an additional paper question if our discussions in class deem this to be relevant. Any additional final paper options will be circulated before the question approval date of **November 2nd****

Students **should** submit their final paper question and thesis statement in class by **November 2nd**. It is highly recommended that students discuss their paper outlines and thesis statements with either the instructor or T.A. during office hours.

*Final papers will be between **10-12 pages** in length and will utilize a **minimum of 5 course readings**. A reference page, following proper APA format, is required and is not included in the 10-12 page limit.

Detailed final paper instructions along with a grading rubric will be posted on CULearn

<p>All citations should be in APA format Referencing Social Media</p>	<p>All written work is to be double-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font</p>	<p>All late submissions will be penalized at the rate of 10% per day</p>
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Class Schedule

(1) September 7	Introduction	Syllabus Review and Questions of Inquiry
(2) September 14 Janna Lecture*	Approaches to Studying Religion [Theories, Methods, and Definitions]	<p>* Kessler Chapters 1 and 2</p> <p>* Durkheim, E. (1995/1912). "Definition of Religious Phenomena and of Religion." In Fields (Trans). <u>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</u>. The Free Press. New York. 21-44.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED:</p> <p>* Winkleman, M. & J.R. Baker (2010). "Anthropology and the Study of Religion." In <u>Supernatural as Natural: A Bio-cultural Approach to Religion</u>. Prentice Hall. Upper Saddle River. N.J. 5-30.</p>
(3) September 21	Religion and Culture	<p>*Olivier, R. (2013). "When Religion Meets Culture" In <u>Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways</u>. New York. Columbia University Press. 23-57.</p> <p>*Malifijit, D. (1968). "Anthropology and the Study of Religion" In <u>Religion and Culture and Introduction to Anthropology of Religion</u>. New York. The Macmillan Company. 1-15.</p>
(4) September 28	Religion and Sacred Power (I)	* Kessler Chapters 3, 4, and 5

(5) October 5 Guest Speaker Daniel Spiritwolf	Religion and Sacred Power (II)	<p>* Kessler Chapters 6 and 7</p> <p>* Weiner, E. (2012). "Where Heaven and Earth Come Closer." New York Times Article</p>
(6) October 12	Religion and Secularity *OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT DUE*	<p>* Davie, G. (2007) "Secularity: Process and Theory." In <i>The Sociology of Religion : A Critical Agenda</i>. 2nd Edition. London. Sage. 46-66.</p> <p>*Berger, P and A. Zijderveld. (2009). "The Many Gods of Modernity." In <i>In Praise of Doubt: How to Have Convictions Without Becoming A Fanatic</i>. New York. Harper Collins. 1-24.</p>
(7)October 19	Religion and Questions of Evil and Morality	* Kessler Chapters 8 and 9
October 26	NO CLASS FALL BREAK	
(8) November 2	Religion and Human Existence, Diversity, and Truth *FINAL PAPER QUESTIONS / THESIS STATEMENT DUE*	*Kessler Chapters 12 and 13
(9) November 9	Religious Organizations, Institutions, and New Religious Movements	<p>*Kessler Chapter 11</p> <p>*Dawson, L. (2006). "Why Study New Religious Movements?" In <i>Comprehending Cults: the Sociology of New Religious Movements</i>. Oxford University Press. 1-13.</p> <p>*Dawson, L. (2006). "Who Joins New Religious Movements and Why?" In <i>Comprehending Cults: the Sociology of New Religious Movements</i>. Oxford University Press. 1-13.</p>
(10) November 16	Mediated Religion, Technology, and Pop Culture	<p>*Levitt, P. (2013) "Religion on the Move: Mapping Global Cultural Production and Consumption." In <i>Religion on the Edge</i>. (Bender, C. W. Cadge, P. Levitt, and D. Smilde EDs). Oxford University Press. 159-176.</p> <p>*Bondy, R. (2010). "Feeding the Soul: Food, Television, and Faith." In <i>The Future of Religion</i>. (Rennick, P. S. Cunningham, R. Johnson EDs). Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 97-106.</p> <p>*Campbell, H. (2004). "'This is my Church': The Internet and Club Culture as Spiritual Spaces." In <i>Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet</i>. (L. Dawson, D. Cowan EDs). New York. Routledge. 107-123.</p>

(11) November 23	Religion and Politics	<p>*Kessler Chapter 10</p> <p>*Gotlieb, R. (2002). "Two Ways of World Making." In <u>Joining Hands: Politics and Religion Together for Social Change</u>. Westview Press. 4-23.</p> <p>*Aguilar, M. (2011). "Religion, Politics, and Liberation: A Dialogue Between Gustavo Gutierrez, The 14th Dalai Lama, and Gianni Vattimo." <u>Political Theology</u>. 144-166.</p> <p>*Beinhart, P. (2017). "Breaking Faith: The culture war over religious morality has faded; in its place is something much worse." Atlantic Article</p>
(12) November 30	*FINAL PAPERS DUE*	<p>Movie: Doubt</p>

Important Remarks

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar (p 34), the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52
F = Below 50	WDN = Withdrawn from the course		
DEF = Deferred (See above)			

Academic Regulations, Accommodations, Plagiarism, Etc.

University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found on the university's website, here:

<http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your *Letter of Accommodation* at the beginning of the term, and 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 me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable). The deadlines for contacting the Paul Menton Centre regarding accommodation for exams for the Fall 2018 (December) exam period is **November 9, 2018**.

For Religious Obligations

Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious obligation should make a formal, written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies, or may contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance.

For Pregnancy

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a letter of accommodation. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

For 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: www.carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else's work as your own and is a serious academic offence. For the details of what constitutes plagiarism, the potential penalties and the procedures refer to the section on Instructional Offences in the Undergraduate Calendar. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the Carleton

University Student Academic Integrity Policy (See <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>). The Policy is strictly enforced and is binding on all students. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Students who infringe the Policy may be subject to one of several penalties

What are the Penalties for Plagiarism?

A student found to have plagiarized an assignment may be subject to one of several penalties including but not limited to: a grade of zero, a failure or a reduced grade for the piece of academic work; reduction of final grade in the course; completion of a remediation process; resubmission of academic work; withdrawal from course(s); suspension from a program of study; a letter of reprimand.

What are the Procedures?

All allegations of plagiarism are reported to the faculty of Dean of FASS and Management. Documentation is prepared by instructors and/or departmental chairs.

The Dean writes to the student and the University Ombudsperson about the alleged plagiarism. The Dean reviews the allegation. If it is not resolved at this level then it is referred to a tribunal appointed by the Senate.

Intellectual Property Statement

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

Assistance for Students

Academic and Career Development Services: <http://carleton.ca/sacds/>

Writing Tutorial Services: <http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/group-support/pass/>

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- Students must always retain a hard copy of all work that is submitted.
- 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.
- Carleton University is committed to protecting the privacy of those who study or work here (currently and formerly). To that end, Carleton's Privacy Office seeks to encourage the implementation of the privacy provisions of Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) within the university.
- In accordance with FIPPA, please ensure all communication with staff/faculty is via your Carleton email account. To get your Carleton Email you will need to activate

your [MyCarletonOne account](#) through Carleton Central. Once you have activated your MyCarletonOne account, log into the [MyCarleton Portal](#).

- Please note that you will be able to link your MyCarletonOne account to other non-MyCarletonOne accounts and receive emails from us. However, for us to respond to your emails, we need to see your full name, CU ID, and the email must be written from your valid MyCarletonOne address. Therefore, it would be easier to respond to your inquiries if you would send all email from your connect account. If you do not have or have yet to activate this account, you may wish to do so by visiting <https://students.carleton.ca/>