

Carleton University

Fall, 2018

**College of the Humanities  
Religion Program: RELI 1731A**

**Varieties of Religious Experience**

**Professor:** Dr. Andrea D. Lobel**E-mail:** Andrea.Lobel@carleton.ca**Class times:** Tues/Thurs, 4:05-5:25pm**Class location:** 303 Paterson Hall**Office hours:** **Tues, 2:45-4:00pm**, 310A Paterson Hall

What does it mean to experience the “sacred,” the “holy,” the “spiritual,” or simply put, the “religious?” Are such experiences ‘real,’ or are they delusions—mere tricks of the mind? In this course, we’ll take a cross-cultural, comparative perspective of the experiential aspects of religion. Using the assigned texts, selected films, and our own senses, students will examine not only what these terms mean, but how they manifest and how they’re interpreted within a variety of faith traditions. Our analysis will include themes such as art, myth, magic and the paranormal, literature, and otherworldly journeys. The assigned textbook by Jeffrey J. Kripal is unique, as it’s structured as an initiatory rite-of-passage. Mirroring the texts, this course will integrate a similar structure, incorporating personal reflective pieces as part of the evaluations. By the end of this course, students should be able to think and write critically about the themes examined in the assigned texts. Occasional in-class experiential exercises will also be part of this course.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

- 1) Jeffrey J. Kripal, 2014, *Comparing Religions*. Wiley-Blackwell. (Available at the Carleton University Book Store)
- 2) Additional readings on CULearn and/or ARES

### EVALUATION

Reflective response paper I (5-6 pages, double-spaced – 1125-1350 words) on 3 assigned readings of your choice between Sept 6 and Sept 20. Due in class Thurs, Sept 27 – 15%

Reflective response paper II (5-6 pages, double-spaced – 1125-1350 words) on 3 assigned readings of your choice between Sept 25 and October 25. Due in class Thurs, Oct 18 – 15%

Term paper – 30%

**[Research Proposal and Bibliography, due by noon Tues, Oct 30, on CULearn (10%)  
Term Paper, due in class Wed, Dec 6 (20%)**

December exam (date TBA, to be set by Exam Services) – 30%

Class participation – 10%

## A NOTE ON ATTENDANCE

To be successful in this course, attending class and keeping up with assigned readings are critical.

## CLASS DATES AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Thurs, Sept 6	<b>Course introduction</b>
Tues, Sept 11	<b>No class (Rosh Hashanah)</b>
Thurs, Sept 13	<b>Comparative religious practices: Western religions; defining the holy, the sacred, and mystical experience</b> Kripal, pp. 3-32 K. Grahame, <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> , chapter 7, 'The Piper at the End of Dawn.' (on CULearn.)
Tues, Sept 18	<b>Comparative religious practices: Asia</b> Kripal, pp. 33-40.
Thurs, Sept 20	<b>Historical trajectories: Western origins of religious practice</b> Kripal chapter 2, pp. 43-74.
Tues, Sept 25	<b>Library research seminar</b> Class will meet at MacOdrum Library, room TBA (4:05-5:25pm)
Thurs, Sept 27	<b>Initiation, consciousness, magic, and the sacred</b> Kripal chapter 3, pp. 77-107. TEDTalks: Wade Davis— <i>The Worldwide Web of Belief and Ritual</i> (in-class) <b>Reflective Response Paper I due</b>
Tues, Oct 2	<b>Myth, ritual, and story</b> Kripal chapter 4, pp. 111-141.
Thurs, Oct 4	<b>Religion and nature; shamanism and trance states</b> Kripal chapter 5, pp. 143-174. <i>Russia: The Cradle Of Shamanism—World Medicine</i> (in-class short film)
Tues, Oct 9	<b>Religion and science.</b> Kripal chapter 5, pp. 143-174. <i>Miracle Cures: Is It Real?</i> (in-class short film); Experiential exercise

- Thurs, Oct 11**      **Sex and the body**  
Kripal chapter 6, pp. 177-206.
- Tues, Oct 16**      **Religion, power, and community, part I**  
Kripal chapter 7, pp. 208-236.
- Thurs, Oct 18**      **Religion, power, and community, part II**  
Kripal chapter 7, pp. pp. 208-236.  
**Reflective Response Paper II due**
- Tues, Oct 23 & Thurs, Oct 25**      **FALL BREAK; NO CLASS**
- Tues, Oct 30**      **In-class film and discussion: *The Power of Belief: Its Impact on Our Minds*; experiential exercise; Research Proposal and Bibliography due.**
- Thurs, Nov 1**      **The paranormal; rational vs. irrational, part I**  
Kripal, chapter 8, pp. 239-269.
- Tues, Nov 6**      **The paranormal; the rational vs. irrational, part II**  
Kripal, chapter 8, pp. 239-269.  
Assigned at-home viewing: *Sacred and Secret: Spirit Possession in Bali* (Access via. Films on Demand. <https://library.carleton.ca/find/databases/films-demand>)
- Thurs, Nov 8**      **Death, near-death experiences (NDEs), and the soul after death**  
Kripal chapter 9, pp. 271-297.  
*Life after Death: Sex, Death, and the Meaning of Life* (in-class short film)  
*Tibetan Book of the Dead*; *Shaar Ha-Gilgulim/The Gate of Transmigration* excerpts (on CULearn)
- Tues, Nov 13**      **IN-CLASS FILM: *The Seventh Seal***
- Thurs, Nov 15**      **Theologies and worldviews**  
Kripal chapter 10, pp. 303-333.
- Tues, Nov 20**      **Religious experience and its discontents**  
Kripal chapter 11, pp. 336-362.
- Thurs, Nov 22**      **Guest lecturer TBA – Buddhist Community**
- Tues, Nov 27**      **Beyond belief; religious experience and the brain**  
Kripal chapter 12, pp. 365-394.

**Tues, Dec 4**

**Belief and beyond: A synthesis**

*Humanism and Its Aspirations:*

<https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto3/>

*Essentials of Faith: Humanism* (in-class short film)

**Thurs, Dec 6**

**Wrap-up, questions, and a focus on our collective rite-of-passage**

**\*Term papers due at the *beginning* of class**



## University Regulations for All Humanities Courses

### Copies of Written Work Submitted

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

### Academic Integrity at Carleton

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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, and material on the internet. More information can be found [here](#).

### Academic Accommodation Policy

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#### **Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to the 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 [Student Guide](#)

**Religious obligation:** write to the 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 [Student Guide](#)

**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](mailto: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).

## Grading System at Carleton University

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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 is below. 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.

[Grading System](#)

## Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

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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).

## Statement on Class Conduct

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The Carleton University Human Rights Policies and Procedures affirm that all members of the University community share a responsibility to:

- promote equity and fairness,
- respect and value diversity,
- prevent discrimination and harassment, and preserve the freedom of its members to carry out responsibly their scholarly work without threat of interference.

## Deferred Term Work

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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.

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 (3.0) 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. More information is available [in the calendar](#).

## Deferred Final Exams

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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. [More information](#).

The application for a [deferral](#) must:

1. be made in writing or online 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 [forms and fees page](#).

Any questions related to deferring a Final Exam or Final Assignment/Take Home Examination should be directed to the [Registrar's Office](#).

## Withdrawal From Courses

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Withdrawn. No academic credit, no impact on the CGPA. WDN is a permanent notation that appears on the official transcript for students who withdraw after the full fee adjustment date in each term (noted in the Academic Year section of the Calendar each term). Students may withdraw on or before the last day of classes.

Important dates can be found [here](#):

## Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal

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**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. [More information](#)

## Department Contact Information

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**College of the Humanities** 300 Paterson Hall (613)520-2809

[CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca)

Drop box for CLCV, HUMS LATN GREK Term Papers and assignments is outside 300 P.A.

**Greek and Roman Studies** 300 Paterson Hall (613)520-2809

[GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca)

Drop Box is outside of 300 P.A.

**Religion** 2A39 Paterson Hall (613)520-2100

[Religion@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:Religion@cunet.carleton.ca)

Drop box for RELI Term Papers and assignments is outside of 2A39 P.A.

**Registrar's Office** 300 Tory (613)520-3500

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/>

## Student Resources on Campus

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[CUKnowHow Website](#)

[Academics: From registration to graduation, the tools for your success.](#)