

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

Varieties of Religious Experience

Professor: Amy Clanfield, Ph.D Candidate **Email:** Amy.Clanfield@carleton.ca

Class Times: Wed/Fri, 10:00-11:25AM **Class Location:** 303 Paterson Hall

Office Hours: Wed, 8:30-9:30AM in 310A Paterson Hall

Calendar Description

The variety of religious experiences and their interpretations: myth, literature, art and religious doctrine. Topics include time, self, the other, journey and wisdom. Examples ranging from shamanistic experience to the abstractions of Buddhist philosophy.

Course Summary

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 and our own sense, students will examine not only what these terms mean, but how they manifest and how they’re interpreted within a wide variety of faith traditions. Our analysis will include themes such as art, myth, magic, the paranormal, literature, and otherworldly journeys. This course will integrate personal reflective pieces as part of the evaluation. 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 experiences will also be part of this course.

Evaluations

Reflective Response Paper I – 15% of final grade

- 3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font, 1-inch margin
- Reflect on and respond to 3 assigned readings of your choice between Sept 4 and Sept 20
- **Due in-class Wednesday September 25, 2019**

Reflective Response Paper II – 15% of final grade

- 3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font, 1-inch margin

- Reflect on and respond to 3 assigned readings of your choice between Sept 25 and October 11
- **Due in-class Wednesday October 16, 2019**

Term Paper – 30%

- Research Proposal and Bibliography (10%)
 - **Due on CULearn Wednesday October 30, 2019**
- Term Paper (20%)
 - **Due in-class Friday December 6, 2019**

Final Exam – 30%

- Date TBA (to be set by Exam Services)

Participation – 10%

Required Texts

None. Instead, we will be reading selections from primary religious sources, textbooks, academic articles, and mainstream media sources. All readings are fully accessible via the Carleton Library website or through a simple Google search. A comprehensive list of our readings will be posted on CULearn. Your instructor has made the choice to leave the last several class sessions open and there are no assigned topics or readings. This is to allow for active engagement from students to suggest topics they would like to learn about, essay structure, plagiarism policy, or to revisit prior readings/topics.

A Note on Attendance

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

Fine Print:

This lecture is a **device-free zone**. No cell phones, tablets, laptops, etc. are permitted unless accessibility documentation from Carleton University is submitted to the instructor. If you are expecting an important call, please be respectful towards your colleagues and quietly step out of the classroom. You are responsible for ensuring that you do not miss critical information that may be communicated to the class while you are attending to your screen.

Extra credit opportunities may arise in the form of outside lectures, additional readings, etc; if so, details will be announced in class

Preferred communication is to talk to your instructor either before or after class. If you would like to make an appointment outside of office hours, **please allow for 48 hour response time and DO NOT leave emails to the last minute (see “Late Policy” below)**. Please see “Top 10 Things To Remember When Emailing Your Instructor”: <https://carleton.ca/cuol/2018/top-10-things-remember-emailing-instructor/>

Late Policy:

- 1) **Please don't be late!** Respect that your instructor and colleagues have lives outside of this classroom. This goes for prompt arrival to class, as well as submitting any and all assignments.
- 2) In the event of illness, nuclear apocalypse, pet dying, roommate ate my homework, etc., the circumstances *may* be considered and documentation will be requested.

Important Dates and Deadlines

Sept. 4 – Fall term begins

Sept. 17 – Last day of registration for fall term and fall/winter courses; last day to change courses or selections

Sept. 30 – Last day to withdraw from fall term and fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript

Oct. 11 – December examination schedule available online

Oct. 14 – Thanksgiving. Statutory holiday. University closed.

Oct. 21-25 – Fall break, no classes.

Nov. 8 – Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodation Forms for December examinations to the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities. Note that it may not be possible to fulfill accommodation requests received after the specified deadlines.

Dec. 6 – Fall term ends. Last day of fall term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work.

Dec. 9-21 – Final examinations in fall term courses and mid-term examinations in fall/winter courses may be held. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Dec. 25-Jan. 1 – University closed.

Class Dates and Assigned Readings

Wed Sept. 4 Course introduction

Syllabus

- Fri Sept. 6 The problem of definition: what is “religion” and what is a “religious experience?”**
- “Introduction” from Deming - *Understanding the Religions of the World: An Introduction* (pg. 1-9)
- “Introduction” from Brent Nongbri – *Before Religion: History of a Modern Concept* (pg. 1-17)
- Wed Sept. 11 Western definitions; William James and Mircea Eliade**
- Excerpts from Mircea Eliade - *The Sacred and The Profane* [posted on CULearn]
- Excerpts from William James - *Varieties of Religious Experience* [posted on CULearn]
- Fri Sept. 13 Religious experience and the brain**
- Article by Nina Azari and Marc Slors, “From Brain Imaging Religious Experience to Explaining Religion: A Critique”
- Wed Sept. 18 Initiation, magic, and the sacred**
- Article by Karen McCarthy Brown, "Plenty Confidence in Myself": The Initiation of a White Woman Scholar into Haitian Vodou”
- Fri Sept. 20 Religion and nature; shamanism and trance states**
- Article by Griffiths, Hurwitz, et. al. “Survey of Subjective ‘God-Encounter Experiences’: Comparisons among naturally occurring experiences and those obtained the classic psychedelics psilocybin, LSD, ayahuasca, or DMT”
- In-class video – Vice “The Psychedelic Healing Power of Ayahuasca”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaOffixoxP8>
- *Reflective Response Paper I Due in-class***
- Wed Sept. 25 Library research seminar with subject matter specialist and librarian Denize Tan**
- Class will meet at MacOdrum Library at our normal meeting time, room TBA

Fri Sept. 27 Myth, ritual, and story

Selections from Genesis, Exodus, and Book of Revelation – Bible (New Revised Standard Version)

Excerpts from the *Brick Testament* TBD

Wed Oct. 2 New religious movements (NRMs)

Section of Ch. 10 entitled “From Seekers to New Religions” Deming - *Understanding the Religions of the World: An Introduction* (pg. 467-479)

Fri Oct. 4 New religious movements [cont’d]

Excerpts from Susan Palmer – *Aliens Adored: Rael’s UFO Religion*

Wed Oct. 9 In and around the body

Article by Jurgen Wasim Frembgen, “From Dervish to Saint: Constructing Charmisa in Contemporary Pakistani Sufism”

Fri Oct. 11 Comparative religious practices

Article by Benjamin James Fleming and Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Hindu Hair and Jewish Halaka” (pg. 199-211, including the article by Benjamin James Fleming “From Tirupati to Brooklyn: Interpreting Hindu Votive Hair Offerings”

In-class video: Excerpts from *Good Hair* ft. Chris Rock

Wed Oct. 16 Comparative religious practices [cont’d]

Article by Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Hair, Halakha, and the Theorization of Ritual Practice” (pg. 211-218)

Reflective Response Paper II Due in-class

Fri Oct. 18 Translating dreams

Article by Amira Mittermaier, “The Book of Visions: Dreams, Poetry, and Prophecy in Contemporary Egypt”

**Wed Oct. 23
and Fri Oct.
25**

☺ **READING WEEK** ☺

Wed Oct 30 Possession

Article by Lesley A. Sharp, “Exorcists, Psychiatrists, and the Problem of Possession in Northwest Madagascar”

Research Proposal and Bibliography due on CULearn

Fri Nov. 1 Possession [cont’d]

Article by Marco Innamorati, Ruggero Taradel, and Renato Foschi, “Between Sacred and Profane: Possession, Psychopathology, and the Catholic Church”

In-class video: Excerpts from *The Exorcist* [CONTENT WARNING: CONTAINS GRAPHIC CONTENT AND MASTURBATION]

Wed Nov. 6 Visions

Article by Nicolas Nicastro and Fabienne Picard, “John of Arc: Sanctity, Witchcraft, or Epilepsy?”

Fri Nov. 8 Animals

Evangelical snake handlers in the USA
Sacrificial customs in Islam
Readings TBA

Wed Nov. 13 Near-death experiences

Readings TBA

Fri Nov. 15 Death customs

Readings TBA

Wed Nov. 20 Death customs [cont’d]

Readings TBA

Fri Nov. 22 Indigenous spirituality

Guest lecturer TBA – Indigenous Community

Wed Nov. 27 TBD pending student feedback

Fri Nov. 29 TBD pending student feedback

Wed Dec. 4 TBD pending student feedback

**Fri Dec. 6 TBD pending student feedback
Term Paper due in-class**

Quotes to Consider

“Religion... shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude.” – William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

“I assert that cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest driving force behind scientific research” – Albert Einstein

“A religious experience offers a sense of the ultimate and an awareness of wholeness, a consciousness of the infinite and an absolute dependence.” Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultural Despisers*

"I think of compassion as the fundamental religious experience and, unless that is there, you have nothing." – Joseph Campbell

“The revealed and mystic literature of mankind bears ample testimony to the fact that religious experience has been too enduring and dominant in the history of mankind to be rejected as mere illusion. There seems to be no reason, then, to accept the normal level of human experience as fact and reject its other levels as mystical and emotional.” – Muhammad Iqbal

“Synchronistic events provide an immediate religious experience as a direct encounter with the compensatory patterning of events in nature as a whole, both inwardly and outwardly.” – Carl Jung

“Oh my God, that was a religious experience... in the words of Homer Simpson, the pig is a magical animal.” – Anthony Bourdain

“We were somewhere around Barstow on the edge of the desert when the drugs began to take hold... And suddenly there was a terrible roar all around us and the sky was full of what looked like huge bats, all swooping and screeching and diving around the car, which was going about a hundred miles an hour with the top down to Las Vegas.” – Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*

“What if ten thousand people went up to a mountain top, saw something, and then they all disagreed with what they saw, even people who largely agreed with each other? Even with this best possible analogy to subjective religious experiences we would still have a reason to think the lack of oxygen caused them all to hallucinate.” – John W. Loftus



Humanities

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 at Carleton

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

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 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).

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 its 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: 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>

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 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 communication:

<https://carleton.ca/curriculum/regulations-reorganization/#2.3>

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)

Statement on Class Conduct

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

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

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 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

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 above.

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.

More information

Department Contact Information

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

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

Drop Box is outside of 300 P.A.

Religion 2A39 Paterson Hall (613)520-2100 Religion@cunet.carleton.ca

Drop box for RELI and SAST 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

CUKnowHow Website **Academics:** From registration to graduation, the tools for your success.