

RELI 2741A – Fall 2018

Interpretations of Religion

Meeting: Tuesday & Thursday, 2:35 - 3:55 PM
Residence Commons 372

Instructor: Mourad Laabdi

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Office: 2A61 Paterson Hall

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 4:00 - 5:00 PM, or by Appt.

Office Phone: TBA

Teaching Assistant: TBD

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion. Students will trace key concepts such as belief, myth, symbol and ritual to explore the construction of 'religion' both as a category of analysis and experience. The course provides basic theoretical and methodological tools to help ponder a wide range of questions about religion, such as: What is 'religion'? What makes a certain practice 'religious' and another practice 'non-religious'? What makes a text, person, site or object 'sacred'? Why and how does the 'sacred' complicate current political ideals, such as free speech and public space? Students will strive to engage these and other important questions using examples from various religious traditions as well as contemporary culture.

Course Evaluation

In-Class Reflections	20%	(10 x 2%)
Mid-Term Test.....	20%	Oct. 18
Field Research Essay (four components)	30%	Nov. 29
Take-Home Exam	30%	By Dec. 21

Required Readings

Malory Nye, *Religion: The Basics*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2008). You are encouraged to use the electronic edition available through Carleton library.

All other assigned readings will be made available on Ares.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Gather, review, interpret, present and critically evaluate several arguments, assumptions, concepts and approaches related to the study of religion.
- Critically apply relevant theories and methods within the study of religion to primary source material.
- Make informed and attentive comments on the place of religions in the contemporary world and the state of diversity of human religious experience.
- Express information, arguments and analyses accurately and with clarity in writing.

Important Dates and Deadlines

Sep. 30:	Last day to withdraw from this course with a full fee adjustment
Oct. 4:	Field Research Contracts Due (signed and returned in class)
Oct. 18:	Mid-Term Exam
Oct. 22-26:	Fall break. No Classes.
Oct. 30:	Field Research Essay Outline and Bibliography Due
Nov. 15:	Field Research Essay Due
Dec. 6:	Essay Revision Due
Dec. 21:	Last day to submit the Take-Home Exam

Course Requirements

1. Reading

By signing up for this course, you agree to read and absorb the assigned readings on your own before coming to class. It is important that you read not for content only, but use guiding questions such as:

- What does the author want to communicate?
- How does he/she develop the arguments?
- What type of evidence does he/she provide?
- Does the content of the text agree or disagree with what I know about the subject?

Reading the material is your first and decisive step to doing well in this class, since all the tests and exams contain questions that engage the readings' content directly.

2. In-Class Reflections (20 % = 2%x10)

- Reflections will be written in class **between Sep. 18 and Nov. 20**. (See Schedule for the exact days)
- There are 10 in total, and each reflection is worth 2% of your total grade.
- They respond to a question on an issue discussed in class, and will be handed back to the instructor.
- They must be written on a standardized sheet available for download from the course website.
- Reflections written on regular paper or sent later by email WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. There will be no exceptions.

3. Mid-Term Test (20 %)

- Written in class on **Thursday, October 18.**
- Cover all lecture materials and assigned readings discussed between Sep. 11 to Oct. 11.
- Consist of a mixture of multiple choice and short essay questions.

More details will be posted on the course website and communicated in class.

4. Field Research Essay (30%)

This assignment has been designed with two main goals in sight. (1) To help you gain insight into a religious tradition with which you are not familiar. (2) To help you acquire firsthand understanding of some of the challenges and rewards a scholar of religion faces.

To successfully complete this assignment, you must fulfill the following four components/stages.

Stage One: The Field Research Visit

- You are required to attend an official service/ritual of a religious tradition with which you are not familiar. If you belong to a Christian church, for example, you cannot attend the services of any other Christian denomination.
- You must attend the service with one or two other students, fill out an agreement sheet, and have a photo of you and your group taken at the location of the service.
- **Groups will be formed and contracts will be signed in class on Thursday, October 4.**

Stage Two: Outline and Bibliography (5%)

- **Due on Tuesday, October 30.**
- The second stage is to submit a brief outline of your Field Research Essay.
- The outline must state and explain a key theme/pattern you observed at the religious site.
- It must specify one main theory from Nye's book and explain how you will use it to interpret your observed theme/pattern.
- It must list and annotate two more scholarly sources that further explain the theory.

Stage Three: The Field Research Essay (20%)

- **Due on Tuesday, November 13.**
- After attending/observing a ritual and processing the collected data, you will interpret select observations using one key theory from Nye's *Religion* and two supplementary sources that further explain the theory.
- Your essay must be both descriptive (describing the them/pattern observed) and analytical (using the theory to analyze your observations).

Stage Four: Essay Revision (5%)

- **Due on Tuesday, December 4.**
- After you receive your graded essays, you will have about one week to implement some of the changes suggested by the instructor/TA and resubmit your essay.

Further instructions on how to complete each component of the Field Research Essay will be posted on the course website and communicated in class.

5. Take Home Exam (30%)

- Details will be communicated in class and posted on the course website.
- **The last day to submit the Take Home exam is Dec. 21.**

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Point Equivalence	Grade Definition
A+	90-100	12	Excellent: Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
A	85-89	11	
A-	80-84	10	
B+	77-79	9	Good: Evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.
B	73-76	8	
B-	70-72	7	
C+	67-69	6	Adequate: Student who is profiting from his/her university experience; understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
C	63-66	5	
C-	60-62	4	
D+	57-59	3	Marginal: Some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.
D	53-56	2	
D-	50-52	1	
F	0-49	0	Inadequate: Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature.

Read more about the [Grading System at Carleton](#).

RELI 2741A Website (cuLearn)

The course website on [cuLearn](#) is your most important resource. There, you will find, announcements, key updates and all necessary information about the course, including the syllabus, instructor and TA's contact information and more.

All announcements will be sent via cuLearn to your Carleton account. Please, consult this account frequently and regularly. Failing to do so which results in missing a deadline or overlooking important information about an assignment will NOT be accepted as an excuse.

E-Submission, File Format, and Late Penalty

1. E-Submission:

Essays, outlines, revisions and take home-exams **must be submitted electronically through the course website (cuLearn)**. Paper submissions are not required.

It is your responsibility to submit all assignment on time. No exceptions will be made for students who uploaded the wrong file or run into technological difficulties (e.g., Internet service down, course website temporarily out of work, laptop crushed down, etc.).

2. File Format:

Writing assignments **must be submitted as Microsoft Word files** (.doc or .docx). Mac users, please, convert your PAGES files into WORD, then upload them. Assignments submitted as a PDF will be graded, but will not receive any in-text feedback.

3. Late Penalty:

Assignments **must be submitted by 6:00PM of their due date**. Late submissions without a legitimate reason (sickness, injury, etc.) **will be deducted 10% of the assignment's grade per day** (including weekends). There will be no exceptions.

Missing the mid-term without a legitimate reason will automatically result in a grade of zero. There will be no exceptions.

In a case of illness or injury, you must submit [Carleton's official medical certificate](#).

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism WILL NOT be tolerated in this class. Cases of plagiarism will be dealt with in accordance with Carleton's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Plagiarism is presenting, 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 plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Submitting a take-home exam, essay or other assignment, in whole or in part, by someone else.
- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material without proper acknowledgment in any academic assignment.
- Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Read more about [Academic Integrity at Carleton](#).

Academic Accommodation Policy

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 detail, 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 a 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).

Class Protocols and Etiquettes

1. Cellphones, Laptops and Tablets:

The use of cellphones, laptops or tablets in class is **absolutely prohibited**. Be prepared to take notes using pen and paper. If you have a special need to use a laptop in class or prefer to use it for taking notes, you **must talk to me in advance and receive my permission in writing (by email)**.

Students spotted using their phones in class will have 2 points deducted from their total grade.

2. Note on Email Communication:

I have made a considerable effort to provide extensive details on every component of this course. So, please, keep your emails to me ONLY for information that cannot be found in the syllabus and cuLearn.

To email your instructor or TA, use your Carleton account. Emails sent through other systems (gmail, hotmail) run the risk of being automatically spammed, therefore not read.

Emails are answered normally within two business days, but may at times take longer.

3. Course Sharing Websites and Copyright:

If you have a special need to audio/video record the lectures, **you must talk to me in advance and receive my permission in writing (by email)**.

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copyright 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).

Student Resources

1. Writing Services:

Writing is a major component in this course. To do well in this class, you will need to improve your writing. To improve your writing, I highly recommend that you visit the [Centre for Student Academic Support](#) and benefit from their excellent [Writing Services](#). You can meet with a writing consultant during their drop-in hours on the 4th Floor of MacOdrum Library or book an [appointment online](#).

2. Learn more about a wide range of **student resources on campus** at [CUKnowHow Website](#).

Department Contact Information

Religion Program, 2A39 Paterson II 613-520-2100 II religion@cunet.carleton.ca

Office Hours: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

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

Lectures Schedule

Lectures	Topics	Readings	Assignments
Sep. 6	Introduction	The Syllabus Kessler, <i>Studying Religion</i> (Ch. 1)	
Sept. 11 & 13	Definitions	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 1)	Reflection. 1 (Sep. 13)
Sept. 18 & 20	Religion and Culture	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 2)	Refl. 2 (Sep.20)
Sept. 25 & 27	Religion and Power	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 3)	Refl. 3 (Sep. 27)
Oct. 2 & 4	Religion and Gender	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 4)	Refl. 4 (Oct. 2) Field visit contract (Oct. 4)
Oct. 9 & 11	Religion and Belief	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 5)	Refl. 5 (Oct. 11)
Oct. 16 & 18	Religion and Ritual	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 6)	Mid-Term (Oct. 18)
Oct. 23 & 25	Fall break. No Classes		
Oct. 30 & Nov. 1	Religion and Texts	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 7)	Essay outline (Oct. 30) Refl. 6 (Nov. 1)
Nov. 6 & 8	Contemporary Religions	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 8)	Refl. 7 (Nov. 8)
Nov. 13 & 15	Religion and Truth	Kessler, <i>Studying Religion</i> (Ch. 12)	Research Essay (Nov. 13) Refl. 8 (Nov. 15)
Nov. 20 & 22	Religion and Law	- Edge, <i>Religion and Law</i> , pp. 1-11 - Bakht, "Were Muslim Barbarians Really Knocking On the Gates of Ontario?"	Refl. 9 (Nov. 22)
Nov. 27 & 29	Religion and the Arts	Plate, <i>Religion, Art and Visual Culture</i> , (introduction)	Refl. 10 (Nov. 29)
De. 4 & 6	Wrapping up, Exam review	Kessler, <i>Studying Religion</i> (Ch. 2)	Essay Revision (Dec. 4)
December 21	Last day to submit the take-home exam.		



University Regulations for All Humanities Courses

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](#).

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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 System](#)

Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

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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. [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

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

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 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.](#)