

# RELI 2741A - Fall 2019

## Interpretations of Religion

**Meeting:** Monday & Wednesday, 11:35 AM - 12:55 PM  
University Centre 282

**Instructor:** Mourad Laabdi

**Email:** mourad.laabdi@carleton.ca

**Office:** Paterson Hall 2A61

**Office Hours:** Monday & Wednesday, 10:00-11:00 AM, or by Appt.

**Office Phone:** 613-520-2600, extension 1991

### Course Description

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What is religion? What defines a practice as 'religious' and another as 'non-religious'? What qualifies a text, site, figure, or object as 'sacred' and others as 'profane'? How and how deeply are the religious and the cultural entwined in our life? Are we living in an age of religion's evanescence or its resurgence? This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion and the many ways these and other important questions have been addressed by scholars. Its aim is to establish that the study of religion is a dynamic domain relevant to making sense of our present so much as our past. Students in this course will examine religion's central components such as belief, text and ritual by drawing on key theories of the study of religion and cases from various institutional and non-institutional religious traditions, and contemporary culture. They will pursue a comparative approach to explore the different ways religion informs culture and enjoy exciting experiential learning opportunities, such as attending a religious service, visiting a visual culture exhibit, and engaging in conversation with special guests who share similar interest in religion and culture.

### Course Evaluation

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Reading Reflections .....	20%	(10 x 2%)
Mid-Term .....	20%	Oct. 9
Field Research Essay .....	30%	Oct. 30
Exhibition Report .....	5%	TBD
Take-Home Exam .....	25%	Dec. 21

### Required Readings

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Malory Nye, *Religion: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2nd ed. [Electronic copy available through Carleton library](#). One hard copy will be placed under reserve for short term loan at the library.

All other assigned readings will be made available on cuLearn.

## Learning Outcomes

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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.
- Present an understanding of efficient ways of taking fieldwork notes and the ethnographic method.
- Express information, arguments and analyses accurately and with clarity in writing.

## Important Dates and Deadlines

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Sep. 30:	Last day to withdraw from this course with a full fee adjustment.
Oct. 9:	Research visit contracts due in class.
Oct. 14:	No class. Statutory holiday.
Oct. 16:	Mid-Term in class.
Oct. 21-25:	No class. Fall break.
Oct. 30:	Outline and Bibliography due.
Nov. 13:	Field research essay due.
Nov. 27:	Self-review due.
Dec. 21:	Last day to submit the take-home exam.

## RELI 2741A Website (cuLearn)

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The course website on [cuLearn](#) is your main resource. There, you will find key updates, announcements and all necessary information about the course, including the syllabus, your instructor's contact info and much more. All announcements will be sent to your Carleton account ending with [@carleton.ca](#). Please, consult this account regularly. Failing to do so that results in missing a deadline or overlooking important information about an assignment will NOT be accepted as an excuse.

## Course Requirements

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### 1. Reading

As a student in this course, you are responsible for studying on your own and before coming to class all assigned readings. It is key that you read not for content only, but try to identify things such as, the aim of the authors, who they are responding to, how they develop their argument, what evidence they provide to sustain it, etc. Reading the assigned materials is your first and most decisive step toward doing well in this course.

### 2. Reading Reflections (20%)

Students are required to submit 10 weekly reflections between Sep. 4 and Dec. 4. See "Lectures Schedule" below for exempt weeks. Because this is a split class meeting twice a week, reflections are due in the first

class every week; i.e., on Monday. **Reflections submitted on Wednesday will not be accepted.** Reflections worth 20% of your total grade (2% each) and are graded based on completion only; however, provided you meet the minimum requirements. See “Reflections Guidelines” on cuLearn for details.

### **3. Mid-Term Exam (20 %)**

The mid-term will be written in class on **October 16**, consist of multiple choice and short answer questions, and cover all lecture materials and assigned readings. See “Mid-Term Guidelines” on cuLearn for details.

### **4. Field Research Essay (30%)**

I have designed this activity with two goals in mind: (1) to help you gain insight into a tradition with which you are not familiar, (2) and help you acquire firsthand experience of some of the challenges and rewards of studying religion. This assignment will be completed over four stages. For full details on each stage, see

#### Stage One: The Field Research Visit

Students will attend a religious service of a tradition they are not familiar with. So, if one’s background is Christianity (regardless of how closely or remotely associated with it they feel), one ought to work on an entirely different religious tradition, such Islam or Hinduism. Your task during the field visit is to observe and take notes. Every student will fill out and sign a field trip contract, attend the service with two or more students (depending on class enrolment), and have a photo of them and their group taken at the service location. **Groups will be finalized, and signed contracts collected in class on October 9.**

#### Stage Two: Outline and Bibliography (5%)

Due on **October 30**. This is a two-part task: outline of the field research paper and annotated bibliography of two scholarly sources. The outline must state and briefly explain one major theme or pattern that you have observed, identify one theory from Nye’s book that is most helpful to analyse your observations. The bibliography is an annotation of at least two external scholarly sources that address the theory you chose from Nye’s book.

#### Stage Three: Field Research Essay (20%)

Due on **November 13**. This is the final writing phase where you give a mature analysis of your observations using theory. Your essay will be both descriptive (describing the theme/pattern observed) and analytical (using theory to analyze your observations).

#### Stage Four: Self-Review (5%)

Due on **November 27**. Your instructor will give you constructive feedback on your field research paper. You will have one week to implement some of the changes he suggests and submit your revised essay.

### **5. Exhibition Report (5%)**

Class will visit Olivia Johnston’s exhibition, “Saints and Madonnas” at the Carleton University Art Gallery. Each student will write a report on their experience reflecting on some of the photos or the exhibition as a whole. Exact date TBD. More details will be posted on cuLearn and communicated in class during the first two weeks.

### **6. Take-Home Exam (25%)**

Due on **December 21**. Complete details will be posted on cuLearn and communicated in class two weeks before the end of class.

## Academic Integrity

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**Plagiarism IS NOT tolerated in my classes.** Cases of plagiarism will be dealt with in accordance with Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy: <https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy.pdf>

**Plagiarism is presenting, intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of others as one's own.** This 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 in this class 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.

For more on *Academic Integrity at Carleton*, see: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

## Submitting Assignments and Source Citation

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### 1. Electronic Submission:

All written assignments in this course are to be submitted electronically through the course website. Log in to cuLearn, open "Submit Assignments" tab, and upload your assignment. It is your responsibility to submit your work on time and to take necessary measures not to run into last minute technical issues (Internet service down, laptop broke, etc.). No exceptions will be made in such cases.

### 2. File Format:

All written assignments must be submitted as **Microsoft Word files only** (.doc or .docx). If you use Mac, convert your PAGES ext. into WORD. Assignments submitted as a PDF are graded. However, they receive no in-text feedback.

### 3. System of Source Citation:

The citation style used in this course is Chicago Notes and Bibliography. Students are required to use it in every written assignment that asks for citations. To learn about this style of citation, visit:

[https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html)

## Missing Tests and Late Penalty

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Reading Reflections are accepted **ONLY** if the student attends class from the beginning to the end. Reflections from students who come late will not be accepted. See "Reading Reflections Guidelines" on cuLearn for 5 common ways in which students often lose their reflection's mark.

All written assignments submitted late without a *legitimate reason* will be deducted **10%** of their grade **per day** including weekends. Requests for extension must be joined with justificatory documents and must be communicated to the instructor *before the due date*, not after.

Missing the Midterm without a *legitimate reason* will result in a zero grade. Students who present proper documentation will have a makeup scheduled for them. There will be **ONLY ONE** makeup.

*A legitimate reason* may include illness, injury, urgent travel or a compassionate reason (e.g., death). For illness/injury, you must submit Carleton's official medical certificate: [https://carleton.ca/registrar/wp-content/uploads/med\\_cert.pdf](https://carleton.ca/registrar/wp-content/uploads/med_cert.pdf). For travel, a copy of the itinerary that shows clearly your name and dates of travel must be provided. In the event of death, you must submit a letter from the funeral house or religious institution that performed the funeral which confirms your attendance.

## Protocol and Etiquette

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### 1. Classroom Behavior:

The classroom is a space where every student should feel safe and included. Formative dialogue is highly encouraged, and open-mindedness is expected. Respect for each other's differences and opposing views will always be sustained. Disruptive behavior such as dual chatting, taking a nap and preparing for another class while in this class is not permitted and will not be tolerated.

### 2. Cellphones and Laptops:

Cellphones, laptops or tablets are NOT PERMITTED in class. Prepare to take notes using pen and paper. If you *need* to use your laptop to take notes, you must email me in advance to obtain my permission in writing. Students spotted using their phones in class will receive a zero on their reading reflection.

### 3. Emailing the Instructor:

I have made a considerable effort to provide extensive details on every component of this course on cuLearn. So, please, try not to email me about information that you can find *easily* in the syllabus and/or cuLearn. When you send an email, use your Carleton account. Emails sent via other operators (Gmail, Hotmail, etc.) risk being automatically spammed, therefore not read. I respond to emails within one to two business days, but it may take longer under certain circumstances.

### 4. Course Sharing and Copyright:

Video/audio recording of lectures and taking photos of slides is NOT PERMITTED. If you have a *special need* to record the lectures, you must talk to me in advance and receive my permission in writing.

At Carleton University, classroom teaching and learning activities by both instructors and students (lectures, discussions, presentations, etc.) 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 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).

## Academic Accommodation Policy

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To request special arrangements to meet your academic obligations, the processes are as follows:

**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](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).

**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](#).

## Student Resources

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### 1. Writing Services:

Writing is a major component of this course and students are expected to improve their writing skills. You are highly encouraged to use Carleton's Writing Services (<https://carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>). You can meet with a writing consultant during drop-in hours on the 4th Floor of MacOdrum Library or book an appointment online. Visit the Centre for Student Academic Support at <https://carleton.ca/csas/>.

2. For more student resources on campus, visit <https://carleton.ca/cuknowhow/student-resources/>.

## 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 if 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; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.

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

## Department Contact Information

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Religion Program, 2A39 Paterson II 613-520-2100 II [religion@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:religion@cunet.carleton.ca)

Office Hours: 8:00 am – 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

## Lectures Schedule

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Lectures	Topics	Readings	Assignments
Sep. 4	Introduction	The syllabus.	
Sept 9 & 11	What is Religion?	Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious;" and Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Chapter 1).	Reflection 1
Sep. 16 & 18	Religion and Culture	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 2).	Refl. 2
Sep. 23 & 25	Religion and Power	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 3).	Refl. 3
Sep. 30 & Oct. 2	Religion and Gender	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 4).	Refl. 4
Oct. 7 & 9	Religion and Belief	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 5).	Refl. 5 <b>Contracts (Oct. 9)</b>
Oct. 14 & 16	<b>Oct. 14: No Class. Statutory holiday.</b>		
	<b>Oct. 16: Midterm Exam in class.</b>		
Oct. 23	<b>No Class. Fall break.</b>		
Oct. 28 & 30	Religion and Ritual	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 6).	Refl. 6 <b>Outline/Biblio (Oct. 30)</b>
Nov. 4 & 6	Religion and Texts	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 7).	Refl. 7
Nov. 11 & 13	Religion and Visual Arts	Plate, "Visual Arts and Culture," in <i>Vocabulary for the Study of Religion</i> .	Refl. 8 <b>Essay (Nov. 13)</b>
Nov. 18 & 20	Contemporary Religions	Nye, <i>Religion</i> (Ch. 8)	Refl. 9
Nov. 25 & 27	Rethinking Religion	Gilhus, "All Over the Place: The Contribution of New Age to a Spatial Model of Religion."	Refl. 10 <b>Self-Review (Nov. 27)</b>
Dec. 2 & 4	Take-Home Workshop	Movie: <i>My Name is Khan</i> Film Analysis Guidelines	<b>Screening (Dec. 2)</b> <b>Discussion (Dec. 4)</b>
Dec. 21	<b>Last day to submit the take-home exam.</b>		



## University Regulations for All College of the 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:

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**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](#)

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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).

### **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 is 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](http://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**

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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 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

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[CUKnowHow Website](#)

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