

COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES  
RELIGION: RELI 3741A

CLASSICAL APPROACHES TO RELIGION

**Instructor:** Dr. Shawna Dolansky

**E-mail:** Shawna.Dolansky@carleton.ca

**Office hours:** 2a60 PA, Tu 11:30am – 1:30PM

**Office Phone:** 520-2600 ext. 7029

**Lectures:** Fri 2:35-5:25pm, ME 3190

We will consider a variety of important theories of religion that have been advanced since the idea of a scientific approach to religion was first proposed. Over the semester, we will discuss, debate, and reflect on the nature and the origin of religion according to the founders and key thinkers within the discipline, and work toward an understanding of how, when, why, by whom, and for what purpose(s) the systematic, critical, and scientific study of religion came into existence and continues to be sustained. Our review begins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues until roughly 1990.

**Learning Outcomes:**

In this course, students will –

- Learn the history of the field of religious studies;
- Learn the basic terminology and concepts used in the academic study of religion;
- Come to understand the origins of differing ways of thinking about and defining religion;
- Encounter a variety of theories and analytical methods used in the interpretation of religion;
- Learn how to critically analyse primary source texts that outline these theories and methods;
- Develop their own reflections and responses to theoretical perspectives on religion that have been and continue to be employed in the academy.

**Required Texts:**

1. Daniel Pals *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists* – available in the campus bookstore.
2. William E. Deal & Timothy K. Beal *Theory for Religious Studies* - available as e-book through library.
3. Other readings listed on the syllabus will be made available through CuLearn.

**Evaluation:**

**1. Weekly reading analyses.**

*12 papers worth 5 points each; can drop your lowest 2 for a total of 50 points*

- (a) These are due every week starting Sept 14 and continuing until Dec 7, at the *beginning* of class. Late analyses will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- (b) They are to be 1-2 page overviews of the primary source readings assigned, following the “5 questions” format outlined in Pals’ introduction. The purpose of these is to demonstrate understanding of the primary source readings, as well as to keep a log and summary of the major thinkers and works read.

**2. Glossaries.**

*Each version is worth 5 points for a total of 10 points*

- (a) This is an ongoing project in which you will keep track of key terms from lecture and readings on a weekly basis.
- (b) The first version of your glossary will be handed in at the *beginning* of class Nov 2 and should reflect key terms encountered up to and including the readings for that date.
- (c) The final version of your glossary will be handed in at the *beginning* of class Dec 7 and should reflect any additions, corrections, and modifications of key terms encountered throughout the semester.
- (d) Although you may discuss the contents of your glossary with your classmates, the final work should be your own. Any glossaries which bear suspicious resemblances to other glossaries in the class will be flagged for potential plagiarism and treated accordingly.
- (e) Late glossaries will be penalized 1 point out of 5 for every day late.

**3. Individual presentations. 8 points**

- (a) Each student is responsible for signing up to give a presentation every week from Sept 21 through Nov 9.
- (b) Individual presentations are available in 3 forms:

- Summary of a theorist and his work according to the same format as the weekly reading analyses, based on extra primary source reading in Pals that the rest of the class will not be assigned;
- Summary of a theorist and his/her work according to the same format as the weekly reading analyses, based on the secondary source overview in Deal & Beals and a primary source reading (or selection of readings) of the presenter's choice;
- Summary of a published academic response to the theorist under discussion that day, and explication of that response to the class along with a reflection on it and/or resulting discussion questions for the class.

(c) When you sign up for a presentation, you are committing to covering that topic/author for the class. The class will be counting on you to explain important material to which they will otherwise not be exposed. Be sure to arrive to class prepared to fulfil that commitment in the same way as you will want others to fulfil it for you.

#### **4. Group presentations. 7 points**

(a) Each student will sign up to present material on *either* civil religion (Nov 23) *or* feminism (Nov 30); two groups will accordingly be formed in the class.

(b) Although you will be given some class time to coordinate with each other, groups should arrange to meet outside of class as necessary.

(c) Although you will be part of a group, the work will be divided up so that each group member will have their own discrete theorist or article to present to the class in coordination with the demands of the topic and the constituency of the group. **MARKS WILL BE ASSIGNED TO INDIVIDUALS BASED ON THE MATERIAL EACH PERSON PRESENTS** - there will be no group marks assigned.

(d) When you sign up for a presentation, you are committing to covering that topic/article/author for both your group, and the class as a whole. Both your group, and the class as a whole, will be counting on you to explain important material to which they will otherwise not be exposed. Be sure to arrive to class prepared to fulfil that commitment in the same way as you will want others to fulfil it for you.

#### **5. Attendance and participation. 10 points**

(a) More than 2 absences over the course of the semester will endanger your ability to pass the course. If you have legitimate reasons for your absences, notify the professor prior to the class and follow up with proper documentation within 24 hours of the class missed.

(b) This is not an 8:30 class, so arriving late more than once will be looked upon with disfavour for its discourtesy to fellow classmates and disrespect to the professor, and will be reflected in your marks accordingly.

(c) Arriving excessively late without prior notice to the professor, or leaving at the break without medical documentation will be counted as absences.

(d) Being engaged on electronic devices for purposes that have nothing to do with class activities is also notably discourteous to fellow classmates and disrespectful of the professor and will be counted as absences from class. (Yes, I can tell.)

(e) This is a course about ideas, and is best experienced within the context of an enthusiastic, dynamic, fluid, and informed exchange of same. Active and constructive participation in class discussions will be rewarded.

#### **6. Final take-home exam. 15 points**

(a) An 8-10 page paper that will consider the cumulative knowledge gained in the course and discuss it in light of extra readings and a question presented to the class Dec 7.

(b) Typed, double-spaced, pages numbered, due Dec 21 by 11:50pm in the online dropbox at cuLearn.

(c) Must use Chicago style for citations: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

(d) Exams that copy, in whole *or in part*, wording or ideas from any source online or in print without proper citation, will be considered instances of plagiarism. Plagiarism will be prosecuted in this course to the fullest extent, which means it will be painstakingly documented and presented in a report to the Dean's office. The Dean's office takes all allegations of plagiarism extremely seriously and an investigation will ensue which will leave a permanent mark on your academic record. You could receive an F for the course, be placed on academic probation, or even expelled from the university.

(e) Late exams will not be accepted.

**SCHEDULE:**

**Sept 7**            **Introduction to the course and the study of religion**

**Sept 14**           **E. B. Tylor & James Frazer**

READ Pals' intro + pp. 1-6, 10-18, 22(bottom)-35, 37-39, 50-58.

DUE analysis of readings

**Sept 21**           **Sigmund Freud**

READ Pals pp. 71-98

DUE analysis of readings

*Responses:*

- Marsha Aileen Hewitt, "Psychoanalysis, Religious Experience, and the Study of Religion: Not "Religious Studies." Critical Research on Religion 1 #1 (2013): 25-32.
- Jonathan Lear, "The Illusion of a Future: The Rhetoric of Freud's Critique of Religious Belief," ch 2 in *On Freud's The Future of an Illusion*, ed. S. Akhtar, Routledge 2018.

**Sept 28**           **Emile Durkheim**

READ Pals 99-125; 135-142

DUE analysis of readings

*Responses:*

- Steven Lukes, "Is Durkheim's Understanding of Religion Compatible with Believing?" Religion 42 #1 (2012): 41-52
- W.S.F. Pickering, "The Eternality of the Sacred: Durkheim's Error?" Archives des sciences sociales des religions. N. 69 (1990): 91-108.

**Oct 5**             **Karl Marx**

READ Pals 143-170

DUE analysis of readings

*Responses:*

- Christian Uchegbue, "A Critical Evaluation of Marx's Theory of Religion," American Journal of Social Issues & Humanities, Vol.1(2) (2011): 50-81.
- Richard Comstock, "The Marxist Critique of Religion: A Persisting Ambiguity," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1976): 327-342.

*Presentations:*

- William James (ch 6 in Pals)
- Friedrich Nietzsche (ch 3 Deal and Beal; + primary source of choice)

**Oct 12**           **Max Weber**

READ Pals 237-255; 260-66

*Presentations:*

- Rudolf Otto (ch 7 in Pals)
- Ferdinand De Saussure (ch 4 in Deal & Beal; + primary source)

**Oct 19**           **Mircea Eliade**

READ Pals 271-308

DUE analysis of readings

*Presentations:*

- E. E. Evans-Pritchard (ch 10 in Pals)
- Roland Barthes (ch 7 in Deal & Beal + primary source)
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty (ch 24 in Deal & Beal + primary source)

**Oct 26**           **BREAK WEEK**

**Nov 2 Clifford Geertz**  
 READ Pals 341-372  
 DUE Glossary v 1  
 DUE analysis of readings

*Presentations:*

- Jean Baudrillard (ch 9 in Deal & Beal + primary source)
- Jacques Lacan (ch 20 in Deal & Beal + primary source)

**Nov 9 Derrida & Foucault**  
 READ ch 15 & 16 in Deal & Beal  
 READ Michel Foucault “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 8, No 4 (1982): 777-795.  
 DUE analysis of readings

*Presentations:*

- Pierre Bourdieu (ch 11 in Deal & Beal + primary source)
- Wilfred Cantwell Smith (<https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/winterspring2011/moral-imagination-wilfred-cantwell-smith> and <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/comparative-religion-whither-and-why-by-wilfred-cantwell-smith/>)

**Nov 16 Edward Said**  
 No class today  
 READ ch 25 in Deal & Beal  
 READ *Orientalism* intro and ch 1  
 DUE analysis of readings (by e-submission today; discussion will be next week)

**Nov 23 Civil Religion**  
 READ Robert Bellah “Civil Religion in America” [http://www.robertbellah.com/articles\\_5.htm](http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm)  
*Group Presentation:* on the concept of civil religion, articles in *The Rhetoric of American Civil Religion* and other readings TBD

**Nov 30 Feminism**  
 READ Darlene Juschka “Gender” in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* pp. 236-237  
 READ Friedman & Dolansky “Women’s Status” in *The Bible Now* pp. 121-122(top)  
*Group Presentation:* on the first two “waves” of feminism; readings TBD but should include Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary Daly, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Joan Scott, Judith Plaskow, Carol Christ, Luce Irigaray (ch 18 D&B), Gayatri Spivak (26 D&B), Julia Kristeva (19 D&B)

**Dec 7 Why (Whether?) Classical Approaches Matter**  
 READ Russell McCutcheon “Studying Religion” pp 1-11 only  
 READ Rodney Stark, “SSSR Presidential Address, 2004: Putting An End to Ancestor Worship,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43:4 (2004) 465–475  
 READ Bruce Lincoln “Theses on Method,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8 (1996), 225-7  
 DUE Reflection on readings  
*Take-home exam will be assigned in 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.](#)