

**RELI 4850A-5850W**  
**Martyrdom**  
**Prof. Kimberly Stratton**  
**Winter 2017**  
**Thursday 2:30-5:30**

**Course Description:**

With the upsurge in terrorist violence since 9/11, often perpetrated by suicide bombers and others willing to sacrifice their lives for a cause, understanding the motivations and social underpinnings of voluntary death has become more pressing. These acts of violence instill horror, not only for the loss of life they cause among innocent civilians, but for the willingness of ordinary people to use their bodies as weapons of terror. Religion often underpins this willingness, even in some cases eagerness, to die and it is religion that converts such deaths into martyrdoms and confers not only honor and respect upon the martyr, but promises of heavenly reward and salvation (individual and collective) as well. Furthermore, the conflicts that lead to terrorist attacks are increasingly cast in religious (rather than political) terms although secular benefits (such as political control and economic benefit) often accrue to stakeholders in the attack. Religiously motivated suicide is not a new phenomenon, however, but has a long history in Eastern and Western culture.

This course investigates the topic of religiously inflected suicide and martyrdom comparatively and theoretically. By examining cases from a variety of religions, time periods, and historical contexts (ranging from the Ancient Mediterranean and Karbala, to Jonestown, Heaven's Gate, and recent Islamicist suicide bombings), this course will strive to discover the political and social dynamics of martyrdom: how does martyrdom and religiously inflected suicide engage power in the public sphere? How do they function as responses to social and political dynamics? What theoretical approaches most illuminate this extreme behavior? Who decides what counts as martyrdom and how are martyrs created? How does Martyrdom contest or reinforce authority? What role does martyrdom play in the collective memory and identity of a group? How does that shape practice and behavior for subsequent generations?

Wherever possible, the course will engage primary sources that reflect the beliefs and practices of the tradition under consideration as well as secondary sources that theoretically consider, reflect upon, and illuminate them.

**Course Objectives:**

Students who successfully complete this course

1. Will have gained knowledge about the history, beliefs, and practices related to acts of martyrdom in the major traditions covered (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism).

2. Will be able to identify and understand various theoretical complexities and problems that inhere in defining an act as martyrdom.
3. Will be able to read a primary source both critically and with sensitivity to the values and beliefs of people who revere it.
4. Will be able to present a summary and critical analysis of a scholarly work on the topic of martyrdom.
5. Will be able to generate discussion questions to illuminate and engage with primary and secondary readings assigned in the course.
6. Will be able to propose a research question and follow through with an outline, bibliography, and 15-20pp research paper that presents an argument and clear thesis.
7. Will be able to present a 20 min presentation of research to the class and engage questions from peers.

### **Evaluation:**

Participation is essential for the success of the seminar; students must attend all sessions and actively contribute to the discussions. **3 or more absences (without a doctor's note) will lead to failure in the course.**

### **RELI 4850**

Participation 30%; Leading one (1) discussion 10%; Weekly reading responses/discussion questions (1pg) on assigned readings of the week 15%; Research paper (15pp) 30%; 20 min Research Presentation 15%.

### **RELI 5850**

Participation 30%; Leading one (1) discussion 10%; Weekly reading responses/discussion questions on assigned readings of the week (1-2pp) 15%; Research paper (18-20pp) 30%; 20 min Research Presentation 15%.

### **Course Texts:**

**Ordered at Octopus Books** (116 Third Avenue, Ottawa, K1S 2K1. 613-233-2589)

- *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Paul Middleton (London: T&T Clark, 2011)  
(also available as an ebook via ARES on cuLearn)

**All other readings available via ARES on cuLearn unless indicated otherwise**

### **Schedule:**

Jan 5            Course Intro  
 READ: 1) "Making Martyrs" in *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Paul Middleton (London: T&T Clark, 2011); and 2) "The Distance We have Travelled" in *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martrydom among Christian and Jews*

*in Antiquity*, Arthur Droge and James Tabor (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992)

- Jan 12      Theoretical approaches  
READ: 1) "Memory and Sacrifice: An Embodied Theory of Martyrdom," DeSoucey et al; 2) "Religion, Rationality and Experience," Colin Jerolmack and Douglas Porpora  
RECOMMENDED: "Killing for Politics," Roxanne Euben
- Jan 19      Noble Death in Western tradition  
READ: 1) Plato's *The Phaedo* (URL link on cuLearn); (2) "The Death of Socrates" in *Noble Death*; 2)  
RECOMMENDED: "Is there Martyrdom in the Hebrew Bible" in *Sacrificing the Self: Perspectives on Martyrdom and Religion*, ed by Margaret Cormack (New York: Oxford UP, 2001)
- Jan 26      Jewish martyrs  
READ: (1) 2 Maccabees (URL on cuLearn); (2) "Martyrdom in Judaism" in *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed*  
RECOMMENDED: "Legend of the 10 Martyrs" in *Rabbinic Fantasies*, ed. David Stern and Mark J. Mirsky (New Haven: Yale, 1998)
- Feb 2      Early Christianity  
READ: (1) "Perpetua and Felicitas" (URL on cuLearn); (2) "Theology of Martyrdom" In *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed*  
RECOMMENDED: "Inventing Martyrs in Early Christianity" in *The Myth of Persecution*, Candida Moss (New York: Harper Collins, 2013)
- Feb 9      Islam-Karbala  
READ: (1) "Battle of Karbala" (URL on cuLearn); (2) "Part Two: The Deluge of Weeping Flagellant Process and Passion Play" in *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, Heinz Halm (trans. By Allison Brown, Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1997)  
RECOMMENDED: "Visions and Re-Visions of Karbala" in *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory*, Syed Akbar Hyder (New York: Oxford UP, 2006)
- Feb 16      Sikh saints and warriors  
READ: (1) "Playing the Game of Love," in *Fighting for Faith and Nation*, Cynthia Keppley Mahmoud (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); (2) "Diasporic Sublime: Sikh martyrs, Internet mediations, and the question of the unimaginable," Brian Keith Axel

RECOMMENDED: "From Protesters to Martyrs: How to Become a 'True' Sikh,"  
Lionel Baixas and Charlène Simon  
**Research Question/Proposal Due (1pg)**

Feb 23 NO CLASS

Mar 2 Hindu Sati  
READ: (1) "Truth and Sacrifice: Sati Immolations in India" in *Sacrificing the Self*; (2) "The Roop Kanwar Case" in *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India*, ed. By John Stratton Hawley (New York: Oxford UP, 1994)  
RECOMMENDED: "The Iconographies of Sati" in *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse*

Mar 9 Martyrdom and suicide "cults"  
READ: (1) "The Devil in Mr. Jones" In *Imagining Religion*, J.Z. Smith (Chicago: U. of Chicago press, 1982); (2) "Mass Suicide and Branch Davidians" in *Cult, Religion, and Violence*, edited by David Bromley and Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002)  
RECOMMENDED: "Making sense of Heaven's Gate" in *Cult, Religion, and Violence*

Mar 16 "Terrorist" martyrs  
READ: (1) "Final Instructions to Hijackers of September 11" in *Holy Terrors*, Bruce Lincoln (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 2003); (2) "Martyrdom in Islam" In *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed*; (3) "The Psychology of the Global Jihadists" in *The Fundamentalist Mindset*, ed. Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (New York: Oxford UP, 2010)  
**Paper Outline Due (must include a clear thesis statement and argument)**

Mar 23 Accidental "martyrs"  
READ: (1) *She Said Yes: The Unlikely Martyrdom of Cassi Bernal*, Misty Bernal (Pocket Books, 2000); (2) "Remembering Matthew Shepard," Thomas Dunn  
RECOMMENDED: "Religion as a Chain of Memory" in *Martyrdom and Memory*, Elizabeth Castelli (New York: Columbia UP, 2004 **and** "Not for Neda," Mehdi Samati and Robert Brookey

Mar 30 Research Presentations

April 6 Research presentations  
**April 7 Research Papers Due in Religion Drop-box (PA 2A)**

## REGULATIONS COMMON TO 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.

### PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- 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;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course

### GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see "Petitions to Defer")
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

### WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 9, 2016**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 7, 2017**.

### REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me 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. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: [carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/](http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/)

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by **Nov. 11, 2016** for the Fall term and **March 10, 2017** for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: [carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/](http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/)

### PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment. If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery.

If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please [contact](#) the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept.

Deferrals of a final assignment or take home, in courses without a final examination, must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor.

Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **3 working days** of the original final exam.

### ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic & Career Development Services 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-6632	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor Library