

The College of the Humanities (Religion)
Nature and the Category of the Sacred
Seminar RELI 4850A/5850F

Thursdays 11:35 – 2:25 PA 2A46

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Office Hours: Thursdays 3:00 – 4:30 pm (or by appointment)

It is now widely accepted that humanity has entered a new epoch, the Anthropocene, where human activity has radically altered the planetary landscape and the very chemistry of the atmosphere. Warnings of possible environmental catastrophe have moved from the periphery to near the centre of public and political discourse. Some skeptical critics have dismissed this as a return of religious apocalypticism. Other voices have taken the opposite view: that what is in fact needed at this historical juncture *is* a return of religion, at least in the form of reverence for nature and the re-enchantment of the world through recovery of the category of the sacred. This seminar investigates what is meant when humans invoke the term “sacred.” In particular, what does it mean, both theologically and legally, to declare a geographical location a sacred site? How does the secular state respond to claims of sacrality? How are we to adjudicate differing visions of how to create an “ecological civilization”? The seminar engages these questions by focusing on a local and contemporary instantiation of environmental debate: the contestation over the development of the Chaudière Falls and its islands (regarded as an Indigenous sacred site) here in Ottawa at the heart of the national capital.

The course is in two parts divided by the Fall Break. In the first we read theory of the sacred and its loss through disenchantment in the dominant culture. In the second part we turn to the place of the sacred in Canadian Indigenous cultures and our local Ottawa case study.

READINGS

These are available on the cuLearn site and the ARES library platform. They include the readings given in the schedule below as well as links to a variety of websites, primary source documents, and blog posts related to the local Chaudière Falls controversy.

EVALUATION

Reading Responses for 10 weeks = 15%

Each week you are to post a paragraph length reflection on an idea in one or more of the readings for that week. You are also to post a paragraph on either your potential essay topic, or, once that has been decided, on an insight or development in your research for your paper. Responses may include a question you would like to see addressed by the group. These response/reflections are to be posted on the cuLearn site by Wednesday, i.e., *the day before* our weekly meeting. They will be visible to all in the seminar and will allow me to offer my own feedback. These responses are to promote informed engagement at the weekly meeting which is the *sine qua non* of success in this seminar. They are also intended to keep you oriented and attentive to your research endeavour.

Seminar Presentation and Participation 25%

Each student will be responsible for presenting on the readings for the week once in the semester. This, along with brief oral presentation of your final paper, will be worth approximately 10% and will be added to the assessment of your overall engagement with the course material as reflected in your participation (15%) in the seminar. Note: *to miss more than three of the weekly meetings (which would mean, in effect, you had missed a third of the class) is to forfeit credit for the course*

Essay Proposal 10%

Suggested topics will be provided. The proposal indicates your choice from among the topics. It is to consist of a working title, a working bibliography, and a preliminary abstract that details a preliminary thesis statement. The tentative thesis statement should indicate how you intend to focus the chosen topic and the argument to be developed. **Due Oct. 20.** Note: This proposal is an absolutely essential feature of the course. Decisions have to be made early regarding your topic as your research essay may necessitate using inter-library loan and other research avenues that necessitate being well underway by mid semester.

Editorial Exercise 10%

600 -700 words following the genre required for submission of an opinion piece to a newspaper. This is an exercise in concision, cogency, and communicative style. **Due by Dec. 2.**

Research Essay 40%

A research essay on the order of 15 -20, double-spaced pages. [M.A. students 20- 25 pages] Topics must be approved by the instructor. Essays must have a clearly articulated thesis. *Essays must also include an abstract.* **Due Dec. 8.** Note: late papers (except with medical documentation) are docked 4 percentage points per day.

Note: All course requirements listed above must be fulfilled to gain credit for this course

SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule is malleable and may be affected by the availability of guest speakers

Part I

1. Thurs. Sept. 8
Introduction to the course.
Reading: on the concept of the Anthropocene (selected resources)
2. Thurs. Sept. 15
Classical theorists of the Sacred
Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford: OUP, 1979. pp. 1-24.
Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, New York: Harcourt, 1957.
Introduction, pp. 8-18; ch. 1, "Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred," pp. 20-65.
3. Thurs. Sept. 22
Eliade cont., and critical appraisal
Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, ch. 3 "The Sacredness of Nature and Cosmic Religion," pp. 116-159.
Veikko Anttonen "Sacred." In *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell McCutcheon, London: Cassell, 2000. pp. 271-282.
4. Thurs. Sept. 29
Disenchantment I
Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation"
Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis." *Science*, New Series, 155, no. 3767 (March 1967): 1203-1207.
5. Thurs. Oct. 6
Disenchantment II
Bronislaw Szerszynski, *Nature, Technology and the Sacred*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. Part I Modernity, Nature and the Sacred, ch. 1 "The Disenchantment of the World," pp. 3- 9; ch. 2, "Nature, Secularization and the Transformation of the Sacred," pp. 20-27; Part II, Nature and Technology, ch. 3 "Nature, Science and the Death of Pan," pp. 31-50
6. Thurs. Oct. 13
Reactions to Disenchantment I
Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, New York: OUP, 1996. ch. 8, "Religion and the Resacralization of Nature," pp. 270-292.

7. Thurs. Oct. 20
Reactions to Disenchantment II
Arne Naess, "The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. A summary." *Inquiry* 16.1 (1973): 95-100
Thomas Berry, "The Universe Story." In *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace, and Ecological Wisdom*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.
8. Thurs. Oct. 27 **FALL BREAK**

Part II

9. Thurs. Nov. 3
An Ottawa story
Samuel de Champlain, Journal, 1613
Philemon Wright, "An account of the first settlement of the Township of Hull, on the Ottawa River, Lower Canada." *The Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository*, Volume 3, no. 15 (September, 1824): 234-246
Jean-Luc Pilon and Randy Boswell, "Below the Falls: An Ancient Cultural Landscape in the Centre of (Canada's Capital Region) Gatineau." *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 39 (2015): 257-293.
10. Thurs. Nov. 5
Indigenous Lifeways
Irving Hallowell, "Ojibwa ontology, behavior, and world view." In *Readings in Indigenous Religions*, ed. Graham Harvey, London: Continuum, 2002.
Peter Nabokov, *Where the Lightning Strikes: The Lives of American Indian Sacred Places*, ch. 2, "Naming the Spirits – Ojibwa," pp. 20-34.
11. Thurs. Nov. 10
Indigenous Sacred
Bryan Cummings and Kirby Whiteduck, "Towards a Model for the Identification and Recognition of Sacred Sites" (pp 3-24); Leroy Little Bear, "Aboriginal Relationships to the Land and Resources" (pp. 15-20); Peter Kulchynski, "Bush/Lands: Some Problems in Defining the Sacred" (pp. 21-24). In *Sacred Lands: Aboriginal World Views, Claims and Conflicts*, eds. Jill Oakes et al. Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, 1998.

12. Thurs. Nov. 17
Sacred in the Courts I
Darlene Johnston, "Respecting and Protecting the Sacred." A Report for the Ipperwash Inquiry (2006) pp. 1-37.
13. Thurs. Nov. 24
Sacred in the Courts II
Michael Lee Ross, *First Nations Sacred Sites in Canada's Courts*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005. Introduction, pp.1-6; ch. 1, "The Outlines of a General Theory of Sacred Sites," pp.7-11.
Marc Fonda, "Are they like us yet? Some thoughts on why religious freedom remains elusive for Aboriginals in North America." *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*. 2.4.4 (2011): 1-14.
14. Thurs. Dec. 1
Settler and Indigenous Imagination
Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, Berkeley: University of California Press, ch. 21, "The Ecologically Noble Savage," pp. 342-358.
Byron Plant, "Secret, Powerful, and the Stuff of Legends: Revisiting Theories of Invented Tradition." *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*. 28.1 (2008): 175-194
15. Thurs. Dec. 8
Symposium
Fifteen minute oral presentations of research papers

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/

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/

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 **5 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 th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor Library