

CARLETON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES
RELIGION PROGRAM: RELI 4850A WINTER 2010
“Prophets and Revolutionaries”
(Seminar in the Study of Religion)

Professor Johannes C. Wolfart

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES:

This seminar will explore radical and revolutionary dimensions of western Christianity in the modern period, using representations of historic cases drawn from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Members will consider the material and ideological circumstances linking the following major religio-political upheavals:

- the German Peasants’ War and the Radical Reformation of the sixteenth century
- the English Revolution and Radical Sects of the seventeenth century
- the Red River and Northwest Rebellions and prophetic leadership in the nineteenth century
- Revolutionary politics and popular religion in Nicaragua in the twentieth century

Our exploration will be guided by four works of very different genres: a novel by an anarchist collective, a classic of “radical history,” a monograph by a political scientist and conservative “public intellectual,” and a recent ethnography. Different as they are, each one of these works is distinguished by a strong interpretive bent. While these works may be augmented with “primary documents” (distributed via WebCT), our initial focus will be on the textual representation of radical Christians (prophets) and citizens/subjects (revolutionaries).

Furthermore, the seminar will evaluate:

- attempts, widespread and ongoing, to differentiate religious “belief” from political “ideology”
- common assumptions about the increasingly or essentially secular nature of modernity
- historical materialist approaches to popular politics
- the applicability of the approach known as the “social history of ideas” to the study of religion

The seminar will proceed in the mode of a workshop and proceed from the assumption that debate on a question is fruitful even when it remains inconclusive. Finally, please note that while some of the worldviews studied in this course are explicitly theological, the academic procedures and critical methods employed in the academic study of religion are not. **This course presupposes your acceptance of the principles of the modern research university.** Your understanding of these, especially as they pertain to the study of religion, will undoubtedly develop further during this course. Similarly, your development and presentation of the essay proposal and completion of the term essay will likely add to your academic skills set.

REQUIRED READING:

- Luther Blissett, *Q* (Arrow Books, 2000).
- Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Penguin Books, 1991 [1972]).
- Thomas Flanagan, *Louis ‘David’ Riel: Prophet of the New World*. Rev. ed. (University of Toronto Press, 1996).
- Roger Lancaster, *Thanks to God and the Revolution: Popular Religion and Class Consciousness in the New Nicaragua* (Columbia University Press, 1988).

EVALUATION:

- Essay Proposal – **10%** (2-3 pages plus bibliography)
- Workshop presentation of essay draft – **20%**
- Term Essay – **50%** (15-20 pages)
- Ongoing seminar participation/contribution – **20%** (including the occasional pop-quiz on readings, if necessary)

Certainly, it is my aim as a teacher to get to know you as individuals, to recognize your individual strengths and weaknesses, and to foster individual intellectual development. At the same time, however, I am obliged to treat individuals equally in certain key respects. As a marker, therefore, I cannot take into consideration anything other than your actual performance on the items above. Similarly, for the sake of equity the following **penalties for late assignments** will be strictly enforced: 2 marks (i.e. 2% of total grade) per day or partial day. Exceptions will be made only in extreme cases (snow storm, documented medical emergency, etc.) and when an extension has been granted by me (and for very good reasons, of course) at least one week in advance of the due date.

TERM ESSAY

In this course you will be expected to produce a term essay on a topic of your choice, within certain parameters and in consultation with me. A scholarly essay is different in certain key respects from other forms of academic writing. Certainly, a term essay is not a book report or a research paper. An **essay brief** with detailed instructions will be distributed to you in due course. To further increase the likelihood of your success with the essay, I have made the preparation and “workshopping” of an **essay draft** a significant part of this course.

POLICY ON ATTENDANCE

Not only is it common practice to evaluate participation in discussion and contribution to a seminar, it is also customary that habitual non-attendance be considered unacceptable performance. Such non-attendance entails a failure to contribute that is simply un-collegial. Moreover, since it is impossible to make up a missed seminar, a member who does not attend regularly cannot really be said to have taken the course. **Therefore, any member who is absent from more than 3 meetings of the seminar will not receive course credit.** In other words, all members of the seminar must be present for three quarters of all meetings of the seminar! Period.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours will be held Wednesdays from 4:00-5:00.

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

In order to ensure compliance with the federal privacy act commonly known as FIPPA (i.e. for your protection), Carleton communications policy states that faculty must conduct email communications with students only through their Carleton Connect accounts. Please be advised, further, that students can normally expect up to a 24hour turn-around time on e-mail communication, especially during high volume times (i.e. before examinations, at essay time, etc.).

SEMINAR MEETING SCHEDULE AND TOPICS

Week I (7 January) – Introduction to the course and background to the German Peasants’ War and the Reformation.

Read: Blissett, pp. 1-136

Week II (14 January) – What is the status of the novel as a datum? [please note that I shall not be able to attend this meeting; I am obliged to attend meetings off-campus that day]

Read: Blissett, pp. 143-253

Week III (21 January) – The legacies of the Reformation/Radical Reformation: Church and State; “conservative” and “progressive” Christianity.

Read: Blissett, pp. 254-374

Essay Proposals Due on 21 January

Week IV (28 January) – England in the seventeenth-century; what is the status of the “public sphere” in early modern Europe?

Read: Hill, pp. 13-183

Week V (4 February) – The legacies of the English revolution: from the Bible belt to Billy Bragg.

Read: Hill, pp. 184-323

Week VI (11 February) – Prophets in resistance to colonization: the remarkable case of Louis Riel, the “father of Manitoba.”

Read: Flanagan, pp. 1-104

WINTER BREAK

Week VII (25 February) – The politics of “religion” and the politics of “religionists”

Read: Flanagan, pp. 105-204

Week VIII (4 March) – Latin America in the 20th century; the strange position of the ethnographer in interesting times.

Read: Lancaster, pp. 27-83; 164-216

Week IX (11 March) – What is liberation theology? Who or what is an activist academic?

Read: Lancaster, pp. xiii-21; 84-163

Week X (18 March)

Essay Draft Workshop/Seminar Presentations

Week XI (25 March)

Essay Draft Workshop/Seminar Presentations

Week XII (1 April)

Concluding Discussion

Term Essays Due on 1 April (no foolin'!)

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 range from a mark of zero for the plagiarized work to a final grade of “F” for the course, and even suspension from all studies or expulsion from the University.

GRADING SYSTEM

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

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

F	Failure. No academic credit
WDN	Withdrawn from the course
ABS	Absent from the final examination
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 November 16, 2009. The last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter (full year) and Winter term courses is March 12, 2010.

REQUESTS FOR 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 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. For more details visit the Equity Services website: http://www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

Religious obligation: 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. For more details visit the Equity Services website: http://www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

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 are 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 I receive 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 the last official day to withdraw from classes in each term. For more details visit the PMC website: http://www.carleton.ca/pmc/students/acad_accom.html

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to complete a **final** term paper or write a **final** examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control or whose performance on an examination has been impaired by such circumstances may apply in writing within five working days to the Registrar's Office for permission to extend a term paper deadline or to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully and specifically supported by a medical certificate or other relevant documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Classics and Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608	500 Unicentre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-6632	4 th floor Library
Learning Commons 520-1125	4 th floor Library