

Carleton University

Fall, 2020

**College of the Humanities  
Religion Program: RELI 1731A**

**Varieties of Religious Experience**

**Professor:** Dr. Andrea D. Lobel

**Email:** Andrea.Lobel@carleton.ca

**Class times:** Asynchronous

**Class location:** Online

**Office hours:** By appointment (Zoom or phone)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What does it mean to experience the “sacred,” the “holy,” the “spiritual,” or simply put, the “religious?” Are such experiences ‘real,’ or are they delusions—mere tricks of the mind? In this course, we’ll take a cross-cultural, comparative perspective of the experiential aspects of religion. Using lectures, the assigned texts, selected films, and their own senses, students will examine not only what these terms mean, but how they manifest and how they’re interpreted within a variety of faith traditions. Our analysis will include themes such as art, myth, magic and the paranormal, literature, and otherworldly journeys.

The assigned textbook by Jeffrey J. Kripal is unique, as it’s structured as an initiatory rite-of-passage. Mirroring the texts, this course will integrate a similar structure, incorporating personal reflective pieces as part of the evaluations. By the end of this course, students should be able to think and write critically about the themes examined in the assigned texts. In addition to written assignments and a final examination, class participation on CULearn discussion forums and online experiential exercises are integral components of this online course.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Think, reflect, and write critically, at a university level, about the topics and themes examined in the lectures, assigned texts, and films, and discussed in the online forums
- When reading, be able to distinguish a paper’s argument from its subject matter
- Construct an argument and support it with evidence
- Distinguish primary and secondary sources, and be able to recognize acceptable academic sources for the study of religion
- Demonstrate emerging undergraduate-level research skills and proper citation styles
- Recognize personal situated-ness and personal bias in confronting religious phenomena
- Understand the basic history, doctrinal variety, rituals, and social contexts of the religion(s) studied in this course
- Recognize and use key introductory religion concepts and terminology covered in the lectures and readings

## PRECLUSIONS

Precludes additional credit for RELI 1205, RELI 1206 and RELI 1402 and RELI 2002.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- 1) Jeffrey J. Kripal, 2014, *Comparing Religions*. Wiley-Blackwell. (Available at the Carleton University Book Store or online; a reserve copy is also available on ARES.)
- 2) Additional readings on CULearn and/or ARES

## EVALUATION

1. Reflective response paper I (5-6 pages, double-spaced – 1125-1350 words) on 3 assigned readings of your choice between Sept 6 and Sept 20. Due on CULearn Fri, Sept 25, 5 pm (10%)
2. Reflective response paper II (5-6 pages, double-spaced – 1125-1350 words) on 3 assigned readings of your choice between Sept 25 and October 25. Due on CULearn Fri, Oct 16, 5 pm (10%)
3. Term paper and Proposal/Bibliography (25%):
  - A. **Research Proposal and Bibliography**, due on CULearn by Fri, Oct 23, 5 pm – 5%
  - B. **Research-based Term Paper**, due on CULearn by Fri, Dec 11, 5 pm – 20%
4. December online exam on CULearn: **Date TBA, to be set by Exam Services (25%)**
5. Class participation: Details provided below. **(30%)**

## A NOTE ON ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

### *Attendance*

To be successful in this course, reading the posted lecture slides on CULearn and listening to any included audio narration, keeping up with the assigned readings, and participating actively in the online discussion forums are critical. “Attendance” will be taken, in the sense that all students are expected to post in the discussion forums on CULearn during the week in which the lectures and readings are assigned.

### *Class Participation*

Because this course is being offered online, and asynchronously (i.e., at no specific time, meaning that students may participate whenever it is most convenient for them during the week), interaction and engagement with the material, with the instructor, and with other students are important for learning to take place.

Participation in the online forums will be marked for both meeting word-count requirements *and* for quality/substance.

The following is what the 30% mark for Attendance and Participation will be based on. Each student is expected to:

1. Post one reflective commentary per week on the designated CULearn Discussion Forum addressing at least one of the lectures, and including references to the readings and any assigned videos and/or experiential exercises. This written commentary may range from 250 to 400 words, and is much like a journal entry. **Unlike a research paper, this is where you can insert your opinions and analysis. No formal citations are required,** but do mention the specific lecture, reading (e.g., chapter and page numbers), or film you're referring to.
2. Post one response per week to another student's reflective commentary in the Discussion Forum, ranging from 150 to 250 words.
3. Post **two** audio or video files of at least three minutes in duration as one of their reflective commentaries on the lectures, readings, and/or videos. Each of these will *replace* one written reflective commentary. **Please note that each student only needs to submit two of these audio or video files over the entire term.** Students may choose when they wish to do so instead of submitting a reflective commentary.
4. Make a contribution to all online experiential exercises (Details and deadlines will be provided on CULearn.)
5. Submit at least one question in advance of each guest lecture (Details and deadlines will be provided on CULearn.)

If any of the above is unclear, please feel free to ask for clarification, either in the Discussion Forums, or at [andrea.lobel@carleton.ca](mailto:andrea.lobel@carleton.ca).

## **POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

- All work is due on the stated due dates.
- Extensions will only be granted in serious circumstances.
- The late penalty is 2% of the assignment mark per day of lateness.

## **WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU FIND YOURSELF MISSING DEADLINES OR FALLING BEHIND**

Send me an email as soon as you can, and we can arrange an office hour/time to talk via Zoom or phone. I'll always do what I can to help you catch up.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS AND THE PAUL MENTON CENTRE**

Should you require accommodations for a disability or other health condition, and have not already made arrangements with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities, please be sure to contact them as soon as possible at 613-520-6608 or via email at [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca). (Visit their web site at: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>) I will work with them to ensure that you receive the accommodations you require throughout the academic year.

## **A NOTE ON STUDENT WELL-BEING**

As my student, your well-being is important to me. University can be stressful, and part of the job of being your professor is responding to you as a whole person, not just as a student working to earn marks. And of course, the current coronavirus pandemic has been stressful and isolating for many, adding to these difficulties to varying degrees.

Here are some recommendations to help you make the academic year a smoother one:

Take care of yourself. Do what you can to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well and exercising, avoiding illegal drugs, avoiding or minimizing alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking some time to relax.

Meditation and yoga may also be useful. This will help you better achieve your academic goals, and to cope with stress.

Remember to wear masks and practice social distancing, and follow advice found on Carleton University's COVID-19 page, at <https://students.carleton.ca/coronavirus>.

None of us is immune to life's challenges. If you find yourself feeling stressed, you are far from alone! There are many useful resources available on campus, and an important part of the university experience is learning how to ask for help. If you or anyone you know experiences academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support sooner rather than later. Visit <https://carleton.ca/wellness/> to access useful resources both here at Carleton University and off-campus. As well, please consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for additional support.

## **CLASS DATES AND ASSIGNED READINGS**

### **Week**

**Sept 9-11**

**Course introduction; Library research methods**

- Sept 14-18**                    **Comparative religious practices: Western religions; defining the holy, the sacred, and mystical experience**  
 Kripal, pp. 3-32  
 K. Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, chapter 7, 'The Piper at the End of Dawn.' (on CULearn.)
- Comparative religious practices: Asia**  
 Kripal, pp. 33-40.
- Sept 21-25**                    **Historical trajectories: Western origins of religious practice**  
 Kripal chapter 2, pp. 43-74.
- Initiation, consciousness, magic, and the sacred**  
 Kripal chapter 3, pp. 77-107.  
**TEDTalk:** Wade Davis—*The Worldwide Web of Belief and Ritual*  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/wade\\_davis\\_the\\_worldwide\\_web\\_of\\_belief\\_and\\_ritual#t-7300](https://www.ted.com/talks/wade_davis_the_worldwide_web_of_belief_and_ritual#t-7300)
- Reflective Response Paper I due Fri, Sept 25, 5 pm**
- Sept 28-Oct 2**                **Myth, ritual, and story**  
 Kripal chapter 4, pp. 111-141.
- Religion and nature; shamanism and trance states**  
 Kripal chapter 5, pp. 143-174.  
**Film:** *Russia: The Cradle Of Shamanism—World Medicine*  
 Available on Carleton University, Films on Demand  
<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=104730&xtid=120553>
- Oct 5-9**                        **Religion and science**  
 Kripal chapter 5, pp. 143-174.  
**Film:** *Is It Real? Miracle Cures*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-Wgn\\_i9fq8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-Wgn_i9fq8)  
 Experiential exercise TBA (Online debate)
- Religion, power, and community, part I**  
 Kripal chapter 7, pp. 208-236.
- Oct 12-16**                    **Religion, power, and community, part II**  
 Kripal chapter 7, pp. pp. 208-236.  
**Reflective Response Paper II due Fri, Oct 16, 5 pm**
- Religious Belief Examined: Who/What/Where/When/Why do we believe?**

Readings TBA

**Film:** *The Power of Belief: Its Impact on Our Minds*

<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=104730&xtid=9230>

Experiential Exercise TBA

Oct 19-23

**The paranormal; rational vs. irrational, part I**

Kripal, chapter 8, pp. 239-269.

**The paranormal; the rational vs. irrational, part II**

Kripal, chapter 8, pp. 239-269.

**Film:** *Sacred and Secret: Spirit Possession in Bali*

<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=104730&xtid=47376>

**Research Proposal and Bibliography, due Fri, Oct 23, 5 pm**

Oct 26-30

**FALL BREAK; NO CLASSES**



*If you notice this puppy meme, send Professor Lobel an email at [andrea.lobel@carleton.ca](mailto:andrea.lobel@carleton.ca) telling her so before the end of the first day of classes on Sept 9<sup>th</sup>, and you'll receive a bonus 1% boost to your participation mark. (Shh! Don't tell anyone.)*

Nov 2-6

**Guest Lecturer TBA (recorded audio or video):**

Neopagan community

**Neopagan and Earth-based religions**

Readings TBA

Experiential exercise TBA

Nov 9-13

**Death, near-death experiences (NDEs), and the soul after death I**

Kripal chapter 9, pp. 271-297.

**Film:** *Life after Death: Sex, Death, and the Meaning of Life, Episode II*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBgB7MbBogA>

**Death, near-death experiences (NDEs), and the soul after death II**

Excerpts from *Tibetan Book of the Dead*; *Shaar Ha-Gilgulim/ The Gate of Transmigration* excerpts (on CULearn)

- Nov 16-20                   **Theologies and worldviews**  
Kripal chapter 10, pp. 303-333.
- Religious experience and its discontents**  
Kripal chapter 11, pp. 336-362.
- Nov 23-27                   **Beyond belief; religious experience and the brain I**  
Kripal chapter 12, pp. 365-394.
- Religious experience and the brain II – This is Your Brain On Music:**  
Experiential exercise TBA & discussion (CULearn)
- Nov 30-Dec 4               **Belief and beyond: A synthesis**  
*Humanism and Its Aspirations:*  
<https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto3/>  
**Film:** *Essentials of Faith: Humanism*  
<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=104730&xtid=36432>
- Guest Lecturer TBA (recorded audio or video):**  
Humanist Community
- Dec 7-11                    **Unanswered questions; unquestioned answers – Discussion Forum**
- Wrap-up, exam review, and a focus on our collective rite-of-passage**  
**\*Term papers due online via CULearn by Dec 11, 5:00 pm.**

**Insert Humanities regulations here**



# Humanities

## University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses

### Academic Dates and Deadlines

---

This schedule contains the dates prescribed by the University Senate for academic activities. Dates relating to fee payment, cancellation of course selections, late charges, and other fees or charges will be published in the Important Dates and Deadlines section of the Registration Website.

### 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.

### Academic Integrity at Carleton

---

The University Senate defines **plagiarism** as “*presenting, whether intentionally 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 that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts 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

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Academic Integrity Process](#)

# Academic Accommodation Policy

---

## Academic Accommodation

Carleton University is committed to providing access to the educational experience in order to promote academic accessibility for all individuals.

**Parental Leave:** The Student Parental Leave Policy is intended to recognize the need for leave at the time of a pregnancy, birth or adoption and to permit a pause in studies in order to provide full-time care in the first year of parenting a child or for health-related parental responsibilities.

**Religious obligation:** Carleton University accommodates students who, by reason of religious obligation, must miss an examination, test, assignment deadline, laboratory or other compulsory academic event.

### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

Academic accommodation of students with disabilities is available through the [Paul Menton Centre](#) by evaluations that are carried out on an individual basis, in accordance with human rights legislation and University policy, and with the support of relevant, professional/medical documentation.

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

Individuals who disclose that they have experienced sexual violence will be provided support services and will be treated with dignity and respect at all times by the University and its representatives. A person affected by sexual violence is not required to report an incident of or make a complaint about sexual violence under the formal complaint process of the Sexual Violence Policy in order to obtain support and services, or in order to receive appropriate accommodation for their needs.

[Supports and services available at the University to obtain information about sexual violence and/or 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. [More information.](#)

# Grading System at Carleton University

---

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. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean."

The [system of grades](#) used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion, is listed below. Grade points indicated are for courses with 1.0 credit value.

## Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

---

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).

[More information](#)

## Student Rights and Responsibilities at Carleton

---

Carleton University strives to provide a safe environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, free of injustice and characterized by understanding respect, peace, trust, and fairness.

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students. Carleton University is committed to building a campus that promotes personal growth through the establishment and promotion of transparent and fair academic and non-academic responsibilities.

[7 Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

## Deferred Term Work

---

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.

1. 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. In all cases, formative evaluations providing feedback to the student should be replaced with formative evaluations. In the event the altered due date must extend beyond the last day of classes in the term, the instructor will assign a grade of zero for the work not submitted and submit the student's earned grade accordingly; the instructor may submit a change of grade at a later date. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

2. In cases where a student is not able to complete term work due to illness or injury for a significant period of time/or long term, the instructor and/or student may elect to consult with the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses) or Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) to determine appropriate action.

[More information of deferred Term Work](#)

## Deferred Final Exams

---

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.

The application for a deferral must:

1. be made in writing 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 [here](#).

[More information on Final Exam Deferrals](#)

## [Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal](#)

---

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](#). 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. You can do this via the [MyCarleton Portal](#). A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load.

## Department Contact Information

---

*Bachelor of the Humanities* 300 Paterson Hall  
[CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca)

*Greek and Roman Studies* 300 Paterson Hall  
[GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca)

*Religion* 2A39 Paterson Hall  
[Religion@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:Religion@cunet.carleton.ca)

*Digital Humanities (Graduate)* 2A39 Paterson Hall  
[digitalhumanities@carleton.ca](mailto:digitalhumanities@carleton.ca)

*Digital Humanities (Undergraduate Minor)* 300 Paterson Hall  
[digitalhumanities@carleton.ca](mailto:digitalhumanities@carleton.ca)