

RELI1731; Fall Term  
The College of the Humanities

## VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Dr. Timothy Pettipiece

Course Email: [TimothyPettipiece@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:TimothyPettipiece@cunet.carleton.ca)

*This course is being offered asynchronously.*

*Scheduled office hours will not be held this term.*

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

In spite of claims that we live in a secular and post-religious world, religion and religious questions continue to be at the heart of many major social, academic, and political debates. This course will explore the ongoing relevance of religion in the contemporary context and examine the various ways in which human beings experience and attempt to conceptualize the “religious”, “spiritual”, “sacred”, or “holy”. The core themes will be explored from a comparative angle, using examples taken from a range of different traditions and perspectives.

- Students will develop a conceptual vocabulary for thinking about and discussing religion from an academic perspective
- Students will engage with a diversity of viewpoints regarding religion and “religious experience”
- Students will learn to think *reflexively* about religion in order to become more critically self-aware

### PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

As a first-year course, RELI1731 is often the first time students have been invited to think critically about “religion” or examine it from an academic perspective. This can sometimes be a difficult and disorientating experience, as many people have strong opinions about the issues involved. Please note that the course is being taught from a non-confessional, non-theological perspective that seeks neither to validate or invalidate religious claims or traditions. Rather, it is meant as a broad introduction to the academic study of religion. Students are invited to think deeply about the issues and concepts presented from a variety of perspectives in order to gain a broader and more self-reflective understanding of religion and religious experience.

### COURSE DELIVERY

This course will be delivered *asynchronously* online. Course material has been divided into a series of topics with assigned readings and pre-recorded lectures, which students are invited to work through at their own pace. I strongly advise you to develop a regular work routine and not leave everything to the last minute. Extensions will not be granted based on poor time management. Also, note that Brightspace will serve as our course hub, which means that all course content will be made available and all assignments will be submitted there. If you are new to Carleton, please familiarize yourself with that platform.

**NB: We will not be having weekly live lectures at a scheduled time.**

### COMMUNICATION

I am not able to hold regular office hours at the moment, but you can still contact me about course related issues via email (see above), and I will do my best to respond within 24 hours during weekdays, 48 hours during weekends. I will also be holding regular virtual “drop in” sessions on ZOOM for anyone who would like to discuss course material or related topics with myself or other students in the class (times TBD).

### REQUIRED TEXTS

**Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Comparing Religions* (Wiley Blackwell, 2014)**

\*In spite of its somewhat generic title, this book explores the question of religion and religious experience from a wide variety of academic perspectives and will serve as the intellectual roadmap for the course.

### EVALUATION:

Initial Reflection 5% (see Written Assignment A below)

**DUE Sept 24**

Response Paper I	25% (see Written Assignment B below)
Response Paper II	25% (see Written Assignment B below)
Midterm Exam	20% (first half of course material)
Final Exam	25% (second half of course material)

**DUE Oct 22**  
**DUE Dec 10**  
 Complete by Nov 1  
 Winter exam period

## TOPICS

## READINGS

**\*Additional readings on Brightspace**

INTRODUCTION: Religious “*Experience*” / Experience of “*Religion*”

MODULE I:	COMPARATIVE PRACTICES Reading / Reflection: Ideas of the Holy Video: Afterlife (NFB) (7 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 1 OTTO <i>Idea of the Holy</i>
MODULE II:	FROM THE BIBLE TO BUDDHISM Reading / Reflection: Way of Liberation Video: The Magic Conch (11 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 2 JAMES <i>Reality of the Unseen</i>
MODULE III:	THE SKILL OF REFLEXIVITY Reading / Reflection: Divine Language Video: Divine Fate (NFB) (10 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 3 BUBER <i>I and Thou</i>
MODULE IV:	MYTH AND RITUAL Reading / Reflection: Ritual Video: What Makes a Hero (TED) (5 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 4 BURKERT “Sacrifice as Act of Ritual”
MODULE V :	RELIGION, NATURE, SCIENCE Reading / Reflection: “Thinking” God Video: Pale Blue Dot (3 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 5 AQUINAS <i>Summa theologiae</i>
MODULE VI:	SEX AND BODY Reading / Reflection: Dualisms Video: Religion and Violence	KRIPAL CHAPTER 6 BLAKE <i>Marriage of Heaven and Hell</i>
MODULE VII	SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION Reading / Reflection: Sacred Canopy Video: Wovoka Ghost Dance (6 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 7 BERGER, <i>World Construction</i>
MODULE VIII	THE RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION Reading / Reflection: Stairways to Heaven Video: Sufism (10 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 8 IBN AL-ARABI <i>Meccan Illuminations</i>
MODULE IX:	THE END OF ALL THINGS Reading / Reflection: Death and Dying Video: The Great Liberation (NFB) (45 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 9 <i>Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> (excerpt)
MODULE X:	FAITHFUL RE-READINGS Reading / Reflection: Know Thyself Video: The Who’s <i>Tommy</i>	KRIPAL CHAPTER 10 MEHER BABA <i>Discourses</i>
MODULE XI:	RATIONAL RE-READINGS Reading / Reflection: Digital religion? Video: The Simulation Hypothesis (10 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 11 DAVIS “The Spiritual Cyborg”
MODULE XII:	REFLEXIVE RE-READINGS Reading / Reflection: Post-religiosity? Video: Kwame Anthony Appiah (TED) (14 min)	KRIPAL CHAPTER 12 <i>Humanist Manifesto</i>

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT A: INITIAL REFLECTION**

When it comes to the topic of religion, we all have assumptions, preconceptions, and experiences that inform and shape our understanding. One of the goals of this course is to come to terms with those assumptions and develop a more self-conscious awareness of how we think about and relate to religious ideas and issues. For this assignment, please compose a 2-page (double spaced) reflection on the following questions:

*Describe something (it could be a person, place, thing, idea, artwork, etc.) to which you might apply the words “sacred” or “holy”? If you have difficulty relating to those terms, then how about “supremely beautiful,” “transcendent” or “sublime”? How do you relate to this? Why is it important to you?*

Submit your paper in .pdf form via Brightspace by Sept 24.

NB: The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with a baseline against which you can evaluate how your understanding may or may not have changed by the end of the term. You will have an opportunity on the final exam to re-assess your initial reflection.

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT B: RESPONSE PAPERS**

For this course you are required to submit **two** response papers on a religiously themed film and book (see lists below). Response Paper I should be based on a film from the list below, while Response Paper II should be based on a text from the list below. Papers will be submitted in .pdf format via Brightspace.

### **What a response paper is:**

A response paper is a critical / reflective essay that examines how a text or film deals with religious themes and concepts. It is based on a close and careful reading / viewing of the work, contains specific examples drawn from the work, and provides your well-considered opinion of the work’s strengths and/or shortcomings. The essay demonstrates that you have read/watched the book/film, internalized and contextualized its arguments/themes in light of the course material, and can articulate and substantiate your reactions to it.

### **What a reader response paper is NOT:**

-A descriptive summary of the book/film or of the historical events it describes.

-A research paper. You don’t have to do any additional research beyond viewing the film or reading the book. However, your analysis should include references to the textbook and additional course readings.

-A classic “thesis” paper, in which you state a thesis argument at the front end and use the book/film to support this thesis, reiterating the argument in the conclusion. The response essay should express a coherent analysis of the work in light of what you’ve been learning in the course.

-An opportunity for general opinionating, nor an opportunity to make statements of opinion that are not supported by evidence drawn from the text/film, or relevant to the issues at hand.

-A test of whether you had the “right” interpretation of the book/film. This is a venue for you to express what the book or film means to **you** in light of what you’ve been learning in the course. It should display thoughtful evaluation of the text and express of how it may have contributed (or not contributed) to your understanding of religious issues and concepts involved.

**Ask yourself the following questions** as you prepare to write a reader response paper. These are not meant to be a template for your paper, but they can help you organize your thoughts and decide what you’d like to write about in your response.

-What were the central religious themes of the book/film? Did the author/director, in your opinion, do an effective job of following through on those themes? How does this book/film relate to what interests you about religion? What did you learn from it? If you didn’t learn much, why was that? What questions did this text/film leave you with? What would you like to learn more about?

### **Sample format for a reader response paper of 4 pages (double spaced):**

1. **Introduction/theme:** 1-2 paragraphs that “set the stage” for what will follow.

2. **Background:** 2-3 paragraphs that introduce the book/film, its religious themes and the context in which it was written/produced.

3. **Analysis:** use the remainder of the paper to examine the religious aspects of the book/film and provide your opinion of them. The analysis should contain examples from the book/film to support your argument (cited with page numbers or time code). You should also make specific connections to concepts from the textbook and course material in order to support your analysis, with appropriate citations.

4. **Conclusion:** one paragraph that states the wider significance of this work to you.

**\*Title page or bibliography is not required.**

**\*\*The paper can be longer than 4 pages, but not shorter.**

**\*\*\*Late submissions will be accepted but with a 10% deduction per day.**

### CHOOSING A FILM AND BOOK

For paper I choose a film from the following list and for paper II choose a text. You are responsible for acquiring a copy of your selected text/film. No substitutions will be accepted and you cannot write on both a book and a film adaptation of it. Try to pick something you haven't read or viewed before. Please note that the works listed have been selected because they are well suited for analysis and reflection based upon course material. Their inclusion in the list should not be taken as an endorsement of their contents or their artistic merit.

RESPONSE PAPER I: FILM	RESPONSE PAPER II: TEXT
The Last Temptation of Christ (1988)	Hermann Hesse, <i>Siddhartha</i>
Agora (2009)	Margaret Atwood, <i>A Handmaid's Tale</i>
Kingdom of Heaven (2005)	Umberto Eco, <i>The Name of the Rose</i>
Persepolis (2007)	Carl Jung, <i>Answer to Job</i>
Machine Gun Preacher (2011)	Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>The Antichrist</i>
Noah (2014)	Frank Herbert, <i>Dune</i>
Des hommes et des dieux (2010)	Martel, <i>Life of Pi</i>
The Seventh Seal (1957)	Philip K. Dick, <i>Valis</i>
Gandhi (1982)	Roger Zelazny, <i>Lord of Light</i>
The Name of the Rose (1986)	C. S. Lewis, <i>Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i>
Jésus de Montréal (1987)	Barbara Kingsolver, <i>The Poisonwood Bible</i>
Black Robe (1991)	Christopher Moore, <i>Lamb</i>
The Apostle (1997)	Khaled Hosseini, <i>The Kite Runner</i>
Kundun (1997)	Nikos Kazantzakis, <i>Last Temptation of Christ</i>
Malcolm X (1992)	Sue Monk Kidd, <i>The Book of Longings</i>
Princess Mononoke (1997)	Walter M. Miller, <i>A Canticle for Leibowitz</i>
Dr Strange (2016)	Samuel Becket, <i>Waiting for Godot</i>
Silence (2016)	Shūsaku Endō, <i>Silence</i>
Little Sister (2016)	Yaa Gyasi, <i>Transcendent Kingdom</i>
Blade Runner 2049 (2017)	Amin Malouf, <i>Gardens of Light</i>

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please familiarize yourself with Carleton's [academic integrity policy](#). Course components containing any plagiarized or copied material will receive an automatic zero and be referred to university administration.



# 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.

### Online Learning Resources

While online courses offer flexibility and convenience, they also present unique challenges that traditional face-to-face courses do not. [On this page](#), you will find resources collected by Carleton Online to help you succeed in your online courses; Learning Strategies and Best Practices, Study Skills, Technology and Online Interaction and Engagement.

### 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 Policy (updated June 2021)

**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, material on the internet and/or conversations.

**Examples of plagiarism** include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms,

formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;

- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

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

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

Academic accommodation refers to educational practices, systems and support mechanisms designed to accommodate diversity and difference. The purpose of accommodation is to enable students to perform the essential requirements of their academic programs. At no time does academic accommodation undermine or compromise the learning objectives that are established by the academic authorities of the University.

### Addressing Human Rights Concerns

The University and all members of the University community share responsibility for ensuring that the University's educational, work and living environments are free from discrimination and harassment. Should you have concerns about harassment or discrimination relating to your age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, place of origin, race, sex (including pregnancy), or sexual orientation, please contact the [Department of Equity and Inclusive Communities](#).

### 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:

#### Religious Accommodation

Please contact your 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, please review the [Student Guide to Academic Accommodation](#).

#### Pregnancy Accommodation

Please contact your 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, please review the [Student Guide to Academic Accommodation](#).

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit the [Equity and Inclusive Communities website](#).

### **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. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your 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 [Senate Policy on Accommodation for Student Activities](#).

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

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the [Paul Menton Centre website](#).

## **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. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion can be found [here](#). 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.

## **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.

## 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) 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.
3. If a student is concerned the instructor did not respond to the request for academic accommodation or did not provide reasonable accommodation, the student should consult with the department/school/institute chair/director. If a mutually agreeable accommodation to complete course requirements prior to the course grade submission deadline cannot be achieved, the Associate Dean will become involved. If academic accommodation is not granted, and the student receives word **after** the academic withdrawal deadline, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) for a final grade of WDN (Withdrawn) in the course(s). If academic



accommodation is not granted, and the student receives word **prior** to the academic withdrawal deadline, the student may elect to withdraw from the course(s).

4. Furthermore, if academic accommodation is granted, but the student is unable to complete the accommodation according to the terms set out by the instructor as a result of further illness, injury or extraordinary circumstances beyond their control, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses). Please note, however, that the course instructor will be required to submit an earned final grade and further consideration will only be reviewed according to established precedents and deadlines. [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 Registrar's Office "Defer an Exam" page](#)

## Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal

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. A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load. A course dropped after the deadline for financial withdrawal will receive a grade of Withdrawn (WDN), which appears on your official transcript.

Even if you miss the deadline for financial withdrawal, you might decide to drop a course to avoid a failure or a poor grade showing up on your student record and bringing down your CGPA. It is your responsibility to drop the course via Carleton Central within the published [deadlines](#) (see Academic Withdrawal).

If you are considering withdrawing from a course, you may want to talk to an advisor first. Course withdrawal may affect your student status, as well as your eligibility for student funding, immigration status, residence accommodation and participation in varsity sports, etc. Additionally, remember that once you choose your courses, you must use the “Calculate amount to pay” button to determine the correct amount of fees to pay.

Carleton Central is your one-stop shop for registration activities. If you are interested in taking a course, make sure to complete your registration. Simply attending a course does not mean you are registered in it, nor is it grounds for petition or appeal.

## 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)

*MEMS (Undergraduate Minor)* 300 Paterson Hall  
[CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca)