

*Death and the Afterlife in World Religions (2732 B/V)*¹**Instructor:** Professor Christopher Jensen**Email:** Christopher.Jensen@carleton.ca²**Lectures:** Online (asynchronous)**Office Phone:** N/A**Office hours:** (Online) M 14:30-16:00 / Th 13:00-14:30 (or by appointment)

Course Overview

In spite of the kaleidoscopic range of human cultures and all of the ways that these cultures have transformed over time, it remains the case that the fundamental units in this system – the inheritors, transmitters and creators of culture – are biological beings. We need to eat and excrete, we need shelter, we are driven to mate, and, after a certain measure of time, we die. Perhaps unsurprisingly, much of the variety seen in human cultural systems is focused on the ways that these biological processes can be understood, disciplined, ritualized, and, if possible, controlled. In this course, we will be considering the variety of ways that the world's religions have tussled with the unavoidable, existentially distressing fact of death.

Intellectually, the problem of death has consistently spawned a host of related questions: “Why do people die?”, “Is it possible to know when I’m going to die?”, “What happens to people after death?”, “Can I do anything to save myself?”, “Can anyone save me?”, and many more. In this course, we will explore the responses to such questions proposed by the devotees of the world's religious traditions, considering, as one example, the issue of cosmology (i.e., theory about the nature and structure of the world) as it relates to death, noting the breadth of possibilities proposed across religious cultures: reunion with loved ones in a blissful afterlife; posthumous punishment; salvation by deities; notions of karmic recompense and the cycle of life, death, and rebirth; and even the possibility of achieving immortality. When confronted with the reality of death, however, a grieving person often cannot find solace in these sorts of overt doctrinal teachings alone. For this reason, we will also consider various other means, such as stories, visual art, and rituals, that are employed in the religious traditions under consideration to provide emotional solace and social reintegration to grieving individuals. In general, our approach to this complex material will focus on the problem of death as it is expressed in three key dimensions of religion: 1) religious teachings (doctrines and philosophy); 2) religious stories; and 3) ritual and mortuary practice.

¹ I would like to thank Dr. Angela Sumegi for sharing her RELI 2732 syllabus with me and for inspiring me to think more deeply about various issues relating to the instruction of this course. Also: my thanks to Alex Belland, my SAPP collaborator, for his assistance in redeveloping the course for asynchronous delivery.

² As per Carleton University policy, all communication between students and professors should be conducted via our Carleton email accounts.

Learning Objectives

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

- Recognize and describe the historical development, basic features (e.g., doctrines, narratives, rituals), and disciplinary vocabulary associated with the religion(s) studied in this course (via lectures, readings, and assigned videos);
- Apply theories related to religious doctrines, narratives, and rituals to specific examples drawn from the world's religions;
- Engage with primary texts in translation;
 - Note: these three skillsets will be assessed via weekly comprehension quizzes, and two cumulative tests (covering the first and second halves of the course, respectively).
- Evaluate internet sources (summarizing contents, citing references, differentiating sources of information, recognizing acceptable academic resources);³
- Assess your own work and the work of others.
 - Note: these two skills will be fostered through the two Source Analysis exercises, and the associated Pair and Share activity.

Textbook

- **REQUIRED:** Angela Sumegi, *Understanding Death: An Introduction to Ideas of Self and the Afterlife in World Religions*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).
- All other readings will be posted to the course website or ARES.

Assessments

Weekly Quizzes	3% x 10 =	30%
Syllabus Quiz	2% x 1 =	2%
Cumulative Tests	9% x 2 =	18%
Source Analysis Activity	15% x 2 =	30%
Pair and Share	5% x 4 =	20%

Weekly Quizzes

Beginning in the first week of class, I will be posting quizzes that will assess your understanding of the mini-lectures, videos, and readings for the week, via matching, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blanks questions. Each completed quiz will account for 3% of your final grade. Given that there are more than 10 weeks in the course, I will simply take your ten *best* scores on these assignments.

Syllabus Quiz

This quiz will assess your comprehension of the syllabus. You must receive a perfect score to receive your 2%, but you can retake it as many times as you like.

Cumulative Tests (Feb. 26th - 27th and Apr. 13-14th)

These two tests will assess your comprehension of material from the first and second halves of the course (respectively), via matching, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blanks questions. While they will be open book, you will nonetheless need to be familiar with the content of the course (including lectures, videos,

³ Note: These objectives are shared between all Religion courses at the 2nd-year level. In addition to being useful critical thinking tools, developing these skills will aid you in future RELI courses as well.

textbook readings, supplementary readings) in order to score well on these exams. These tests will be available for a 24-hour period, beginning on Friday at 2pm and ending on Saturday at 1:59pm.

Source Analysis Activity (x2) – scheduling as outlined below (“Scheduling the Source Analysis ...”)

This activity will task you with locating, assessing, and describing an online resource related to one of the traditions discussed in class. This resource can be a short article (less than 10 pages), a short video or segment of a video (less than 15 minutes), a podcast or podcast segment (less than 15 minutes), or other relevant source. The related report will be approximately 1000-1200 words (3.5-4 pages) in length, and it will guide (a small set of) your classmates as they engage with your chosen source.

Engaging in this activity will not only help you to hone your skills in evaluating online sources, but it also provides you with two options (over the course of the semester) to explore a relevant topic of your choice and to share it with your peers.

This is a solo activity; every student submission must be distinct and must be the product of their own work.

NOTE #1: a full grading rubric for this activity will be posted to the course page in the first week of class.

NOTE #2: given the increased rates of academic misconduct that have accompanied the switch to online course delivery, students should be aware that all of the TAs will be comparing Source Analysis submissions prior to grading them. If two students have decided to present on the same source, the contents of their submissions will be compared to ascertain that no unauthorized collaboration has occurred. In keeping with Carleton policy, any cases of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Dean’s Office.

Pair and Share Activity (x4) – scheduling as outlined below (“Scheduling the Source Analysis ...”)

In this activity, you will read a fellow students’ Source Analysis, watch/listen to their selected resource, and respond to it. Your response will consist of a short write-up (~450-600 words).

NOTE: a full grading rubric for this activity will be posted to the course page in the first week of class.

Scheduling the Source Analyses + Pair and Share activities

A key aspect of the Source Analysis / Pair and Share activities is that they will help to increase the *breadth* of your engagement with the topic. The scheduling of these activities will help to encourage this. In each half of the semester, each student will complete ONE Source Analysis and TWO Pair & Shares – **each in a separate week**. This process will repeat in the second half of the semester. Thus, over the course of thirteen weeks, each student will have had the opportunity to engage more substantively with SIX of the course topics.

Note: in order to ascertain that all topics will be covered (and so as to not create an undue grading burden on the course TAs), **students will be required to sign up for Source Analysis / Pair and Share slots**, which will be evenly distributed throughout the semester. The sign-up forms for the first half of the semester will be available as of the first day of class, and ones for the second half will be accessible on Monday after the first cumulative test.

Students who have signed up for the week's Source Analysis Activity must have their work posted by **no later than Wednesday evening at 11:55pm**; students who have signed up for the Pair and Share Activity must post their responses **no later than Sunday night at 11:55pm**.

- Note #1: given that the Source Analysis Activity corresponds to the current week of course material, assignments submitted more than twenty-four hours late will not be accepted. If you find that you can no longer complete a Source Analysis on your selected week, you must inform your TA as soon as possible. It is then **your** responsibility to find another student who is willing to switch timeslots with you; if you cannot find another student who is willing to switch, which will be much more difficult if you try to do so at the last minute, you will not have the option to complete the current Source Analysis activity.
- Note #2: given that the Pair and Share activity is somewhat less time sensitive, all students will be given a **free, “no questions asked” extension** of seven days (total) for the submission of these four assignments. These “grace days” can be split up between multiple submissions (e.g., hand in three of them two days late and one of them one day late (7 days)) or use all seven days on a single assignment. Pair and Share assignments that are more than a cumulative seven days late (in total) will not be accepted, except on medical or compassionate grounds.

* Please review your assignment schedules for your other courses before booking your Source Analysis and Pair & Share slots. I hope that you will use this opportunity to balance your semester's workload. *

Anatomy of a Week in 2732

As this course is somewhat different than any that I have taught before (and likely different than many that you have taken), I will briefly outline some of the key features in my approach to teaching it as an asynchronous class below.

- Every Monday by noon, all of the course resources for the week (mini-lectures, activities, quizzes, readings, reading guides, etc.) will be available. You will be free to work through these materials at your own pace throughout the week. That said, the weekly comprehension quizzes must be completed by no later than Friday night at 11:55pm on the week in which they are posted.
 - Note: in an average week, you should be able to work through all of this course material in approximately 5-6 hours. On weeks in which you are either studying for a cumulative

test or preparing one of your submissions (the Source Analysis / Pair and Share activities), you will obviously be spending more time proportionately on our course.

- Every Monday, if necessary, I will post a short Q&A video, in which I will respond to unanswered questions that have been posted to the course forums.
- I will hold office hours twice per week (M 14:30-16:00 / Th 13:00-14:30) via the BigBlueButton room on our course page. If you have any questions about assignments or course content, feel free to come by for a chat.
- Given that many students are feeling overwhelmed by the variety of pressures on their time in this new online environment, I am not mandating weekly forum posts for students our class. That said, each group **will** have an assigned course forum, which they can use to ask clarification questions about course material. Any unanswered questions will be forwarded to me, and I will answer them in the weekly Q&A. In addition, this forum will also provide the **one source of bonus marks** available to students of RELI 2732. Any student who provides a substantive correct response (~150-200 words, correctly referencing course materials) will earn a bonus point, which will count toward their final grade in the class. See below for more on the bonus point policy.
- Students who have signed up for the current week's Source Analysis activity will write up and submit their projects no later than Wednesday evening at 11:55 pm.

Course Policies

1. ALL e-mail correspondence must first be directed to the TA assigned to you. Please consult cuLearn after the first class for your assigned TA's contact information.
 - a. **EXCEPTION:** Students who require academic accommodations should feel free to discuss these matters (either in person or via email) with the instructor. Please be sure to contact the Paul Menton Centre to complete the required forms ASAP, given that the first comprehension quiz will be posted on Friday of the first week of class.
2. Before contacting your TA with a course inquiry (relating to either the subject matter or course policies), you should first consult the *Questions* forum on our course's cuLearn page. All questions related to course content and assignments, and the instructor's responses, will be posted (anonymously) to this forum, allowing for it to serve as a resource for all enrolled students.
3. The only available "grade-raising" opportunities for students in this course are the bonus point awarded for answering student queries in your group's question forum (as described above).
4. If you miss either of the scheduled cumulative exams, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor about writing a deferred exam. Deferrals will only be granted for medical or compassionate reasons.
5. "Grace Day" policy → seven days of "no questions asked" extensions can be applied to your Pair and Share assignments (as detailed above). Please do not email your instructor / TA to ask permission to use your grace days; they are pre-approved and are yours to use as you see fit.
6. You must write **both** exams, **at least one Source Analysis and at least two Pair and Share Activities** in order to be assigned a grade for the course. **If you do not complete these minimum requirements, you will be assessed a grade of "F" for the course.**

7. Bonus Point policy: bonus points earned by responding to student posts in the course forum will be applied to your final grade in the class. The only limitation on them is that they will improve it by a maximum of two increments (e.g., A- → A+ | B → A-).

Course Timetable and Readings

Please note that I will also be posting additional short readings (religious narratives) and reading guides to cuLearn on a weekly basis. All of this material will be included in the quizzes and cumulative tests.

Week	Topics	Readings
<u>Week 1</u> Jan. 11-15	Course Overview and Policies Investigating Religious Perspectives on Death and the Afterlife	Textbook (CH. 1)
<u>Week 2</u> Jan. 18-22	Death in Indigenous Religions	Textbook (CH. 2)
<u>Week 3</u> Jan. 25-29	Death in the Ancient World (Near East and Greece)	Textbook (CH. 3)
<u>Week 4</u> Feb. 1-5	Jewish Perspectives	Textbook (CH. 4)
<u>Week 5</u> Feb. 8-12	Christian Perspectives	Textbook (CH. 5)
Feb. 15-19	Winter Break (No Classes)	
<u>Week 6</u> Feb. 22-26	Muslim Perspectives ** CUMULATIVE TEST 1 ** (Feb 26-27 th)	Textbook (CH. 6)
<u>Week 7</u> Mar. 1-5	Hindu Perspectives	Textbook (CH. 7)
<u>Week 8</u> Mar. 8-12	Sikh Perspectives // Jain Perspectives	Myrvold, "Sikhism and Death," in <i>Death and Religion in a Changing World</i> (ARES); Selection from Chapple, "Eternal Life, Death, and Dying in Jainism" in <i>Religion, Death, and Dying</i> (ARES)
<u>Week 9</u> Mar. 15-19	Buddhist Perspectives (Early Buddhism and Theravada)	Selection from Textbook (CH. 8)
<u>Week 10</u> Mar. 22-26	Buddhist Perspectives (Mahayana and Vajrayana)	Bernard, "The Tibetan Tantric View," <i>Death and Afterlife</i> (ARES); "Death," <i>Encyclopedia of Buddhism</i> (ARES), remainder of Textbook (CH. 8)
<u>Week 11</u> Mar. 29 – Apr. 2	Death in Chinese Religions (Popular Religion, Daoism, Confucianism)	Textbook (CH. 9)
<u>Week 12</u> Apr. 5-9	Death in 21 st Century Canada	Selection from <i>Dying and Death in Canada</i>
<u>Week 13</u> Apr. 12-14	Near-Death Experiences in World Religions ** CUMULATIVE TEST 2 ** (Apr. 13-14 th)	Selection from Kellerman, <i>Experiences Near Death</i>



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 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 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

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