

Carleton University
College of the Humanities: Religion Program
RELI 4741: Contemporary Issues in the Study of Religion
Fall 2020: Mon. 11:30-2:30 (online)

Professor: Kimberly Stratton

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Office Hours: Mondays 1:30-3pm (use Zoom link for Office Hours posted on cuLearn) or by appointment: please email me to set up a meeting either by phone or using Zoom.

Zoom Link for Class: available on cuLearn page

Zoom Link for office Hours: available on cuLearn page

Course Description:

This course engages with the real world implications of late twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship on religion with a focus on applied learning and developing employable skills that facilitate transition from academia to a career.

We will critically evaluate terminology pertinent to the academic study of Religion as well as engage with contemporary theories and theorists that bear upon questions and problems in the study of Religion. The goals of this course are twofold: 1) to develop literacy in modern theoretical debates that influence contemporary academic research on Religion and shape current conversations within the field of Religious Studies; 2) to connect academic/theoretical discourses from the Study of Religion to the real world, demonstrating the practical import of the academic study of Religion, while developing employable skills that can assist in the transition from the Bachelors Degree to a career or to post-graduate study.

Course Evaluation:

This course is delivered entirely online in Fall 2020 due to the coronavirus. In normal circumstances, fulsome and robust participation would account for a significant component of the course evaluation and learning process. Because a 3 hour Zoom meeting is exhausting and undercuts the course's learning objectives, I have divided participation between live Zoom sessions (1hr/week) and online Discussion Forums (approx. 2hr/week). The goal of this blend is to stimulate as much discussion, reflection, and peer critique as might be achieved in an ordinary 4000 level capstone seminar.

- **Attendance and Participation in Zoom sessions:** 15%. Note: more than 3 missed classes (1/4 of course) without documented excuse = F.
 - Attend Zoom sessions fully prepared, having done the readings *before* class and posted your Briefing Note to cuLearn.
 - Respond thoughtfully to questions of facilitator.
 - Respond respectfully to your peers.
 - **Please make sure that you have the requisite equipment to participate in Zoom meetings: stable internet connection (connect with Ethernet cable rather than wifi if possible), microphone, headphones/speakers, ability to type in chat. Video camera is preferred but not required.**
 - You are allowed one absence without excuse; use it judiciously.
- **Weekly Briefing Notes (BN) x8:** 15% (due in the weeks that you are NOT leading discussion)
 - Briefing Note is a specific business and governmental genre that requires the author to review, in some cases, vast literature related to the topic of the BN and summarize the key points of the literature into assertive and affective key arguments and considerations that clearly inform someone who has limited to no prior knowledge about the topic.
 - BN should summarize and synthesize the assigned readings each week, demonstrating: comprehension, insight, engagement, and an ability to relate the readings to each other and to the larger world.
 - Imagine that you are briefing Justin Trudeau or another public figure on the assigned readings.
 - Make their content and relevance clear to someone who has not read them. Explain why they matter and what actionable points may be derived from them.
 - Post online in the Weekly Forum before class (11:30am Mon.)
 - 250-500 words
 - Lowest grade is dropped (i.e., one freebie!)
- **Respond to posted BNs of colleagues x9:** 15%
 - Read and respond to the BNs of colleagues each week by noon on Friday.
 - Following the Zoom portion of class (approx. 1 hr), we will continue our discussion online by discussing the BNs posted Monday morning.
- **Lead a discussion on ONE of the assigned academic articles:** 15%
 - Briefly present background of the article and its author.
 - Summarize the article for those that did not read it (given there is a choice).
 - Tie the article or chapter to the required readings for the week and to other topics/themes/questions that have arisen in the course.
 - Relate the article or chapter to the larger world, drawing out important themes for people to understand or consider.
 - Raise a few engaging discussion questions that:
 - Address difficulties in the text for comprehension

- Consider problems/issues raised by the ideas expressed in the text
- Consider relevance and application of ideas to current events, issues, debates, etc.
- *If more than one student is presenting, please choose different articles to present.*
- **Final project: 30%**
 - Complete major project (~20pp) on one of the topics/theories/thinkers covered in the course
 - Implement project management skills
 - Suggested projects (other ideas are welcome and encouraged!):
 - Curate exhibition
 - Write journalistic story/feature article
 - Design course syllabus and explain its rationale
 - Write academic research paper
 - Develop policy proposal for govt. body (federal or provincial), NGO or Human Rights Group
 - Write a Blog
 - Record Podcast
 - Proposal: 5% **DUE Oct 19**
 - Annotated Bibliography: 15% **DUE Nov 2** (for an example see the bibliography in Darlene Juschka's article, "Gender")
 - Outline: 20% **DUE Nov 23**
 - Lay-out the specific steps of your argument/story-line
 - Demonstrate the logical link between those steps
 - Describe how they build to support your argument/thesis/narrative
 - Final submission: 45% **DUE Dec 11**
 - Professional presentation: clear writing, grammar, spelling, correct citation format (for academic papers, use *The Chicago Manual of Style*)
 - Content: original ideas, problem solving, application of theories from course, demonstration of relevance (i.e., why it matters), engaging presentation style
 - In-Class Presentation: 15%
 - Clarity, evidence of preparation, delivery, explanation, thoughtfully addressing questions
- **Comment/Respond to Presentations by Colleagues: 10%**

Required Texts:

All Readings are available on-line through our Library. Follow the link to ARES on our cuLearn page.

Text Books: we are reading a substantial portion of the following two text books; you might want to consider purchasing them from an online retailer if your budget allows:

- Taylor, Mark C. (ed.). *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago, 1998.
- Hinnells, John (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, 2nd edition, edited by London: Routledge, 2010.

Learning Objectives:

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

1. succinctly summarize complex theoretical articles, distill their main points, and explain their relevance for the contemporary study of Religion.
2. demonstrate awareness of the intellectual history and background of a theoretical idea or specialist term.
3. critically and constructively engage with the ideas of colleagues in the course (both in online forums and in live Zoom sessions).
4. facilitate the discussion of an academic article by explaining the article's intellectual background and importance, posing thoughtful and probing questions that help peers in the class deepen their understanding of the article and relate the ideas in it to contemporary issues, current events, and social debates.
5. prepare and present an original piece of research in the form of a Final Project that critically engages with theory encountered in the course and relates it to an aspect of Religious Studies (question/problem, ritual/practice, situation/event, belief/idea/narrative) of the student's choice.
6. demonstrate project management skills by working through the steps to create the Final Project, meeting all deadlines and avoiding a last minute rush.
7. formulate cogent and theoretically nuanced arguments.
8. make connections between theoretical approaches used in the academic study of religion and their real-world implications and applications.

Important Note on Intellectual Property and Privacy: Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course content and materials, whether deriving from the instructor or fellow students, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, Briefing Notes, and other shared materials, are protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). Infringement violates the law!

Please do not record the class without prior consent of all participants, nor post any recording of the class without consent of all participants. To do so violates Canadian Privacy laws.

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their *personal 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). Please also make sure you read and understand the University guidelines on plagiarism (at the end of this document).

SCHEDULE:

Week 1 - Sept 14: Course Intro--Introductions, Review Syllabus, Decide on seminar facilitation (Duration of this course may exceed 1hr)

READ (Please read these *before* our first class, but **no BN is due this week**):

- *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion: "Why study Religion?"*
- Lincoln, Bruce. "Theses on Method," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8 (1996), 225-227. Posted here:
<https://carleton.ca/chum/religionpubliclife/admissions/method/>

Week 2 - Sept. 28: Academic Study of "Religion"

READ:

- *Critical Terms for Religious Studies: "Religion, Religions, Religious"*
- *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion: "The Study of Religions: Last 50 Years"*
- Theoretical Article: Russell T. McCutcheon. *Studying Religion: an Introduction*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis. 2014, 1-11;

Or Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27-54.

Week 3 - Sept. 21: The Post Modern Turn

READ:

- *Critical Terms for Religious Studies: "Modernity"*
- *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion: "Post-Structuralism and the Study of Religion"*
- Theoretical Article: Michel Foucault "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 8, No 4 (1982): 777-795;

Or David Chidester. "Michel Foucault and the Study of Religion." *Religious Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (1986): 1-39.

Week 4 - Oct. 5: Orientalism and Post-Colonialism

READ:

- *Critical Terms for Religious Studies: "Culture"*
- *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion: "Orientalism and Study of Religions"*
- Theoretical Article: Edward Said. "Introduction," and "Latent and Manifest Orientalism," in *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979, 1-30;

Or Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988).

Week 5 - Oct 12: Thanksgiving!

Week 6 - Oct 19: Gender

READ:

- *Critical Terms for Religious Studies: "Gender"*
- *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion: "Gender"*
- Theoretical Article: Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 91/5 (1986): 1053-75;

Or Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 3-44.

- **Proposal Due**

Week 7 - Oct 26: Fall Break!

Week 8 - Nov 2: Embodiment and Performativity

READ:

- *Critical Terms for Religious Studies: "Performance" and "Body"*
- Theoretical Article: Judith Butler. "On Linguistic Vulnerability," in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. Routledge: 1997;

Or Pierre Bourdieu, "Belief and the Body" in *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990 [1980]), 66-79.

- **Annotated Bibliography Due**

Week 9 - Nov 9: Religion's Appeal

READ:

- *Critical Terms for Religious Studies: "Rationality"*
- *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion: "Economics of Religion" and "Fundamentalism"*
- Theoretical Article: Matthew Sutton, "Reading the Bible in War and Crisis to Know the Future." In *The Bible in American Life*, ed. Philip Goff, et al., OUP: 2017;

Or Yasmin Moll, "Television is not Radio: Theologies of Mediation in the Egyptian Islamic Revival." *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 33, Issue 2, 2018: 233-265.

Week 10 - Nov 16: Space/Place and Religion

READ:

- *Critical Terms for Religious Studies: "Territory"*
- *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion: "Religion and the Environment"*
- Theoretical Article: Michelene Pesantubbee. "Wounded Knee: Site of Resistance and Recovery," in *Religion, Violence, Memory and Place*, eds. Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press: 2006), 75-88;

Or Charles H. Long, "Conquest and Cultural Contact in the New World," in *Significations: Signs, Symbols and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (The Davies Group, Publishers: 1999), 107-124.

Week 11 - Nov 23: Experiencing Religion

READ:

- *Critical Terms for Religious Studies: "Experience"*
- *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion: "Religion, Media, and Cultures of Everyday Life"*
- Theoretical Article: James Bieolo. "Experiential Design and Religious Publicity in DC's Museum of the Bible." *The Senses and Society*, 2020, Vol. 15, No. 1, 98-113;

Or Brian Keith Axel, "Diasporic Sublime: Sikh Martyrs, Internet mediations, and the Question of the Unimaginable." *Sikh Formations*, Vol. 1, No. 1, June 2005, pp. 127-154.

- **Outline Due**

Week 12 - Nov 30: Religious Resistance, Transgression, and Change

READ:

- *Critical Terms for Religious Studies: "Transgression"*
- *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion: "New Religious Movements"*
- Theoretical Article: Shuck, Glenn, "The Myth of the Burning times and the Politics of Resistance in Contemporary American Wicca." *Journal of Religion and Society*, 2 (2000).

Or James C. Scott, "Ch. 1: Behind the Official Story," in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 1-16.

Week 13 - Dec 7 and Fri. Dec 11: Presentation of Student Projects (*Note: these 2 classes will take full 3 hrs*)

- **Final Project Due (Dec. 11, 11:59pm) - please submit using link on cuLearn**



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 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

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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

Greek and Roman Studies 300 Paterson Hall GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca

Religion 2A39 Paterson Hall
Religion@cunet.carleton.ca

Digital Humanities (Graduate) 2A39 Paterson Hall
digitalhumanities@carleton.ca

Digital Humanities (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall
digitalhumanities@carleton.ca

MEMS (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall
CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca