**Religious Studies 2QQ3—CULTS, CONSPIRACIES & CLOSE ENCOUNTERS (Fall 2019) *DRAFT***

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### Contact Information

* Dr. Philippa Carter [carterph@mcmaster.ca](mailto:carterph@mcmaster.ca)
* UH 125, ext. 23388.
* Office hours: Tuesday, 10:30 – noon, Thursday, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m., or by appointment.

### MEETING TIMES & TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Note: Tutorials start on Wednesday, 11 September

C01-LEC Tu We 9:30AM - 10:20AM TSH 120

T01-TUT Mo 8:30AM - 9:20AM JHE 329 Anna Phipps-Burton <phippsba@mcmaster.ca>

T02-TUT Mo 9:30AM - 10:20AM JHE 329 Anna Phipps-Burton

T03-TUT Mo 9:30AM - 10:20AM BSB 105 Rachel Matheson

T04-TUT Mo 10:30AM - 11:20AM BSB 105 Rachel Matheson <mathesre@mcmaster.ca>

T05-TUT Tu 2:30PM - 3:20PM BSB 104 Max Kennel <kennem12@mcmaster.ca>

T06-TUT Tu 3:30PM - 4:20PM BSB 104Max Kennel

T07-TUT Tu 2:30PM - 3:20PM BSB 121 Irene Quach Soquier <quachsoi@mcmaster.ca>

T08-TUT Tu 3:30PM - 4:20PM BSB 121 Irene Quach Soquier

T09-TUT Tu 2:30PM - 3:20PM ABB 162 TBA

T10-TUT Tu 3:30PM - 4:20PM ABB 162 TBA

T11-TUT We 10:30AM - 11:20AM BSB 104 Nathan Smith <smithd47@mcmaster.ca>

T12-TUT We 11:30AM - 12:20PM BSB 104 Nathan Smith

### CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Why are people often attracted to “alternative” perspectives/religious movements? An examination of some marginal or marginalized groups, beliefs and practices and the ways they challenge and enforce “received wisdom.”

### COURSE GOALS

To examine various theories regarding the origins and significance of marginal and marginalized groups, beliefs and practices.

To evaluate how adequately these theories help us understand these phenomena.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To cultivate a critical approach to cultural perspectives on marginal and marginalized groups, beliefs and practices.

To learn how to apply theoretical models to these cultural phenomena.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

A selection of journal articles available online through Mills Library

### GRADING AND EVALUATION

* 10% Tutorial Participation & Engagement
* 60% Three written assignments @ 20% (700 – 1,000 words)
  + - Details to follow
    - Due dates in course schedule below
    - PLEASE SEE THE NOTE ON THE MSAF
* 30% One Take-Home Exam

### CLASS SCHEDULE

##### SEP 3, 4 Introduction: What is a Cult? What is a Conspiracy Theory? What is a Close Encounter?

##### SEP 10, 11 Jonestown

* READ: Lorne L. Dawson, “Psychopathologies and the Attribution of Charisma” *Nova Religio*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2006), 3-28.

##### SEP 17, 18 Scientology

* READ: Hugh B. Urban, "Fair Game: Secrecy, Security, and the Church of Scientology in Cold War America." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74, no. 2 (2006): 356-89.

##### SEP 24, 25 Open Mind Forum

* READ: C. Ward & D. Voas, “The Emergence of Conspirituality.”*Journal of Contemporary Religion, 26*(1), (2011) 103-121.
* Assignment One due: 11:59 P.M. 30 September.

##### OCT 1, 2 An Ancient Cult, An Ancient Conspiracy Theory

##### OCT 8, 9 The Longest Hatred

* READ: “Conspiracy Theory and Antisemitism” in *Conspiracy Theories* by J. Byford (eBook available through Mills Library). https://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/antisemitism-podcast/john-pawlikowski

##### OCT 15, 16 READING WEEK NO CLASS

##### OCT 22, 23 Conspiracy Theories and Religious Studies

* READ: D. G. Robertson, “The Hidden Hand: Why Religious Studies Need to Take Conspiracy Theories Seriously.” *Religion Compass*. 2017
* READ: D. G. Robertson, “David Icke’s Reptilian Thesis and the Development of New Age Theodicy” *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 4.1 (2013) 27–47
* Assignment Two due: 11:59 p.m. 28 October

##### OCT 29, 30 Conspiracy Theories and Close Encounters

* READ: Robert Pearson Flaherty, "These Are They": ET-Human Hybridization and the New Daemonology” *Nova Religio* Vol. 14, No. 2 (2010), 84-105.

##### NOV 5, 6 Close Encounters of the Third Kind

* READ: Andrew Gordon, "Close Encounters": The Gospel According to Steven Spielberg" *Literature/Film Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1980): 156-64. http//www.jstor.org/stable/43796145.

##### NOV 12, 13 Cults, Conspiracies & Close Encounters

* READ: Paul Brian Thomas, “Revisionism in ET-Inspired Religions” *Nova Religio* Vol. 14, No. 2 (2010), 61-83.

##### NOV 19, 20 Cults, Conspiracies, Close Encounters & Culture The Fourth “C”

* READ: L. Tromly, “Race, Citizenship, and the Politics of Alien Abduction; Or, Why Aliens Do Not Abduct Asian Americans.”*The Journal of Popular Culture, 50*(2), (2017) 276-292.
* Assignment Three due: 11:59 p.m. 25 November

##### NOV 26, 27 Open Mind Forum revisited

##### DEC 3, 4 REVIEW

### THE FINE PRINT

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the *Academic Integrity Policy*, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

* Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
* Improper collaboration in group work.
* Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

#### AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

#### ON-LINE COMPONENTS

In this course we will be using Avenue2Learn and turnitin.com. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

#### ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s *Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities* policy.

#### REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. ***If you find it necessary to submit the MSAF during this course, you must submit the missed work before the end of classes. I do not redistribute grades for missed assignments.***

#### ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

#### EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.