

SCAR/ANTHROP 3AR3 – CULTURE AND RELIGION Fall 2022



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Office Hours: By appointment in-person, or via Teams or Zoom

Lecture: PGCLL B131: Monday & Wednesday 4:30PM - 5:20PM

Lecture audio released as podcast twice a week + ppt slides

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I recognize and acknowledge that McMaster University is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course introduces key theorists and theories, classic and current topics, and issues of methodology and writing in the study of religion and culture.

We will explore topics ranging from the trouble with defining religion, the social sciences and colonialism, the globalization of religion, ritual and bodies, gender, ritual creativity, the future of religion, and religious pluralism.

We will examine methodological, theoretical, cultural, and social dynamics and issues through a number of case studies, including Judaism in Ghana, Islamic punks, conspiracy theories, science fiction, religion in space, and other examples of diverse religious expressions in our modern world.

By the end of the semester, you will recognize the interconnectedness of religion and culture.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This is a Level III course offered by the Department of Religious Studies. While I assume you have some background in the social scientific study of religion, I do not assume you have knowledge of the topics discussed. All are welcome!

1. **Introductory Survey:** To provide you with an introductory survey of topics and themes in the study of popular culture and religion, religion in popular culture, and religion as popular culture.
2. **Connections and Curiosity:** To develop your intellectual and creative curiosity by recognizing how culture and religion are connected to your daily life and educational goals.
3. **Critical Thinking:** To cultivate analytical, reflective, and critical thought regarding your own and others' attitudes toward the themes of the course.
4. **Empathy:** By examining our rich mosaic of religious life more generally, you will focus on our shared collective humanity, and learn to articulate the power of empathy.

COURSE EVALUATION

You are responsible for completing all the assigned weekly readings, attending lectures, and attending tutorials. Movies are watched on your own time. These will prepare you for the course assignments.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Journal articles can be found on the [McMaster Library](#) website. Book chapters are on Avenue as .pdf files. Videos are all publicly available.

LECTURE INFORMATION

Lectures: This course is offered in person.

Recorded Lectures: The lecture audio will be recorded and released on Avenue each week. The audio files will be accompanied by PowerPoint slides. This is being offered for students who cannot make it to campus and for students who miss a class.

Tutorials: TBD.

COURSE EVALUATION – DETAILS

Introduction (5%):

- Introduce yourself and answer the following questions: Who are you? Why are you taking this course? What are your learning objectives this semester and how will you reach them? What is one academic skill that you most want to improve (ex: writing, reading comprehension)?

Due Date: September 19th

Participation (10%):

- As part of an effort to make grading fairer, participation is not based on tutorial attendance alone. Participation can take several forms, including attending tutorials, speaking in class/tutorials, and thoughtful discussion posts on Avenue. Participation grades will be based on your learning objectives, a self-assessment, and input from TAs. More information available on Avenue.

Concept Mapping (20%):

- Submit three concept maps, diagrams, or any other type of map during the semester. This assignment will improve your reading comprehension skills by creating a mental overview of the readings.

Due dates: Oct 6th, Oct 25th, Nov 22nd

Media Reflections (30%):

- Pick any 2 out of our 5 films and write a short review & analysis. Attending tutorials will prepare you for this assignment.

Due dates: Detailed due dates on Avenue.

Format: Detailed instructions & posted to Avenue.

Final Assignment – The Explainer (35%):

- For the final assignment examine religion in popular culture, or popular culture as religion, by choosing and analyzing a case study of your choice. In other words, discover something neat and interesting, and teach me about it!

You can submit this assignment as a PowerPoint presentation, a video explainer, as a traditional essay, zine, graphic novel, or through another creative medium.

You are the expert on the topic you've chosen, so your explainer should help your reader understand your topic by offering the necessary background and information in an interesting way. Assume your reader (us) doesn't know anything about your topic or the material you are drawing on.

WHAT IS AN EXPLAINER?

Explainers are one of the most prominent forms of journalism and popular writing today. Explainers are short, information packed articles or videos meant to convey complex ideas in an approachable way. Unlike a traditional essay, explainers answer set questions and offer useful answers in a more conversational and direct tone.

Proposal (10%): November 1st

Final (25%): December 7th

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS

MODULE 1: THEORY AND METHOD

Week One: Sept 7th

INTRODUCTION & WHAT IS RELIGION?

- Overview of the course, assignments and learning objectives.
 - **Optional:** McCutcheon, Russell T. 2019. "The History of 'Religion'" In *Studying Religion: An Introduction*. 24-36.
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Week Two: Sept 12th & 14th

HOW CAN (SHOULD) WE STUDY RELIGION?

- Stein, Rebecca L., and Philip L. Stein. 2017. "The Anthropology of Religion" In *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*. 50-72 **ONLY**.
 - Bielo, James. 2015. "Doing Religious Ethnography" In *Anthropology of Religion: The Basics*. 29-53.
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Week Three: Sept 19th & 21st

BODIES, WORDS, AND THINGS

- **Watch:** *Jesus Camp* - watchdocumentaries.com/jesus-camp/
 - Bielo, James. 2015. "Bodies, Words, and Things" In *Anthropology of Religion: The Basics*. 54-80.
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Week Four: Sept 26th & 28th

RELIGIOUS ACTION

- **Watch:** *Doing Jewish: A Story from Ghana* – mcmaster.kanopy.com/video/doing-jewish
 - Eller, Jack David. 2015. "Religious Action: Ritual" In *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*. 152-182.
-

Week Five: Oct 3rd & 5th

THE SEARCH FOR NEW MEANING

- **Watch:** *Waiting for John: An Island Cult Worships American Materialism* - www.kanopy.com/en/mcmaster/video/676950
 - Stein, Rebecca L., and Philip L. Stein. 2017. "The Search for New Meaning" In *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*. 410-440
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Week Six: FALL BREAK!

MODULE 2: CASE STUDIES

Week Seven: Oct 17th & 19th

RELIGION IN A CONNECTED WORLD

- Kirby, Danielle. 2013. "The Internet and Popular Cultures: Sources of Context" In *Fantasy and Belief Alternative Religions, Popular Narratives, and Digital Cultures*. 103-128
 - Servais, Olivier. 2015. "Funerals in the 'World of Warcraft': Religion, polemic, and styles of play in a videogame universe." *Social Compass* 62: 362–378
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Week Eight: Oct 24th & 26th

RELIGION AND CONSPIRACY CULTURE

- Ward, Charlotte and David Voas. 2011. "The Emergence of Conspirituality" *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 26: 103-121.
 - Venturini, Tommaso. 2022. "Online Conspiracy Theories, Digital Platforms and Secondary Orality: Toward a Sociology of Online Monsters." *Theory, Culture & Society*: 1-20.
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Week Nine: Oct 31st & Nov 2nd

RELIGION AND POPULAR MEDIA

- Solano, Jeanette Reedy. 2022. "Discovering the divine in the dark: an introduction to religion and film" In *Religion and Film: The Basics*. 1-14.
 - Jindra, Michael. 2017. "It's About Faith In Our Future: Star Trek Fandom as Cultural Religion." In *Religion and Popular Culture in America*, 223-41.
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Week Ten: Nov 7th & 10th

RELIGION AND POPULAR MUSIC

- Watch: *Taqwacore: The Birth of Punk Islam* - mcmaster.kanopy.com/video/taqwacore-birth-punk-islam
 - Stewart, Francis. 2017. "Earth Crisis" In *Punk Rock is my Religion*. 1-16.
 - Robin Sylvan "Rap Music, Hip-Hop Culture, and 'The Future Religion of the World'" In *God in the Details: American religion in popular culture*. 291-306.
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Week Eleven: Nov 14th & 16th

RELIGION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Watch: *Holy Angels* - www-nfb-ca.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/film/holy-angels/

- Robinson, Margaret. 2020. "Last Night a DJ Saved my Life: Hip Hop, Cultural Continuity, and First Nations Suicidality." In *We Still Here: Hip Hop North of the 49th Parallel*. 183-203.
 - Gray, Biko Mandela. 2019. "Religion in/and Black Lives Matter: Celebrating the impossible." *Religion Compass*.13: e2293
-

Week Twelve: Nov 23rd (No class on 21st)

THE FUTURE AND/OF RELIGION: RELIGION AND THE HUMAN

- More, Max. 2013. "The Philosophy of Transhumanism" In *The Transhumanist Reader*. 3-17.
 - Mercer, Calvin and Tracey J. Trothen. 2021. "Transhumanism, the Posthuman, and the Religions: Exploring Basic Concepts" In *Religion and the Technological Future*. 19-42.
-

Week Thirteen: Nov 28th & 30th

THE FUTURE AND/OF RELIGION: RELIGIONS FOR A GALACTIC AGE

- Partridge, Christopher. 2015. "Channeling Extraterrestrials: Theosophical Discourse in the Space Age." In *Handbook of Spiritualism and Channeling*. 390-412.
 - Torres, Emile P. 2022. "Understanding "longtermism": Why this suddenly influential philosophy is so toxic" - <https://www.salon.com/2022/08/20/understanding-longtermism-why-this-suddenly-influential-philosophy-is-so/>
 - Sims, William Bainbridge. "Religion for a Galactic Civilization 2.0" <archive.ieet.org/articles/bainbridge20090820.html>
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Week Fourteen: Dec 5th

NO LECTURE – OFFICE HOURS DROP IN

STUDENT RESOURCES

CAMPUS RESOURCES

- Food Collective Centre: www.msumcmaster.ca/services-directory/14-mac-bread-bin
- Indigenous Student Services: indigenous.mcmaster.ca/
- Sexual Violence Response Coordinator: svpro.mcmaster.ca/contact/
- Equity and Inclusion: equity.mcmaster.ca/
- Online Learning Support: studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-skills/online-learning/
- Writing Support: studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-skills/writing-support/
- Student Success Centre: studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/
- Ontario Crisis Resources and Helplines: www.camh.ca/en/health-info/crisis-resources
- Canada Suicide Prevention Service: www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/

HOW TO CITE

- MLA: owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_in_text_citations_the_basics.html
- Chicago: www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html
- APA: guides.libraries.psu.edu/apaquickguide/intext

HOW TO AVOID UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM

- www.lakeforest.edu/academics/resources/writingcenter/plagiarism.php

HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY & PUNCTUATION RULES

- How to Write an Essay: advice.writing.utoronto.ca/general/general-advice/
- Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes: studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/reading-and-writing-for-academic-purposes-2021/
- 13 Rules for Using Commas: www.businessinsider.com/a-guide-to-proper-comma-use-2013-9
- How to use the Semi-Colon: theoatmeal.com/comics/semicolon

COURSE POLICIES

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue in .docx or .pdf format (NO .pages).

GRADES

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK GRADE

90-100 A+

85-90 A

80-84 A-

77-79 B+

73-76 B

70-72 B-

67-69 C+

63-66 C

60-62 C-

57-59 D+

53-56 D

50-52 D-

0-49 F

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Please contact your TA or the professor if you plan on handing in an assignment late. Late assignments may be penalized at the discretion of the TA and/or professor.

AVENUE TO LEARN

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. 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.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

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. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

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

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, 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 a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [*Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities*](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. 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".

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 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.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

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.