

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 309 L01: RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE
COURSE OUTLINE – WINTER 2018

Course	Religious Experience		
Time	Monday/Wednesday/Friday 11:00-11:50 AM		
Instructor	Office Hours	Office	Contact Information
Dr. Joy Palacios	Mon. and Wed., 3:00-4:00 PM	SS 534	E: joy.palacios@ucalgary.ca T: 403-220-3285

Required Text(s):

Martin, Craig, Russell T. McCutcheon, and Leslie Dorrough Smith, eds. 2012. *Religious Experience : A Reader*. Sheffield, UK and Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing. (This text is available as an e-book through the university's library website.)

Rankin, Marianne. 2008. *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience*. London and New York: Continuum Publishing. (This text is available as an e-book through the university's library website.)

Course Description:

Many religions, charitable institutions, and personal stories of radical change attribute their source to or include in their origin stories the account of a transformative religious experience. Experience, however, is a slippery category. What is a religious experience and how can such experiences be studied? This course will provide students with a historical overview of the role played by religious experience in the major religious traditions and in the lives of a selection of famous mystics and historical figures, a survey of the types of and triggers for religious experiences, and an introduction to the theoretical approaches and philosophical questions that guide the academic study of religious experience. Reflective writing assignments, exams, and a final research project will enable students to interrogate the category of "experience" both personally and critically.

Core Competencies:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

Knowledge:

- Explain the role played by religious experience in the major religious traditions
- Identify the religious and non-religious triggers of religious experience
- Compare, apply, and evaluate the most important theoretical approaches and philosophical questions that guide the academic study of religious experience

Skills:

- Make detailed observations of the physical sensations, emotions, thoughts, ideas, and questions that arise from repeatedly engaging in a practice or action associated with spiritual experience
- Describe, categorize, and analyze the sensory, intellectual, and cultural inputs that make “experience” possible
- Gather, evaluate, and use secondary sources to investigate a research question
- Apply a theoretical framework to analyze the historical, contextual, and cultural construction of “experience” as a category in the accounts of famous religious experiences

Course Requirements:

This course will involve three types of assessments/assignments:

1. Exams = 30%
 - Exam #1 (15%)
 - Exam #2 (15%)

The exams are designed to assess your fundamental knowledge of the theoretical frameworks used in the academic study of religious experience and will focus primarily on the readings from Martin and McCutcheon. I will provide more detailed information about the types of questions on each exam closer to the exam date so that you can prepare.

2. Auto-Ethnographic Project = 35%
 - Proposal (5%)
 - Journal check-ins (3 x 5%)
 - Poster/infographic/digital story (15%)

The auto-ethnographic project is designed to guide you through a personalized interrogation of the category of “experience.” You will receive detailed handouts in class explaining each part of the project, which has three components. First, you will select an activity that in Rankin’s terms can sometimes serve as a trigger of spiritual experience. The activity you choose can be either religious or non-religious in nature, for example, saying the Catholic Rosary, performing yogic sun salutations, spending time in nature, or listening with intention to your favorite music. Once your proposal is approved, you will engage in this activity for at least ten minutes twice per week on your own time and create a journal in which you record your observations about what you sense, think, feel, and learn in the process. At the end of the semester, you will synthesize your findings in a poster, infographic, or 2-minute digital story that will be shared with the class in an Exposition on 9 April and 11 April 2018.

3. Final Research Paper = 35%

The final research paper (1500-1800 words) using at least one primary source, five secondary sources, and one theoretical reading from the semester is designed to guide you through the academic exploration and analysis of either a famous historical account of a religious experience or a practice/trigger associated with religious experience. A handout will detail the required elements of the research paper and we will discuss in class the process of choosing a topic, finding and using secondary sources, structuring an argument, and using Chicago style format.

Summary of dates and weights:

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)	Required pass/fail
29 January 2018	Auto-ethnography proposal	5%	
16 February 2018	Exam #1	15%	
26 February 2018	Journal check-in #1	5%	
16 March 2018	Journal check-in #2	5%	
26 March 2018	Exam #2	15%	
2 April 2018	Journal check-in #3	5%	
9 and 11 April 2018	Poster/info-graphic/digital story (half the class each session)	15%	
13 April 2018	Research paper	35%	
<i>This course does not have a final exam</i>			

Grading

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme, usually used within the Department of Classics and Religion:

A+	100 - 96	A	95 - 90	A-	89 - 85
B+	84 - 80	B	79 - 75	B-	74 - 70
C+	69 - 65	C	64 - 60	C-	59 - 55
D+	54 - 53	D	52-50	F	Under 50

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

Policy with regard to missed assignments/assessments:

In accordance with university policy, deferred examinations are permitted only in exceptional circumstances such as serious illness (only with official 'Physician/Counsellor Statement' form), religious observance, or domestic affliction. For further details see http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred_final.

Journal check-ins will take place in class. Your attendance is required on these dates in order to receive credit for that check-in, unless in exceptional circumstance such as those listed above.

Attendance is also required at both days of the Exposition on April 9th and 11th, where your interaction with your peers and your responses to your peers' work are critical to the learning activity. Failure to attend either day of the Exposition, unless in exceptional circumstances, will result in a loss of two thirds of a letter grade on the assignment (an A+ to an A-). A poster/infographic/digital story not presented at the Exposition will additionally be penalized by a third of a letter grade for each day it is submitted late (an A to an A-). In other words, if you do not attend one of the Exposition days and submit your poster/infographic/digital story a day late, your grade on the assignment will go down by a full letter.

Research papers will be marked down by one third of a grade (A to A-) for each day they are submitted late, unless a previous arrangement for an extension has been made with me in advance.

All that being said, I want you to succeed in this course. If a difficult circumstance in your life will prevent you from completing an assignment on time, please come see me. I cannot guarantee an extension, but I will do my best to work with you to find a solution.

Expectations for student conduct in this course:

Your active participation is important for your own learning as well as the learning of your peers. I will do my best to structure our in-class time in ways that foster and facilitate your engagement with the course materials. Readings assigned for a given date on the schedule should be completed before class begins. Often, I will begin class with a brief lecture highlighting what I think is important in the readings. Whenever possible, I will design interactive activities that will prompt you to explain, analyze, compare, or apply the ideas and information covered in the readings. Please come to class ready to think and share.

During class discussions and activities, I expect each member of the course to help me create a positive learning environment by listening respectfully to each other, using transitions (“As Julia said, I think...”, “I agree/disagree with Mohad because...”, “I want to build on that idea...”), and by refraining from statements that signal judgment. We will be discussing material that can be sensitive and about which members of the course may have strong feelings. For this reason, all members of the class will be asked to use vocabulary that signals observation, description, analysis, scholarly argument, and hypothesis formation.

Electronic Device Policy:

Electronic devices are allowed in this course and will sometimes be used for in-class activities. (I, too, after all, will have my laptop with me to provide PowerPoint presentations and my phone so I can use its timer to keep our activities on track.) I do, however, expect that all members of the class show respect to their fellow students and the instructor(s) by not wearing headphones, answering phone calls, playing music, or watching their own videos. If a student’s use of electronic devices disrupts others, he/she may be asked to leave the room.

Recording any part of the lectures or class sessions in any form must first be approved by the instructor in writing and is for individual private study only.

Syllabus:

A schedule of readings will be distributed on the first day of class and posted to D2L.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar (section K, which can be found here: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>). If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor, or librarian staff.

Student Accommodations

The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

Desire 2 Learn (D2L) Help

Go to <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students> for Student Help and FAQ's about D2L. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are also available on this website.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources

- For program planning and advice, students in the Faculty of Arts will contact The Arts Students' Centre (ASC). Drop in at SS102, call at 403-220-3580 or email at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library.

Freedom of Information and Privacy

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP): <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act indicates that assignments given by you to your course instructor will remain confidential unless otherwise stated before submission. The assignment cannot be returned to anyone else without your express permission. Similarly, any information about yourself that you share with your course instructor will not be given to anyone else without your permission. As one consequence, students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number on each subsequent page.

Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at arts1@ucalgary.ca.

Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints. Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

Safewalk

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors 24 hrs/day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.