
- **RELI 300--Senior Seminar**

We will explore themes in the study of religion as you work toward completing a final paper on the topic of your choice. Our work together represents a "capstone" of sorts for your time in the religion department. Our goals are to engage each other in critical, open, and probing reflections on the study of religion; and our goals are for each of you to write a final paper that touches on crucial questions and themes that have become important to you during your time as a major. At the start of the class, your readings will be assigned. However, quickly, we will read material--your own writing as well as essay selections based on your chosen final topics--that you will assign.

Course Requirements (see syllabus for due dates)

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- First Paper Proposal: 2%
- Second Paper Proposal: 8%
- Final Paper Proposal: 10%
- 1000 words: 2%
- 3000 words: 8%
- 4500 words: 10%
- Final Essay: 40%

Required Texts

Available through the Vassar Bookstore

- Verlyn Klinkenborg, *Several Short Sentences About Writing* (Vintage)
- Robert Orsi: *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton)
- Umberto Eco, *How to Write a Thesis* (MIT Press)

Thesis Related Matters

- See the Thesis Handbook for more information.
- **Petition: DUE FRIDAY NOV 20.** *This is only due if you wish to write a Senior Thesis. See the Handbook for the "thesis petition."*
- For those of you whose thesis includes "human subjects"--i.e. you will be conducting interviews or surveys of some sort or another--please see the following link for the Vassar Institutional Review Board (IRB): <http://committees.vassar.edu/irb/>
- For those of you seeking money to help with research for your senior thesis, see the thesis handbook.

Technology in the classroom

I'm not a huge fan of the use of laptops and iPads in class. I feel they distract us from each other and the matter at hand. They also discourage you from printing out required materials, which I think has adverse effects on reading. That said, I realize that so many of us rely on these tools, and occasionally they are helpful during class. The skinny is this: Please try to minimize your use of electronic gadgets. If you do read from a screen, please ask yourself if your comprehension is suffering because you don't have a hard copy to write notes on and mark up. If that's the case, then print the readings out. Most important, if you do use electronics during class, limit yourself to note-taking and reading of course materials only. If I think you're straying and being unfaithful to this ethic, I may ask you to turn off your wi-fi or your device.

Academic Accommodations

"Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please schedule an appointment with the instructor early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course which have been approved by the Director of Disability and Support Services as indicated in your accommodation letter."

August 31 - September 6

Aug 31 - Introductions and Orientations

- Hua Hsu, "A Guide To Thesis Writing That Is A Guide to Life," <http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-guide-to-thesis-writing-that-is-a-guide-to-life>
 - David Foster Wallace, "This is Water," 2005 Kenyon Commencement Address
 - Eco, 56-57 (The Librarian)
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September 7 - September 13

Sept 7 - Labor Day: NO CLASS

Monday Sept 7, First Paper Proposal Due by 5pm

September 14 - September 20

Sept 14 -- ROSH HASHANAH

September 21 - September 27

Sept 21 - **class until 7pm**

- Klinkenborg, Prologue, 1-47
 - Eco, xix-xxvi, 1-32, 42-44, 221-223
 - Orsi, 1-47
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September 28 - October 4

Sept 28 - class until 7pm

- Klinkenborg, 67-80, 96-103, 117-119, 126-149
 - Eco 45-54 103-105, 107-115, 142-144, 145-173, 183-184
 - Orsi 73-109
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October 5 - October 11

Oct 5 - class until 7pm

- Orsi 158-204
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Second Paper Proposal Due, Wednesday Oct 7, by 5pm

October 12 - October 18

FALL BREAK

October 19 - October 25

Oct 19

- 2 Students assign reading
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Friday, October 23, Final Paper Proposal Due by 5pm

October 26 - November 1

Oct 26

- 2 Students assign reading
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1000 word draft due, Friday, October 30

November 2 - November 8

Nov 2

- 3 Students assign reading
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Optional Readings

<https://www.facebook.com/sheryl/posts/10155617891025177:0> (optional)

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/17/arts/being-mortal-by-atul-gawande.html?_r=0 (optional)

November 9 - November 15

Nov 9

- 1 Student assigns reading: **Alice**
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November 9, Wood Lecture, Wendy Doniger, 5:30pm in Rocky 300

Nov 13, 3000 words due, 5pm in Dropbox

November 16 - November 22

Nov 16

- Peer Reviews of 3000 word draft
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November 23 - November 29

Nov 23 - American Academy of Religion Conference: **NO CLASS**

Nov 25, 4000-4500 words due by 5pm in Dropbox

November 30 - December 6

Nov 30

- Peer Review of 4500 word draft
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