RELG 331: Religion and Globalization

Fall 2020

Mon/Wed/Fri 1:35pm to 2:25pm (EST)

Instructor:
Prof. Sam Nelson
samuel.nelson@mcgill.ca
Birks 008
Office hours: by appointment

Teaching Assistant:
Lucie Robathan
Lucie.robathan@mail.mcgill.ca
Office hours: by appointment

Please note that RELG 331 will be conducted entirely online for the Fall Term 2020. Please see details about the virtual organization of the course below.

Course description: This course will examine the relationship between religion and the many dimensions of modern globalization (economic, political, social, etc.) We will explore the religious dimensions and implications of historic and contemporary globalizing processes, including experiential changes associated with industrialization and global capitalism; the imperial and colonial mediation of global cultural encounters; human migration across cultural and political frontiers; and patterns of secularization associated with globaling “modernization” and “urbanization.” Additional themes explored include the role that religion can play in “place-making” and in the renegotiation of identities and solidarities amid the displacements and “dis-embedding” thrusts of modern globalization, especially in modern global cities.

This course will be divided into three principle learning formats:

Lectures (highlighted in blue below):

Unless otherwise indicated, a weekly lecture will take place each Monday throughout the term. Lectures will either be pre-recorded and uploaded to MyCourses prior to our usual Monday meeting time (i.e. 1:35pm), or will be live-streamed on Zoom via MyCourses from 1:35-2:25; live-streamed lectures will also be recorded and made available on MyCourses for those unable to participate life at the appointed time. Lectures for the least the first two weeks...
of the course will be pre-recorded; thereafter, you will be advised in advance if/when the lectures will take place live. Please note below that lectures will occasionally take place on other days of the week (e.g. Friday of the first week of class and Wednesday following Thanksgiving)

Discussion/Q&A (highlighted in purple below):

Unless otherwise indicated, Wednesdays will be devoted to class discussion and Q&A related to the course material assigned for a given week (lectures, readings, etc.). These will take place at our usual meeting time (1:35 to 2:25) on Zoom via MyCourses. Wednesday discussions will be recorded and made available on MyCourses for those unable to participate live. Take-home exams will be introduced and discussed during the Wednesday discussions seminars.

Novel Discussion Sessions (highlighted in red below):

Over the course of the term we will read two novels that provide literary illustrations of course themes otherwise explored in lectures and assigned scholarly readings. These are Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Minaret* (2005) by Leila Aboulela. Most Fridays will consist of live zoom discussions of the novel chapters assigned for a given week. These sessions are highlighted in red below; please note that novel discussion sessions will take place most, but not all, Fridays. *The first Friday meeting will take place on October 2.*

**Live versus recorded lectures and discussion sessions:** We recognize and will strive to accommodate the varied circumstances students may find themselves during this pandemic. There will be no penalties for those unable to participate in any live components. We will ensure that Monday lectures as well as Wednesday and Friday Zoom discussions will be recorded and promptly made available on MyCourses.

Live discussions on Zoom will frequently entail student break-out groups involving short written group exercises and/or written transcripts of group discussion highlights which will be made available on MyCourse for all students, including to those unable to participate in the live discussion. Additionally, each Wednesday and Friday, live discussion will correspond to a discussion board on MyCourses. These discussion boards are designed principally for those students who are unable to participate in the live discussion but who might wish to post questions or comments on the themes/readings for a given week. *If posted midnight prior to a given live discussion* these comments/questions can be addressed by the instructor in the live discussion; and *if by midnight following a live discussion* they will addressed by the instructor in writing in the discussion board itself.
Please be reminded that **live zoom discussions will be recorded and posted** on MyCourses for the benefit of those unable to participate. During live class events you may be visible or invisible as you prefer, i.e. turn your video function on or off according to your preference.

**Intellectual property and course material distribution without permission:** Please refrain from sharing recorded lectures and discussions and any other instructor generated course materials (e.g., lecture slides, summaries, exam questions, etc.), all of which are protected by copyright law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor.

**Virtual office hours:** a schedule of regular weekly Zoom office hours will be confirmed within a few weeks of the start of the Term, based on an assessment of time availability/constraints of students. In the meantime, don’t hesitate to email the instructor to make an appointment.

A **General Course Queries discussion board** has been created on MyCourses. Students may post questions or concerns related to the organization of the class (e.g. scheduling, course material, technical matters).

**Course readings and resources:**

All course literature, with the exception of the novel Minaret (see below), will be available electronically via MyCourses.

**Friday novels:**

A link to an electronic copy of *Robinson Crusoe* is accessible at the ‘Crusoe’ tab on MyCourses. Please feel free to order a hard copy if you prefer (on Amazon, etc.); editions may vary with respect to page and/or chapter numbers.

McGill does not have access to an electronic copy of Abouleila’s *Minaret*, therefore please plan to purchase an electronic (or hard copy) via Amazon, Google Play, etc. Links to purchasing options can be found at the ‘Minaret’ tab on MyCourses.

**Evaluation:**

**Two novel essay assignments for Crusoe (20%) and Minaret (20%):** Students are to complete essays of 1200-1400 for each of two assigned novels (due on MyCourses by the indicated date). In each case, students will be given specific prompts to be addressed in the essays, designed to demonstrate connections drawn between the literary content of each work and one or more of the major themes explored in lectures and/or other assigned reading.

**Two take-home essay exams:** Students will be assigned one mid-term (30%) and one final (30%) take-home essay exam on major themes and readings, each to be completed in two week’s time and submitted electronically on MyCourses by the indicated date.

*Essay assignment and mid-term and take-home essay exams should be uploaded as Word documents to the relevant assignments portal on MyCourses by the date and time indicated in the schedule below.*
Course Schedule

September 2 (Wednesday)

Course Overview—pre-recorded course introduction available on MyCourses by Wednesday September 2 at 1:35pm.

September 4 (Friday)

Lecture: Globalization—history and concepts

Reading:


***

September 7 (Monday)

Lecture: Globalization (continued)

Readings:


September 9 (Wednesday)

Topic(s): Globalization

September 11 (Friday) – no meeting.
September 14 (Monday)
Lecture: Embedded Religion
Reading:
Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Form of Religious Life (read pp. 101-156)

September 16 (Wednesday)
Topic: Embedded religion/Durkheim

September 18 (Friday)—no meeting.

***

September 21 (Monday)
Lecture: Dis-embedded Religion
Reading:
Charles Taylor, “What was the Axial Revolution?,” chapter 2 (pp. 30-46) in The Axial Age and it’s Consequences (eds. R. Bellah & H. Joas)

September 23 (Wednesday)
Topic: The “axial age”

September 25 (Friday)—no meeting.

***

September 28 (Monday)
Lecture: Religious Roots of Global Modernity
Reading:
September 30 (Wednesday)

Topic: The Protestant Ethic

October 2 (Friday)

Robinson Crusoe I: Introduction

Read “Introduction,” T. Keymer, pp. vii-xxxix (*in online edition at MyCourses link*)

**Introduction of midterm take-home essay exam (due Friday Oct 16 before the start of class)**

***

October 5 (Monday)

Lecture: Religion and Empire I

Reading:


[Optional]: BBC Radio: ‘In Our Time: The Valladolid Debate’

October 7 (Wednesday)

Topic: Las Casas and the ‘Valladolid Debate’

October 9 (Friday)

Robinson Crusoe: Chapters I-IV

***

October 12 (Monday) – Thanksgiving holiday (no lecture)

October 14 (Wednesday)

Lecture: Religion and Empire II
Readings:


October 16 (Friday)

Robinson Crusoe: Chapters V-VII

**Midterm take-home essay exam due before start of class (e.g. 1:25pm EST)**

***

October 19 (Monday)

Lecture: Religion and Indigeneity – Lucie Robathan

Readings:


October 21 (Wednesday)

Topic: religion and indigeneity

October 23 (Friday)

Robinson Crusoe: Chapters VIII-X (to the end)

**Introduction of Crusoe Essay Assignment: due Friday October 30 before start of class**

***
October 26 (Monday)
Lecture: Religion and (Post-)coloniality
Reading:
Gauri Viswanathan, “Colonialism and Construction of Hinduism.”

October 28 (Wednesday)
Topic: Emergence of modern Hinduism

October 30 (Friday)
Minaret: Introduction
**Crusoe essay assignment due before start of class (i.e. 1:35pm EST)**

November 2 (Monday)
Lecture: Religion and Migration I
Reading/documentary:
David Garbin, “Regrounding the Sacred: Transnational Religion, Place Making and the Politics of Diaspora among the Congelese in London and Atlanta.”
“Life and Death the Pentecostal Way”, BBC documentary (2016)

November 4 (Wednesday)
Topic: Pentecostalism and migration

November 6 (Friday)
Minaret: parts 1, 2

***
November 9 (Monday)

Lecture: Religion and Migration II

Readings:

Carolyn Chen, *Getting Saved the American Way: Taiwanese Immigration and Religious Experience* (read chapters 1 & 3)

November 11 (Wednesday)

Topic: religion and migration

November 13 (Friday)

*Minaret*, parts 3, 4

***

November 16 (Monday)

Lecture: Religion and the City I: Secularization

Readings:

Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life.”


November 18 (Wednesday)

Topic: Urbanization and secularization

November 20 (Friday)

*Minaret*, parts 5-6 (*to the end*)

**Introduction of Minaret essay assignment: due Friday Nov 27 before start of class.

***
November 23 (Monday)

Lecture: Religion and the City II: Urban ‘Re-Parochialization’

Reading:


November 25 (Wednesday)

Topic: the urban parish

November 27 (Friday)

Final take-home essay exam introduced: due Friday December 11 at midnight EST

**Minaret essay assignment due before start of class (i.e. 1:35pm EST)**

***

November 30 (Monday)

Lecture: Pilgrimage

Reading/video:


Documentary: Sacred Journeys: The Hajj

December 2 (Wednesday)

Topic: pilgrimage/ the Hajj

December 3 (Thursday)—Final meeting: course review

***

*Friday December 11: final take-home essay exam due at midnight EST.*