

REL-2294-01/PS3294-02 | Religion and Politics

Winter 2023 | Carpenter 204 | M/W/F 2:30-3:20pm

Professor: Leslie Ribovich, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: M/W/F 12:30pm-2:30pm | Sign up [here](#)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

We often hear that you should never discuss religion and politics in "polite company." Yet, religion and politics inform so much of our world today. From the religious affiliations and speeches of American politicians, to the Religious Right's voting bloc, to tensions in the Middle East, to Hindu Nationalism, to churches' views on same-sex marriage, it's hard to read the news without coming across intersections of religion and politics. In this course, we will ask why religion and politics are such pervasive elements of our global society, with a focus on the American context, and whether religion is inherently political and politics inherently religious. We will begin by establishing frameworks for studying religion and politics from the academic study of religion and political science. Then we will examine contemporary case studies where religion and politics intersect by reading scholarship and primary sources. Finally, we will turn inward to study the politics of historical memory in Kentucky, Lexington, and Transylvania to unpack the personal and local dimensions of politics. Throughout, we will work toward a research paper that analyzes a case study of your choice. Counts for Area V: Writing Intensive.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To understand different scholarly frameworks for studying religion and politics, especially by reading theories in political science and religious studies and using them in research papers.
 - To interpret case studies in the United States to see ongoing intersections of religion and politics by reading scholarly and primary sources and researching one case study in depth.
 - To turn inward to Kentucky, Lexington, and Transylvania to see that the personal and local are political by reading about our own context, visiting local sites, and crafting a creative project.
 - To develop research and writing skills by building a research project on a particular case study throughout the semester in this Writing Intensive course.
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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Free Writes: 10%** About once a week, you will respond to a prompt about the readings in class. Free writes are an opportunity to reflect on the course material and test out ideas. They are graded credit/no credit.

- **Building Blocks: 35% (7 total)** To prepare for major assignments, there will be regular building block assignments at various steps along the way. See Canvas for individual prompts. The building blocks are due to Canvas on Sun., at 11:59pm.
- **Peer Reviews: 10% (7 total)** Throughout the term, you will be in small writing groups where you read each other's work. The peer reviews will be written in response to a set of questions. See Canvas for individual prompts. The peer reviews are due to Canvas on Sun., at 11:59pm.
- **Research Paper + Cover Letter: 20%** In this paper, you will make a researched argument about a relevant case study of your choice using (a) clear scholarly framework (s). There will be a cover letter explaining your revision and continued areas for growth. See Canvas for detailed prompt. The paper revision is due to Canvas on at 11:59pm.
- **Creative Project: 10%** In a medium of your choosing, express the relationship between religion and politics in a personal or local context. This might involve contributing an item to the Transy and Race timeline, but it need not. See Canvas for detailed prompt. The project is due to Canvas on at 11:59pm.
- **Final Reflection (at least 750 words): 5%** The final reflection will ask you to reflect on the goals of the course and what you've learned. See Canvas for full prompt. The final reflection is due to Canvas on Tues., 4/18 at 11:59pm.
- **Community Building: 10%** Our class is a community that requires the continuing contributions of everyone involved in order to flourish. We each shape our shared learning experience by paying attention and care to the learning process of others and of ourselves. In class discussions, this means you can participate well in the course by asking questions, listening, responding, tying together ideas other students have expressed, or bringing us to a particular moment in the text. Respect for everyone in the classroom is essential. Use pronouns class participants ask you to use. See Canvas for Community Building rubric.

You must complete all of the course requirements. Failure to complete any course requirement may result in failure of the course. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in advance.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

For more information about University policies, please refer to the Transylvania University Student Handbook by [clicking here](#) or reaching out to the Academic Associate Dean's Office at academicassocdean@transy.edu or the Student Life Office at studentlife@transy.edu.

Attendance Policy

My expectation is that you attend all classes. If you will be absent, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can work something out. Communication is key. If you will be absent, I recommend getting notes from a classmate. Multiple absences warrant concern and may affect your final grade.

Electronic Devices

Accommodations will be provided on an individual basis for students who present documentation from the Disability Services Office.

Electronic devices may only be used for class purposes, such as accessing readings, in-class working docs, and Canvas.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to maintain the highest standard of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty by a student will not be tolerated. All students are expected to know Transylvania's policy on academic integrity as it is defined online in the college catalog. Ignorance or misunderstanding of the policy will not serve as an excuse for academic dishonesty. If you have questions about the policy you can find it at inside.transy.edu and/or ask me about it.

Citations

For all assignments, cite properly using Chicago Manual of Style or MLA Style.

Grading Scale

93-100% = A	73-76% = C
90-92% = A-	70-72% = C-
87-89% = B+	67-69% = D+
83-86% = B	63-66% = D
80-82% = B-	60-62% = D-
77-79% = C+	0-59% = F

Grading requirements will follow Transylvania's standard as laid out in the university catalog. The guidelines for evaluating performance in a course are:

A for excellent work
B for good work
C for satisfactory

D for minimally passing work
F for unsatisfactory/failing work

More specific expectations for each assignment will be discussed prior to the due date.

REQUIRED READINGS

- All required readings will be made available on Canvas.
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COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: FRAMEWORKS

WEEK 1: Study of Religion

Mon., 1/9:

- Read:
 - No reading.
- Write/Do:
 - No prep needed.
- In Class:
 - Introduction to each other and the course.

Wed., 1/11:

- Read:
 - Tisa Wenger and Sylvester Johnson, Introduction to *Religion and U.S. Empire: Critical New Histories* (2022).
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how empire is a site for studying intersections of Christianity and politics. What are the political dynamics of empire, and how does religion shape them?
- In Class:
 - Introduce the study of religion with a focus on empire. Discuss what makes an effective course discussion.

Fri., 1/13:

- Read:
 - Eboo Patel, “3 Reasons Interfaith Cooperation Matter More than Ever,” April 23, 2013, Huffington Post.
 - Lucia Hulsether, “Can Interfaith Dialogue Cure Religious Violence?,” April 26, 2013, Religion Dispatches.
 - Eboo Patel, “What is Interfaith Cooperation for?,” May 6, 2013, Religion Dispatches.
 - Briallen Hopper, “White People Problems: A Time for Burning After Ferguson,” *Killing the Buddha*, September 17, 2014, 8 pages.
 - Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how Patel and Hulsether each understand “interfaith” and “politics.”
 - In Class:
 - Discuss the politics of pluralism. Introduce Building Block 1, peer review, and research paper.
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WEEK 2: Political Science

Mon., 1/16:

- No class. MLK Day.

Wed., 1/18:

- Read:
 - Wendy Brown, “Tolerance as a Discourse of Power” in *Regulating Aversion* (2008), 25-47.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on Brown’s [key terms](#), using Harvey’s definition.
- In Class:
 - Introduce political theory. Discuss Brown’s key terms.

Fri., 1/20:

- Read:
 - Robert Putnam and David Campbell *American Grace* (2010), excerpts.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on the evidence the source uses, especially how survey data influences its definition of religion.
- In Class
 - Introduce and theorize survey data. Preview Unit 2: Case Studies.

>> Building Block 1 BRAINSTORMING due to Canvas on Fri., 1/20 at 11:59pm.

>> Peer Review of Building Block 1 due by Google docs on Sun., 1/22 at 11:59pm.

UNIT 2: CASE STUDIES

WEEK 3: “Judeo-Christian Tradition”

Mon., 1/23:

- Read:
 - Peer’s Building Block 1.
 - K. Healan Gaston, “Introduction” to *Imagining Judeo-Christianity in America* (2019), 1-20.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on what Gaston means by “Judeo-Christianity.” What is the term’s history?
- In Class:
 - Peer Review Workshop–Building Block 1. Introduce Building Block 2. Introduce “Judeo-Christian Tradition” as first case study.

Wed., 1/25:

- Read:
 - Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (1959), 3-7; 48-73.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how Herberg defines the relationship between religion and America.
- In Class:
 - Discuss Herberg's concepts and "Judeo-Christianity."

Fri., 1/27:

- Read:
 - Skim through Brotherhood Week cartoons 1955.
 - K. Healan Gaston, "From Hebraic-Hellenic to Judeo-Christian" to *Imagining Judeo-Christianity in America* (2019), 21-45.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how Gaston's discussion of supersessionism and "Judeo-Christian" operates in the Brotherhood Week cartoons.
- In Class
 - Discussion Brotherhood Week, supersessionism.

>> Building Block 2 PRIMARY or SCHOLARLY SOURCE due Fri., 1/27 at 11:59pm

>> Peer Review of Building Block 2 due by Google docs on Sun., 1/29 at 11:59pm.

WEEK 4: Black Nationalisms

Mon., 1/30:

- Read:
 - Peer's Building Block 2.
- Write/Do:
 - Peer review by Sunday.
- In Class:
 - Peer Review Workshop—Building Block 2. Introduce Building Block 3. Introduce Black Nationalism.

Wed., 2/1:

- Read:
 - Marcus Garvey, chapter 1, chapter 2, and chapter 5 in *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or Africa for the Africans*, compiled by Amy Jacques-Garvey (1977), based on writings from 1920s, 29 pages.

- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how religion and politics intersect in Garvey's visions and goals.
- In Class:
 - Discuss how religion and politics intersect in Garvey.

Fri., 2/3

- Read:
 - Dawn-Marie Gibson and Jamillah Karim, *Women of the Nation: Between Black Protest and Sunni Islam*, pick two narratives.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how gender shapes the religious experiences of the women whose narratives you have read, and vice versa.
- In Class:
 - Share narratives. Discuss gendered religious politics.

>> Building Block 3 PRIMARY or SCHOLARLY SOURCE due Fri., 2/3 at 11:59pm

>> Peer Review of Building Block 3 due by Google docs on Sun., 2/5 at 11:59pm.

WEEK 5: Religious Right Voting Patterns

Mon., 2/6:

- Read:
 - Peer's Building Block 3.
- Write/Do:
 - Peer review by Sunday.
- In Class:
 - Peer Review Workshop—Building Block 3. Introduce Building Block 4. Introduce Religious Right Voting Patterns.

Wed., 2/8:

- Read/Listen:
 - Justin Nortey, "Most White Americans Who Regularly Attend Worship Services Voted for Trump in 2020" (2021).
 - Throughline: The Evangelical Vote Podcast (2020).
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on what patterns the article and pattern are tracing and what explanations the authors may offer for the patterns.
- In Class:
 - Discuss Religious Right Voting Patterns and competing explanations.

Fri., 2/10:

- Read:
 - Anthea Butler, Introduction to *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America* (2021).
 - Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on what Butler means by “the politics of morality in America.”
 - In Class:
 - Discuss Butler’s definition of politics. Discuss how to read a court case ahead of next week.
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WEEK 6: School Prayer

Mon., 2/13:

- Read:
 - *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), 30 pages.
- Write/Do:
 - Identify the various parts of the decision and what the case rules.
- In Class:
 - Introduce school prayer and the religion clauses.

Wed., 2/15:

- Read:
 - *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District* (2022), majority opinion.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how the case frames establishment and free exercise.
- In Class:
 - Discuss Kennedy in relation to *Engel*.

Fri., 2/17:

- Read:
 - *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District* (2022), dissenting opinion.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how the case frames establishment and free exercise, especially the difference between the majority and dissenting opinions. Also note how the facts are presented in each.
- In Class:
 - Discuss the politics of the Court as seen in the majority and dissent.

>> Building Block 4 OUTLINING/DRAFTING due Fri., 2/17 at 11:59pm

>> Peer Review of Building Block 4 due by Google docs on Sun., 2/19 at 11:59pm.

WEEK 7: Abortion

Mon., 2/20:

- Read:
 - Peer's Building Block 4.
 - *Dobbs v. Jackson* (2022), sections divided among the class.
- Write/Do:
 - Peer review by Sunday.
 - Annotate for where underlying theological or religious assumptions might lie in your assigned section.
- In Class:
 - Peer Review Workshop–Building Block 4. Introduce Building Block 5. Introduce abortion. Begin sharing underlying ideas about religion in each of our sections.

Wed., 2/22:

- Read:
 - *Dobbs v. Jackson* (2022), sections divided among the class.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for where underlying theological or religious assumptions might lie in your assigned section.
- In Class:
 - Continue sharing underlying ideas about religion in each of our sections.

Fri., 2/24:

- Read:
 - Zainab Iqbal, "Roe v Wade: Muslim Women Say Overturning of Decision Will Hurt Everyone" (2022).
 - M. Cathleen Kaveny, "Dobbs and Fetal Personhood" (2022).
 - Sarah Seltzer, "Not All Religious People Oppose Abortion" (2021).
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on the varied religious positions regarding abortion that these articles represent.
- In Class
 - Discuss varied religions positions on abortion.

WEEK 8: U.S. Involvement in Israel-Palestine Conflict

Mon., 2/27:

- Read:
 - Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations" (1993).
 - Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance" (2001).
 - Balfour Declaration (1917).
 - Truman memo recognizing Israeli statehood (1948).
- Write/Do:

- Annotate for/take notes on Said's critique of Huntington, and how their debate influences your reading of the primary sources.
- In Class:
 - Introduce U.S. Involvement in Israel-Palestine Conflict.

Wed., 3/1:

- Read:
 - Eran Kaplan and Derek Penslar, *The Origins of Israel, 1882-1948: A Documentary History*, pick at least two primary sources to read.
 - Raed M. I. Quaddoura, et. al., "U.S. Interests and the Israel-Palestine Conflict: A Review" (2019).
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on the core issues of the Israel/Palestine conflict as represented in these sources.
- In Class:
 - Discuss core issues and their relationship to religion.

Fri., 3/3:

- Read:
 - Caitlin Carenen, Chapter 6 in *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel* (2012).
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on the new relationships Carenen is tracing.
- In Class:
 - Discuss layers of the conflict over time. Preview Unit 3: The Political Close to Home.

>> Building Block 5 DRAFT + COVER LETTER due Sun., 3/5 at 11:59pm

UNIT 3: THE POLITICAL CLOSE TO HOME

WEEK 9: Why We're Turning Inward

Mon., 3/6:

- Read:
 - Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence Into Language and Action" (1978).
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how Lorde frames the political power of silence, language, and action.
- In Class:
 - Discuss Lorde, the personal, communal, and identity dimensions of politics.

Wed., 3/8:

- Read:
 - Peer's Building Block 5.
- Write/Do:
 - >> **Peer Review of Building Block 5 due by Google docs on Tues., 3/7 at 11:59pm.**
- In Class:
 - Peer Review Workshop–Building Block 5. Introduce Building Block 6.

Fri., 3/10:

- Read:
 - Jeff Stout, Conclusion to *Democracy and Tradition* (2007).
 - Eddie Glaude, "The History that James Baldwin Wanted America to See" (2020).
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on how Stout and Glaude each frame the local stakes of politics, and what role the history of particular places plays in those stakes.
- In Class
 - Discuss local historical memory and politics.

WEEK 10: SPRING BREAK

Mon., 3/13-Fri., 3/17: SPRING BREAK | NO CLASS

WEEK 11: Religion and Politics in Kentucky

Mon., 3/20:

- Read:
 - Pew Religious Landscape Study, "[Adults in Kentucky](#)" (2014).
 - Pew Religious Landscape Study, [homepage](#).
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on statistics you find particularly intriguing and note why you find them intriguing, also for the relationship between Kentucky and the United States as a whole.
- In Class:
 - Discuss Kentucky's religious landscape and how the Pew Study represents it.

Wed., 3/22:

- Read:
 - "Biography of London Ferrill, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Colored Persons, Lexington, KY" (1854).

- Richard Callahan, *Work and Faith in the Kentucky Coal Fields: Subject to Dust* (2008), excerpts.
- Paul Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (1990), excerpts.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on the varied portraits of religion in Kentucky we get from these sources.
- In Class:
 - Discuss Kentucky's historic religious diversity, and how these sources represent it.

Fri., 3/24:

- Read:
 - Elizabeth Castelli, "Collective Memory and the Meanings of the Past" in *Martyrdom and Memory*, 10-32.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on meanings of memory, history, and the past. Although this is about a very different time and context than ours, how might historical and collective memory be useful for us now?
- In Class:
 - Introduce historical memory and discuss Castelli.

>> Building Block 6 REVISION WORK due Fri., 3/24 at 11:59pm

>> Peer Review of Building Block 6 due by Google docs on Sun., 3/26 at 11:59pm.

WEEK 12: Historical Memory of Lexington, Kentucky

Mon., 3/27:

- Read:
 - Peer's Building Block 6.
- Write/Do:
 - Peer review by Sunday.
- In Class:
 - Peer Review Workshop–Building Block 6. Introduce Building Block 7 and Creative Project.

Wed., 3/29:

- Read:
 - Shawn McGuffey, "Commemorating Hate: On Confederate Monuments, White Supremacy, and Where We Go from Here" (2017).
 - Richard H. Schein, "A Methodological Framework for Interpreting Ordinary Landscapes: Lexington, Kentucky's Courthouse Square" (2009).

- Write/Do:
 - Come up with a list of things you want to pay attention to as we visit Courthouse Square. What questions do you have after reading McGuffey and Schein?
- In Class:
 - Visit Courthouse Square.

Fri., 3/31:

- Read:
 - Brenna Pye, Podcast on “The Extraordinary Life of Dr. Mary E. Britton” (2020).
 - Karen Cotton McDaniel, “Elizabeth ‘Lizzie’ Fouse (1875-1952)” in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times* (2015).
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on Britton’s and Fouse’s positions in Lexington life as Black women after the Civil War.
- In Class
 - Discuss Fouse and Britton. Introduce Transy and Race Project.

>> Research Paper + Cover Letter due Sunday, 4/2 at 11:59pm

WEEK 13: Transy and Race

Mon., 4/3:

- Read:
 - Kanika Chopra '24 and Transy and Race May 2021 students on Transy’s 1831 By Laws.
 - Tracy Clayton, “Roses and Thorns.”
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on shared themes between Chopra, et. al.’s account of the nineteenth-century document and Clayton’s of her experience at Transy in the early 2000s.
- In Class:
 - Visit from students involved in Transy and Race. Discuss patterns across Transy’s history.

Wed., 4/5:

- Read:
 - Leslie Ribovich on Old Morrison.
 - Scott Hudson, et. al., “Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropologies.”
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on the symbolic dimensions of Old Morrison for our campus.
- In Class:
 - Tour of Transy’s campus and Gratz Park as related to race and slavery.

Fri., 4/7:

- Read:
 - Melissa McEuen on Henry Bascom.
- Write/Do:
 - Annotate for/take notes on McEuen's argument about Bascom's role in transforming Transylvania.
- In Class:
 - Discuss what we notice about Transy and race over time, and the political and symbolic dimensions of how we present this history.

>> Building Block 7 CREATIVE PROJECT due Fri., 4/7 at 11:59pm.

>> Peer Review of Building Block 7 due by Google docs on Sun., 4/9 at 11:59pm.

WEEK 14: Creative Projects

Mon., 4/10:

- Read:
 - Peer's Building Block 7.
- Write/Do:
 - Peer review by Sunday.
- In Class:
 - Peer Review Workshop–Building Block 7. Introduce Final Reflection.

Wed., 4/12:

- Read:
 - Sources toward your creative project.
- Write/Do:
 - Work on creative project with peers' comments and my comments in mind.
- In Class:
 - Check in about creative project.

Fri., 4/14:

- Read:
 - Sources toward your creative project.
- Write/Do:
 - Work on creative project with peers' comments and my comments in mind.
- In Class
 - Conclusions.

WEEK 15: Finals Week

>> Creative Project due Sun., 4/16 at 11:59pm

>> Final Reflection due Tues., 4/18 at 11:59pm

STUDENT RESOURCE INFORMATION

Equal Opportunity, Harassment, and Non-Discrimination

Transylvania University is committed to providing a workplace and educational environment, as well as other benefits, programs, and activities, that are free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. To ensure compliance with federal and state civil rights laws and regulations, and to affirm its commitment to promoting the goals of fairness and equity in all aspects of the educational program or activity, Transylvania University has developed internal policies and procedures that provide a prompt, fair, and impartial process for those involved in an allegation of discrimination or harassment on the basis of protected class status, and for allegations of retaliation. For more information about the university's policy and grievance processes click [here](#).

Students who have questions about accommodations, academic or otherwise, under section 504 of Americans with Disabilities Act should contact disabilityservices@transy.edu and/or click [here](#).

For information about Title IX policies, procedures, and reporting click [here](#). For information about the university's Pregnant and Parenting policy under Title IX, click [here](#).

Reports of misconduct can be made to the Title IX Coordinator, Amber Morgan at titleix@transy.edu

Reports can also be made to the following individuals who have been designated as Mandated Reporters by the University: all cabinet members (with the exception of the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion), department supervisors, faculty program chairs, coaches [academic and athletic], Housing and Residence Life staff [including Area Coordinators and Resident Advisors], and all staff who work for the Department of Public Safety. These individuals are employee of Transylvania University who are obligated by policy to share knowledge, notice, and/or reports of harassment, discrimination, and/or retaliation with the Title IX Coordinator.

Contact Information:
Amber D. Morgan – ADA/Title IX Coordinator
Campus Center - 238
admorgan@transy.edu
(859)233-8502

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) sets forth requirements regarding the privacy of student records. FERPA governs both the access to and release of those records, known as education records, and the information they contain. Under FERPA, faculty have a legal responsibility to protect the confidentiality of student records. Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPA, or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class. For additional information, please see Transylvania University's FERPA policy or contact the Office of the Registrar (registrar@transy.edu or 859-233-8116).

Online Conduct

Transylvania University affirms the usage of various instructional technologies within our physical and remote learning environments. Students and faculty agree to use these technologies in order to enhance learning and will refrain from disruptive, inappropriate, or aggressive digital behavior, including, but not limited to, unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class materials, cyberbullying or online harassment both within and beyond classroom learning platforms (i.e. Learning Management Software, Social Media, Blogs, etc.), or any other technological usage that could impair a fellow student's learning or the instructor's ability to teach.

Statement of Community

Transylvania University is dedicated to creating and maintaining an environment that encourages civil academic discourse and scholarly growth. As stated in our mission, our campus community values independent thinking, open-mindedness, and creative expression. Therefore, we aim to foster a climate of respect which is vital to ensuring that all members are treated with courtesy, dignity, and compassion. Creating a community built on these ideals is a responsibility shared by all campus members. We value a willingness to listen to those whose opinions may be different than our own and showing respect to those with differing viewpoints. Our community benefits when its members engage in discussions and activities that acknowledge the value, diverse perspectives, and unique contributions each person brings to our campus. In our conversations and through our actions, we endeavor to treat our community members with the dignity and respect to which all Pioneers are entitled.

Writing Center

The **Transylvania University Writing Center** (TUWC) is a space for our campus community to discuss writing. Our trained peer consultants help students and faculty members dream, draft, and develop texts for a variety of audiences and purposes. Our patrons range from first-years honing their skills as college writers to seniors preparing themselves for the job market or graduate research.

Students do not need to have a written product in order to have a session. In fact, some of our best and most productive sessions are process-oriented and focus on brainstorming, or understanding a writing assignment. Staffers are also well-trained in

helping develop presentations and various digital texts such as podcasts.

To learn more about TUWC: <https://www.transywritingcenter.com/> To learn what one can expect out of a TUWC session: <https://www.transywritingcenter.com/cans-cant-s-and-expectations> To learn how to set up a WC Online account (required to schedule sessions): <https://www.transywritingcenter.com/scheduling> If there are questions about anything TUWC-related, please feel free to email Dr. Scott Whiddon (swhiddon@transy.edu).

Religion Program Inclusive Learning Statement

The Religion Program at Transylvania University is committed to the creation and maintenance of “inclusive learning” spaces. Classrooms and other places of learning are places where you will be treated with respect and dignity and where all individuals are provided equitable opportunity to participate, contribute, and succeed.

In our courses all students are welcome regardless of race/ethnicity, gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disabilities, religion, regional background, Veteran status, citizenship status, nationality and other diverse identities that we each bring to class. Indeed, we believe that the more voices that are included and empowered in our classrooms, enhances the learning experience for everyone.

Success in our classroom and beyond is enhanced by the innovation and creativity of thought that inclusive classrooms facilitate. The success of an inclusive classroom relies on the participation, support, and understanding of everyone. We encourage all of you to speak up and share your views, but also understand that you are doing so in a learning environment in which we all are expected to engage respectfully and with regard to the dignity of all others. The instructors in your courses are committed to the responsibility of creating and maintaining these inclusive spaces through dialogue and constructive exchange of ideas.

Adopted and Adapted from the KU Center For Teaching Excellence

Religion Program Writing Statement

Studying religion means studying writing. The following principles guide the Transylvania University Religion Program’s approach to writing:

- We value writing as a community, which we build when we enter the classroom. As a community, we value being open to revision, feedback, and conversation.
- Revision goes beyond the sentence level to clarifying our ideas and how we structure them. Revision sometimes feels like “rewriting,” but no writing is ever wasted. The old adage “writing is rewriting” rings true.
- Though writing is often personal, feedback on a piece of writing is a commitment to its ideas and to the author. It is not a criticism of the author as a person but encouragement for more clearly discovering and articulating the author’s voice, which has value.

- No writing is ever wasted because writing is a process. It involves reading, taking notes, having conversations, mapping ideas, gathering evidence, reading aloud, drafting, getting feedback, incorporating the feedback with attention to local and large-scale claims, and more.
- Writing is a practice; cultivating a routine around writing—whatever that looks like for us—can help it from becoming an intimidating experience.
- Racism, gender-bias, and other forms of injustice exist, [including in the English language and in approaches to teaching and practicing writing](#). By focusing on features of academic writing that allow us to develop our own voices, we aim to decolonize the notion that there is a “correct” way to write.
- Writing is a way to communicate, to express oneself, to learn. Writing is a space for articulating our own ideas and engaging with the ideas of others.
- Everyone has something to communicate and learn, so anyone can write effective, transformative work.
- Writing can create the possibility for change.

Effective essays communicate the author’s ideas clearly. The following are not rules; they are suggested tools for successfully communicating the author’s ideas to the reader. Although each professor will develop rubrics for individual classes and assignments, in general, we value the following features of academic writing:

Motive: the intellectual context that makes the thesis interesting. The question, tension, puzzle, contradiction, gap, or something else in the evidence that *motivates* the thesis, usually early on in the essay.

Thesis: the paper’s central claim, an original argument about the evidence. The thesis is arguable, meaning that someone could argue against it. It extends, critiques, or clarifies other arguments. The thesis arises from a reading of sources. As a result, the more specific the thesis, the better. This can feel counterintuitive—often the big claim about “society” can feel more effective. However, explicating how a particular dynamic is at play in a specific source or sources leads to a much more effective claim. The thesis usually appears early in the essay.

Evidence: the source material the paper draws on to make its claims. This may be a quotation from a text, the music in a television episode, or numbers from a dataset. We are open to diverse kinds of evidence. Authors choose evidence carefully. The evidence genuinely leads to the author’s point (no cherry-picking), and goes beyond summary.

Analysis: what the paper does with the evidence to reach the thesis. Analysis may be the act of assembling pieces of evidence to reach a new conclusion, or unraveling the meaning of a key term. Analysis involves explanation and interpretation in the author’s own voice. There is usually more analysis than evidence in any given paragraph.

Structure: the way the paper develops its reasoning. Papers develop the motive and thesis, step by step. Paragraphs are the logical unfolding of the thesis. Depending on what the thesis is, the structure may vary. The structure serves the reader’s

understanding of the author's ideas. Authors walk the reader through the thesis step by step, with strong topic sentences based in the author's original claims, not a summary of what a source says or does.

An author can effectively use these features of academic writing across diverse genres and prompts. The features of writing are here to help you communicate your ideas, not limit you. Creativity is encouraged! We want to know what you have to say! We have developed these features of academic writing from Gordon Harvey's "[Elements of the Academic Essay](#)" and the Princeton Writing Programs "[A Writing Lexicon](#)," which we encourage you to read as you write an essay in a Religion course. These sources include more important features of academic writing, which we also value.