

Religion and Colonialism

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Institutional Description

Case Western Reserve University is a comprehensive research university, with an undergraduate enrollment of about 5,000 students. About half of CWRU undergraduates receive a degree from the College of Arts and Sciences, a third earn degrees from the School of Engineering, and the remaining degrees are conferred by the School of Nursing and the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences. In its current institutional configuration, Case Western Reserve University is the product of the 1967 merger between the Case Institute of Technology, Western Reserve University, and the Flora Stone Mather College for Women. The contours of this federation continue to be worked out, including ongoing negotiations over administrative structures, the undergraduate curriculum, and the distribution of financial resources across these units, as well as the three professional schools (medicine, business, and law). CWRU also enrolls about 6,000 graduate and professional students who primarily earn degrees from the professional schools.

CWRU is a selective, academically-focused campus, which has staked its national reputation on the STEM fields. Once a regional institution, in the past ten years the university has become far more competitive in undergraduate admissions, has grown its undergraduate enrollment by almost 2,000 students, and now draws applicants from across the United States. It also actively recruits internationally, and one in ten students (mainly graduate) are now international students, mostly from China and the Gulf region. Students tend to be focused on academic achievement and professional goals, particularly toward the health sciences and engineering.

Curricular Context

This course will be taught as a combined undergraduate/graduate course in the Department of Religious Studies. Courses in the department tend to be small (25 or fewer students), typically consisting of our majors and minors (usually 10-15 students at any given time) and STEM majors seeking to fulfill their humanities requirement. Senior engineers also enroll in religious studies classes during their final year, when their schedule tends to open up. The department has a small master's program that usually enrolls 2-3 students per year, who are often CWRU staff members pursuing the degree part-time. Since this is an upper-level course, most majors and minors will have taken the department's gateway theory and method course, "Interpreting Religion." I have designed this course as a 2.5-hour seminar that will meet once a week. I typically begin each class with an image,

video, object, or short document to open up discussion around the key themes. For each new geographic context introduced, I will give brief lectures to orient the students. In this course, I plan to have each student lead at least one discussion of the weekly readings. I have found it useful to pare down readings to 50-60 pages/week; otherwise, my overextended students will disengage from the course. My goal for this course (as all my other courses) is to promote discussion among the students and to create a collaborative learning environment in which students are encouraged to ask questions and respond to one another.

This course also fulfills two primary curricular imperatives: the global cultural diversity requirement and the departmental seminar. The former requires that the course be sufficiently global in scope, as defined by more than 50% of the course material that concerns regions and cultures outside of the United States and Western Europe. The latter designates that the course be writing-intensive and have a research component for students majoring or minoring in Religious Studies. However, non-majors may enroll as well.

Course Description

What happens to religious beliefs and practices in sites of colonial contact? How have colonial encounters shaped our knowledge of religion? These two questions will frame our semester-long inquiry into colonial religious practices and the production of knowledge *about* religion in colonial settings. Along the way, we will pay close attention to how religion relates to other sites of social power and organization, namely race, gender, and nation.

This course focuses on various empires as they were/are constituted in Asia, Africa, and North America. Through these case studies, we will explore the institutions, texts, practices, and material cultures through which varying historical actors created and negotiated the religious in the context of modern empires. To do so, we will focus our attention on primary sources alongside secondary analysis by modern scholars.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe religious beliefs and practices as they develop, change, and emerge in specific colonial contexts.
2. Investigate religion and colonialism through analysis of primary documents and secondary sources.
3. Define and apply critical terms and analytical frameworks concerning “religion,” “race,” “colonialism,” and “modernity.”
4. Compare and contrast configurations of religion and colonialism in different historical and geographic contexts.
5. Argue a persuasive thesis based on original research, in the form of an extended expository essay.
6. Develop oral communication skills through active participation in class discussion, leading one class discussion in the semester, and presenting on research.

Required Texts

Tisa Wenger, *Religious Freedom: The Contested History of an American Ideal* (UNC Press, 2017)
Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World* (Harvard UP, 2017)

One novel of your choosing:

Leila Abouzeid, *Year of the Elephant*
Tsisti Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*
Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*
Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

All other readings are available on Canvas.

Assignments

- 1. Participation (20%).** Attendance is mandatory. Please come to class on time, with the readings for our discussions. If you do not bring your readings to class, your participation for that day will be lowered. Laptops are permitted for accessing PDF documents. Cell phones and other electronic devices are not allowed in class.

Bring your reading assignment to class each day. Our class time will primarily be devoted to conversation around these texts, so preparation is essential for contributing to class discussions.

Participation points are awarded as follows: if you are on-time, attend each class, and listen attentively, you will earn 90% of available points. Active participation in the way of comments and questions will earn you additional points. A lack of engagement will earn you lower points.

Every student is permitted two unexcused absences, which have no effect on your participation grade. I also realize that extenuating circumstances can arise. If this happens, and you are unable to adequately prepare for a class day, please send me an e-mail explaining the situation. I expect that you will take advantage of this policy no more than twice in the semester. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to make up any missed work and to ask for notes from a classmate.

- 2. Point Person (10%)**

Each student will serve as a discussion leader for one class period. In advance of your assigned class day, please schedule a meeting with Professor Howe to review the readings and any questions you may have. You will be responsible for being our expert for the day, particularly to provide us with the basic analysis of the day's primary sources. Professor Howe will provide a primary source guide to assist you in this process. You should also come prepared with **2** discussion questions from the assigned secondary source reading.

- 3. 4 Critical Response Papers (20%).** Students will write four short papers (2 pp. each).
You will write a short (2 pages maximum) paper on a particular reading (as indicated on the syllabus). Due dates are indicated on the syllabus.

Select a passage from the secondary reading (a paragraph or so). Copy the passage (single-spaced) exactly as it appears in the reading, and include the author and page number in this format (author last name, page number).

In the next paragraph, paraphrase the author's argument/main point *in your own words*.

Finally, in one or two paragraphs explain the importance of this passage for the course. What issues does it raise about religion and colonialism? Which problems does the author want to address? What are key points that we should discuss as a class? How does it relate to other readings in the course?

** Be prepared to discuss your paper on the day that it is due.

- 4. Analysis of a novel of your choosing (4-5 pages) (10%).** Additional instructions regarding this paper will be distributed in advance.
- 5. Final Paper (8-10 pages) (40%).** You will select one colonial context and fashion one guiding research question about that context to pursue in your final paper. Each student is required to consult with Professor Howe before Spring Break about your topic, question, and to discuss possible sources. An annotated bibliography is due by week 12.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction – Mapping Territories, Religions, Bodies
Primary: Colonial Maps and Land Surveys (Canvas)

Week 2: Defining Key Terms: Religion, Colonialism, Empire, Imperialism, Race/Racialization
Tisa Wenger, Introduction, *Religious Freedom*, pp. 1-14

David Chidester, "Imperial, Colonial, and Indigenous" in *Empire of Religion*, 25-58.

Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Week 3: Yoga

Primary: Cleveland Museum of Art Exhibition Catalog

<http://clevelandart.org/events/exhibitions/yoga-the-art-of-transformation>

Yoga Postcards from the British Raj (Canvas) Secondary: Andrea Jain, "Who Is to Say Modern Yoga Practitioners Have It All Wrong? On Hindu Origins and Yogaphobia," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Volume 82, Issue 2, 1 June 2014, Pages 427–471 (Canvas)

Week 4: Gender, Power, Violence in Colonial India

Primary: Reverend W. Bampton, Eyewitness account of *Sati*

Secondary: Van Der Veer, Chapter 3, “Moral Muscle: Masculinity and its Religious Uses” in *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*. (Canvas)

Lata Mani, “Missionaries and Subalterns in the Marketplace,” in *Contentious Traditions*. (Canvas)

Week 5: Islam, Democracy, Citizenship in the Ottoman Empire

Primary: Halidé Edib, *Turkey Faces West: A Turkish View of Recent Changes and their Origin* (Canvas)

Ali Suavi “Dimukrasi” (Democracy) (Canvas)

Secondary: Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 37-64.

Week 6: Marriage and Sartorial Choices in Egypt and Turkey

Primary: Selections from Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women*

Mansurizade Mehmet Sa`id, “Laws Should Change in Accordance with the Conditions of Nations” and “Polygamy Can Be Prohibited in Islam”

Secondary: Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 65-98.

Leila Ahmed, “Unveiling,” *A Quiet Revolution*, pp. 19-45. (Canvas)

Week 7: Orientalist Imaginings

Primary: Harem descriptions from Edward Burton and Louis Massignon (Canvas)

Harem paintings from European Romanticism (Canvas)

Selections from Disney’s *Aladdin* (Canvas)

Selections from Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales from a Harem Girlhood* (Canvas)

Secondary: Edward Said, selections from *Orientalism* (canvas)

Week 8: Medical Practice and Missionaries in the Congo

Primary: Excerpts from King Leopold’s Letters (Canvas)

“Our African Missions,” Baptist Missionary Society (Canvas)

Secondary: Nancy Rose Hunt, Introduction and “Dining and Surgery” in *A Colonial Lexicon* (Canvas)

Week 9: The Atlantic Slave Trade

Primary: Autobiography of Omar ibn Said (Canvas)

Secondary: Albert Raboteau, *Canaan Land*, “‘The Invisible Institution’: Religion Among the Slaves” (Canvas)

Week 10: Indigenous Religions and Rituals North America

Primary: selections from Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion*. (Canvas)

Secondary: Wenger, "Making Religion on the Reservation," in *Religious Freedom*, 101-142.
Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, "Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects" (Canvas)

Week 11: Cell Phone Towers, Oil Pipelines, and Negotiating Sacred/Sacred Space

Primary: #NODAPL archive (Canvas)

Vine Deloria, video on sacred space (Canvas)

Secondary: Nicolas Howe, "The Spiritual Gaze," *Landscapes of the Secular* (Canvas)

Week 12: The Racialization of Islam

Primary sources : Elijah Muhammad, "What the Muslims Want" and "What the Muslims Believe," from *Message to the Blackman in America* (Canvas)

FBI Reports on the Nation of Islam and Moorish Science Temple (Canvas)

Secondary: Edward Curtis IV, "The Black Muslim Scare of the Twentieth Century: The History of State Islamophobia and Its Post -9/11 Variations," in *Islamophobia in America* edited by Carl W. Ernst, 75- 106. (Canvas)

Week 13: Gendered Visibility and Invisibility in the Global War on Terror

Primary: Laura Bush Thanksgiving Radio Address (Canvas)

Secondary: Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" *American Anthropologist* (2003). (Canvas)

Junaid Rana, "Racial Panic, Islamic Peril, and Terror," in *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*. (Canvas)

Week 14: Colonialism and the Study of Religion

Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," from *Genealogies of Religion*

Wenger, "Conclusion: Race, Empire, and the Multiplicities of Religious Freedom," *Religious Freedom*, 233-240.

Aydin, "Conclusion: Recovering History and Revitalizing the Pursuit of Justice," *Idea of the Muslim World*, 227-238.

Week 15: Presentations of Research Projects