

RLG308: Religion and the City

Mondays 11am – 2pm

Larkin 211

Course Instructor

Rebekka King (rebekka.king@utoronto.ca)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10am – noon.

Office Location: TBA

Course Description

The course focuses on the role of religion in the genesis and development of cities, as well as the ways urbanization and immigration have transformed religious organizations and identities. Various methodologies, including ethnography, literary/textual analysis, social and cultural history will be considered. This year's focus will examine the formation of civic identity (real and imagined) with reference to the (religious) 'Other'.

Required Texts

- * *Epic of Gilgamesh*, (John Gardner, editor; John Maier, translator).
- * Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (translated by Maureen Freely, 2005).
- * Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of A Lion*.
- * Bible or New Testament Reader (NRSV).
- * Course Pack (CP) – True Copy, 1033 Bay Street (right next to Urbana Coffee).
- * Readings Available on Blackboard.

Books for the course can be purchased at The Women's Bookstore, 73 Harbord Street.

Policy on Late Assignments and Missed Tests

All assignments are due at the beginning of class (any assignment handed in after the class has commenced will have 5% deducted from the mark). All late assignments will be penalised an additional 2% per calendar day (including weekends). We live in a technological age and, unless a student was born yesterday¹, he or she is aware that technology has the potential to fail and that the likelihood of such an event doubles the night before a paper is due. With this in mind, students are encouraged to backup assignments regularly; computer failure and other technological mishaps do **not** qualify for an extension.

¹ Note: students born yesterday are not permitted to take RLG308H1-S-LEC5101.

Students who miss a test or assignment due to illness or other acute adversity beyond their control must submit a formal letter of petition to the course instructor in advance of assignments or within one week for missed tests. This letter should be accompanied by:

- a completed University of Toronto Student Medical (<http://www.utoronto.ca/health/forms/medcert.pdf>) in cases of illness, and comparable supporting documentation in other cases.
- student's phone number, U of T number and utoronto.ca email address (to which the instructor will send an email outlining the appropriate make-up assignment or penalty)

Students are expected to manage their time. A student who has adequately prepared for assignments over the entire tenure of course will not feel compelled to ask for an extension.

Expectations, Policies, and Common Courtesy

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all lectures and the special fieldtrip in March. Should you miss a lecture you are responsible to find out what you missed from one of your colleagues in the class; the course instructors will not provide notes or an overview.

Punctuality: Please arrive on time and plan to remain for the entire class. Unless you become ill, do not begin packing up your books because this is distracting to everyone. If you know in advance that you cannot stay for the entire class, please sit next to the door and exit quietly.

Courtesy in Class: Other than to respond to or ask a question, please do not converse during lectures (even quiet whispering is distracting and disrespectful of your fellow students and your instructors). Please turn off (or silence) all cell phones and pagers before the class begins. Students who plan to spend the lecture time watching movies, checking email, facebook or chatting on MSN are invited to sit at the back of the classroom or leave. Should laptop use become a distraction we will, as a class, consider setting up laptop-free zones.

Email and Blackboard Communication: Students are expected to write courteously and clearly (no text-messaging abbreviations or slang). Always use your utoronto.ca email address (the server regularly rejects hotmail accounts as spam) and always include an appropriate summary of the email topic along with the course code (RLG308) in the subject line. The course instructor does not spend her days waiting to receive and reply to emails from students; once I have received an email from a student I will gauge the urgency of the email and reply appropriately.

Turnitin.com

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is one of the cornerstones of the University of Toronto. It is critically important both to maintain our community which honours the values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness and responsibility and to protect you, the students within this community, and the value of the degree towards which you are all working so diligently. According to Section B of the University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.utoronto.ca/govcncl/pap/policies/behaveac.html>) which all students are expected to know and respect, it is an offence for students to:

- To use someone else's ideas or words in their own work without acknowledging that those ideas/words are not their own with a citation and quotation marks, i.e. to commit plagiarism.
- To include false, misleading or concocted citations in their work.
- To obtain unauthorized assistance on any assignment.
- To provide unauthorized assistance to another student. This includes showing another student completed work.
- To submit their own work for credit in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- To falsify or alter any documentation required by the University. This includes, but is not limited to, doctor's notes.
- To use or possess an unauthorized aid in any test or exam.

There are other offences covered under the Code, but these are by far the most common. Please respect these rules and the values which they protect.

As a student, you are responsible for ensuring the integrity of your work and for understanding what constitutes an academic offence. If you are not sure if your actions or methods are acceptable, always ask your instructor. **Ignorance of the rules does not excuse cheating or plagiarism.**

Assignments and Evaluation

10% - Class Participation

15% - Blackboard Discussion

Each student will write four succinct critical reflections ending with a provocative question (max. 500 words) based on the week's readings and post it to Blackboard by Friday at midnight. Students will then have until Sunday at midnight to respond to at least one of the questions prepared by their classmates. The aim of this exercise is to promote an atmosphere of intellectual collegiality and to encourage students to articulate a scholarly perspective on the subject matter. With this in mind students will be evaluated not only on their particular response but also on their willingness to engage with and offer insight to the ideas suggested by their classmates. A schedule for these postings will be distributed in the second week of classes.

25% - Midterm – Religion and the City in the Ancient World (February 22nd)

25% - Ethnography Assignment (Due March 29th – in class)

Students will be required to identify and visit a site in contemporary Toronto that can be perceived as a heterotopic space. Students will be required to explore Anderson's 'Imagined Communities' and Hobsbawm's 'Invented Traditions' in formulating their argument (see assignment guideline on pages 6-7).

25% - final exam

Three hours – during the university's scheduled exam period.

Topics and Readings

January 4: Introduction: the Rise of the City and the Civic Imagination

Readings: Psalm 137; Book of Lamentations; Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (1998) (CP).

January 11: Imagining the Locative (The Epic of Gilgamesh)

Readings: The Epic of Gilgamesh (first half).

January 18: Imagining the Locative (Gilgamesh Continued)

Readings: Gilgamesh (second half); Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, 16(1) pp. 22-27 (Blackboard).

January 25: The Utopian Pauline Project in Rome

Readings: Paul's Letter to the Romans; Wayne Meeks, "The Urban Environment of Pauline Christianity" pp.9-50 in *The First Urban Christians* (CP).

February 1: A Re-description of Civic Space and Time: The Church and Urban Hegemony

Readings: Augustine, *City of God* – Book XIX (Blackboard); I Tunes University: "Saint Augustine" – Philosophy Talk (Sampler) – Stanford University (49:49) (download for free online from I Tunes U site).

February 8: Contested Civic Space: Istanbul not Constantinople

Readings: Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (Trans. Maureen Freely).

February 15: Reading Week – no class (Read Ondaatje, *In the Skin of a Lion*!)

February 22: Mid-term.

March 1: The Place of the City in the Era of the Nation State

Readings: Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" pp.1-14 in *The Invention of Tradition* (CP); Benedict Anderson, "Introduction" and Chapters 2 & 3, pp.1-46 in *Imagined Communities* (CP); Michel Foucault, "The Great Confinement" from *Madness and Civilization* pp.124-140 in *The Foucault Reader* (CP).

March 8: America and Urbanisation: From the Puritan City on the Hill to the Imperial Hegemony
Readings: Belden C. Lane, "Giving Voice to Place: Three Models for Understanding American Sacred Space" *Religion and American Culture*, 11 (1), pp. 53-81 (Blackboard) John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (Blackboard); Simon Coleman, "An Empire on a Hill? The Christian Right and the Right to be Christian in America" *Anthropological Quarterly* 78 (3) pp. 653-671 (Blackboard).

March 15: Walking Tour of Toronto with Dion Oxford of The Salvation Army Gateway Shelter
Readings: Michel DeCerteau "Walking in the City" pp.91-110 in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (CP); David Sibley, "Mapping the Pure and the Defiled" and "Bounding Space: Purification and Control" pp. 49-89 in *Geographies of Exclusion* (CP); Mark Kingwell, "Hard and Soft" pp. 4-25 and "The Imaginary City" pp.218-235 in *Concrete Reveries: Consciousness and The City* (CP).

March 22: Alternative City: Case Study (Mormonism)

Readings: Harold Bloom, "American Original: The Mormons" pp. 66-130 in *The American Religion* (CP); Catherine Albanese, "Mormonism and the Enlightenment of Magic" pp.136-150 in *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (CP).

March 29: The Subversive City: Case Study (Jonestown).

Readings: David Chidester, "Introduction" and "Orientation in Space" pp. 1-11, 79-104 in *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (CP); Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Devil in Mr. Jones" pp. 370-389 in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (CP); Gospel of Mark.

Religion and the City

Final Assignment - Ethnography of Toronto

Due: March 29th (in class)

“This is the first time she had sat in a Macedonian bar, in any bar, with a drinking man. There is a faint glow from the varnished tables, the red checkered tablecloths of the day are folded and stacked. The alcove with its serving counter has an awning hanging over it. She realizes the darkness represents a Macedonian night where customers sit outside at their tables. Light can come only from the bar, the stars, the clock dressed in its orange and red electricity. So when customers step in at any time, what they are entering is an old courtyard of the Balkans. A violin. Olive trees. Permanent evening. Now the arbour-like wallpaper makes sense to her. Now the parrot has a language.”

-Ondaatje, *In the Skin of a Lion*, p. 37

* * *

In our readings of Michael Ondaatje’s *In the Skin of a Lion* we have identified several places that serve as non-conventional sacred sites to the (sub-citizen) immigrant characters of the novel. These sites include: The Macedonian Restaurant described above (where both Alice and Patrick, like the parrot, learn to speak a new language of the self); The Bloor Street Viaduct (where we learn that official history and unofficial history don’t necessarily coalesce but sit uncomfortably together); and The Waterworks factory (which is both the grand central temple to Commissioner Harris’ Toronto and a site of subversive protest).

We have also been developing a theoretical understanding of space that relies upon questions of imagined communities, imposed self-representations and invented traditions (Anderson, Hobsbawm, Foucault) – we have suggested that time and space intersect in differing ways depending upon the significances invested therein by communities and experiences (Lane). We have declared that there are certain sites that serve as heterotopias (Foucault, “Of Other Spaces”). Following Foucault, we have defined heterotopias as spaces of *otherness*, spaces that give voice to the other, counter-sites which are simultaneously physical spaces and mental or cognitive spaces. These are spaces that have more than one layer of meaning and significance and construct relationships to other places in a way that isn’t always immediately clear. In respects to the title of our course, Religion in the City, we are suggesting that perhaps there exists a Religion *of* the City which confines the characters of *ITSOAL* and forces them to articulate an identity in opposition to the hegemony that is Toronto. Our task then is to ask the same questions in contemporary Toronto – in 2010, who is included and excluded in the physical construction and cognitive imaginings of Toronto? What sites become non-conventional sacred sites to those who must define themselves as *citizens non grata* in opposition to the establishment? How do we identify and define heterotopias in our midst?

Expectations

You will be required to identify (and visit) a site that fits these categories in the city of Toronto and make a case for it. Your essay will be 8 to 10 pages (12 pt. font, double spaced) and should include a 1) brief poetic description of the site and 2) a longer in depth analysis of its heterotopic status. You are expected to rely **heavily** on the theoretical concepts which we have engaged with in the readings and in lectures (e.g. the texts referenced above; others in the Course Pack: you may also find the de Certeau and Sibley readings to be especially relevant).

While the methodology associated with this assignment is less conventional than a typical university course, you are expected to present your data in clear and concise scholarly English and to formulate a persuasive argument supported with extensive understanding of the concepts and terms relevant to your discussion and to the course (please consult the marking guide).

It is **strongly** recommended that you discuss your site with Rebekka (either by email, during her office hours, or after class).

Submission

Once again you will be asked to submit this assignment through Turnitin.com.