

CREL 2533: 'CULTS': NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS
FALL 2018
ACADIA UNIVERSITY
Wednesday 7:00-10:00PM BAC142
(Cross-listed with Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies)



Branch Davidian Complex—Waco, Texas 1993



One version of the Wiccan Rede

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Sign-up for appointments—either in-person at office or on skype—
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1. COURSE DESCRIPTION (from the Acadia University Calendar):

An examination of practices and self-understandings of New Religious Movements (NRMs) (i.e. Scientology, Neo-paganism (Wicca), Satanism, Falun Gong, Branch Davidians) in North America. Topics include: the social scientific study of NRMs; historical roots and teachings of movements; issues of popularity and interpretation; and special consideration of gender in the emergence and form of NRMS.

2. COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To provide an introduction to the social scientific study of new religious movements.
2. To provide an introduction to some beliefs, practices, histories and traditions of a variety of types new religious movements (NRMs) or "cults" in North America.
3. To explore basic religious studies concepts and questions. What is a religion? What is a cult? Who joins NRMs? Why do NRMs emerge? What is the anti-cult movement?
4. To reflect on what the emergence of NRM'S in society may signify about established religions and the broader culture.
5. To develop a critical ability to identify and access religious tenets and their contribution to the wellbeing and/or harm of persons and groups.
6. To give special consideration to gender in the emergence and form of NRMS.
7. To learn to distinguish types of information about NRMs available on the internet.

3. REQUIRED READINGS

1. Lorne Dawson. *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*. OUP, 2nd Ed., 2006.
2. I just learned this book is out of print I am investigating how to supply it stay tuned: **Edith L. Blumhofer. *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister*, Eerdmans, 1994.**
3. **Selection of Articles available on ACORN** (A reading guide is supplied for articles. This guide serves as the exam review guide given as the semester unfolds rather than at the end of the semester).

4. COURSE REQUIREMENTS: The Fine Print

- **15% Class attendance and participation** (includes weekly paragraph reflections)
- **Research project**
 - **20% Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography** –due anytime from **Oct.3 to October 19th** (after you hand it in **you must book an appointment with me on skype or in office to receive your grade and feedback.**) You must submit a paper copy TO ME OR TO Janice in 441 BAC AND an electronic copy (on acorn)
 - **35% Essay: 8-10 pages (Due anytime from November 7th to Nov. 30th)** You must submit a paper copy TO ME OR TO Janice in 441 BAC AND an electronic copy (on acorn)
 - **30% Final Exam** (Final exam TBA: Exam period Dec. 8 -20th)

Late Papers: There will be a 5% per day penalty for late assignments unless accompanied by a medical certificate or written explanation. If you have been meeting with me and working on your assignment I almost always grant an extension penalty-free on the first assignment but not on the essay this term.

1. **Class attendance and participation.** Class participation and interest displayed can change your mark by more than a letter grade. Prepare for class by reading assigned texts and reflecting on general themes. In class contribute to discussion by sharing your questions and thoughts and by attending to the ideas of others. **Bring at least one critical question, arising from reflection on the readings to class each week TYPED AND NO MORE THAN ONE PAGE to be submitted to the instructor AS A RECORD OF ATTENDANCE—these questions will not be graded and cannot be handed in by a classmate if you leave halfway through class you get credit for ½ the class.**

2. **All students will be required to take the final examination.** This exam will be based on required readings, lectures and videos. The final exam will be based on course texts, readings, videos and lecture materials. Exam format: 3 essay questions. The exam will consist of 3 sections each having 3 questions - Students answer 1 question from each section. When Possible I will put videos on reserve after the class viewing but some videos or segments of films will not be available outside of class time.
3. **Required Readings as designated on ACORN. READING FOR THIS CLASS AS IT PROCEEDS IS IMPERATIVE.** Some readings are SELECTED from on on-line journals, chapters from books or popular sites. It is recommended that you at least **save a copy** to your hard drive **&/or print a copy** of the readings as you access them to facilitate study for exams. **Each week you need to have either an electronic copy or a paper copy with you for use in class discussion. Review questions are provided for articles and on-line readings in the week assigned on ACORN.**
4. **Laptop/Cellphone Policy:** Laptops can be both a benefit and a distraction in a classroom. While many students benefit from taking notes using a laptop, other students cannot resist the temptation of checking e-mail, chatting, playing games or watching movies during class time. This class has a strict —no **non-class related usell rule for laptops** — if you are found violating this policy, then your in-class laptop privileges will be taken away. Cellphones are a distraction for everyone, and should be turned off during class. If there is a special situation where you need to have your phone on for a particular day, please let the instructor know the situation before class.

5. A RULES ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND DISHONESTY

Each student is responsible for familiarizing themselves with University Policies on Academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please read the section "Academic Integrity" found in the *Acadia University Calendar, 2006-2007*, either in hard copy or on-line at:

<https://libguides.acadiau.ca/plagiarism>

. The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

All of these offences are serious breaches of intellectual ethics and serious offences. I will adhere to the policy of the history and classics department: plagiarized work will receive a grade of zero (no departmental appeal is possible). In especially bad cases more severe penalties, including a course grade of F (zero) and/or a recommendation for expulsion from the university, are possible.

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, grade of F for the course or suspension or expulsion from the university.

NOTE In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. **STUDENTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT THEIR MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS ELECTRONICALLY TO ACORN AND IN HARD COPY TO THE PROFESSOR IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED SUBMITTED.**

5. B. Accessible Learning Services

If you are a student with documentation for accommodations who anticipates needing supports or accommodations, please contact Accessible Learning Services at 902-585-1823, disability.access@acadiau.ca. Accessible Learning Services is located in Rhodes Hall.

6. C. WRITING HELP

The Writing Centre offers free help to all students wanting to improve their writing skills. You can sign up online today:

- To book a one-to-one appointment with a trained writing tutor, click here: writingcentre.acadiau.ca/writing-tutorials.html
 - To see which helpful presentations and workshops you'll want to attend this year, click here: writingcentre.acadiau.ca/workshops-and-presentations.html
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6. OPPORTUNITIES FOR AWARDS

- **The CFUW Award in Women's and Gender Studies**

Students engaged in research or an assignment on a topic relevant to women's and gender studies should consider applying for the CFUW Award (worth \$1500)... You do not have to be registered as a WGS student to apply for the award. See the WGS website:

http://womenstudies.acadiau.ca/CFUW_Award.html for full details, or discuss with the instructor or WGS Coordinator.

- **Canadian Society for the Study of Religion Undergraduate Student Essay Contest**

<http://www.cssrscer.ca/?q=node/20>

7. CLASS TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS: SEE ACORN each week for topic and reading assignments.

7. A SUGGESTED ESSAY TOPICS

The following are topics you may be interested in pursuing for your essay (note: they are topics not theses). However, you are not required to duplicate these topics exactly—the topics constitute frames with which to begin to focus your research. If there is any question concerning the appropriateness of your essay topic, please clear the topic with me—it is most helpful if you bring a few sentences describing your proposed topic to me in office hours.

These topics are meant to fertilize your imagination not limit it. **Read ALL OF SECTION SEVEN BEFORE CHOOSING A TOPIC**

1. Choose a leader or founder of/in a New Religious Movement and in the light of contemporary scholarship analyzing his or her religious vision or work in the light of contemporary issues of race, gender, sexuality, class or some other issue relevant in the study of NRMs. (I.e. Starhawk and environmentalism as central religious tenet; Mary Baker Eddy in Christian Science and the re-conception of the human person in relation to blood transfusion, etc.)
2. Choose a narrative or event in relation to a particular NRM and in the light of contemporary scholarship critique the public analysis at the time it occurred. (I.e. look at newspaper articles from the time of some major event treating these as primary popular sources and use the secondary literature on NRMS to construct your analysis.)
3. Choose a film which centers on an NRM or issue in a particular historical context. For example: *Inherit the Wind* (Fictional treatment of the Scopes trial and the teaching of creation/evolution in the schools).
4. Choose a contemporary scholar whose work on NRMS. Focusing on their work, analyze some aspect of their contribution to scholarship on religion and social vision.
5. Choose a political figure whose religious commitments and social vision are rooted in some tradition's scripture. Analyze this aspect of their vision and their mode of reliance on that book.
6. Investigate some artifact in popular culture that claims to advance a particular knowledge and understanding of NRMS.
7. Choose a New Religious Movement in North America (for example, the Branch Davidians) and examine their mode of biblical interpretation and dependence on apocalyptic biblical literature.
8. Compare and contrast claims made by members of a specific NRM and what a representative or members of the *anti-cult movement* claims about this new religious movement? (I.e. choose two websites as the primary sources for this topic.)
9. Analyze representations (caricatures) of NRMs in an artifact (artefacts) in popular culture (I.e. a TV series or particular episode, for example *Law and Order*, *Charmed*, etc.), arguing a particular thesis.

7. B WRITING CRITERIA-GUIDANCE—PAPER PROPOSAL /ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FIRST ASSIGNMENT: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Your proposal should be in the form of a one-page proposal with an annotated bibliography attached.

The proposal should pose your question for research, briefly summarize the literature you will address, and propose the thesis you will argue in your paper. Your annotated bibliography should cite in an acknowledged form at least seven (7) key sources you are using to investigate your topic. Below each citation include a three to four (4-6) sentence summary of the source and its relevance to your research (example below). Course materials may be used as sources where applicable. Students may choose to write from a personal basis including their own experience as a “source” of insight and substance in the essay. Since the second assignment builds on the first, students should read carefully syllabus description of this assignment and the criteria for papers below.

- **WHAT IS AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY?** An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 100-150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. (see the process below)
- **ANNOTATIONS VS. ABSTRACTS.** Abstracts are the purely descriptive summaries often found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles or in periodical indexes. Annotations are descriptive and critical; they expose the author's point of view, clarity and appropriateness of expression, and authority.
- **THE PROCESS.** Creating an annotated bibliography calls for the application of a variety of intellectual skills: concise exposition, succinct analysis, and informed library research. First, locate and record citations to books, periodicals, and documents that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic. Briefly examine and review the actual items. Then choose those works that provide a variety of perspectives on your topic. Cite the book, article, or document using the appropriate style. Write a concise annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article. Include one or more sentences that (a) evaluate the authority or background of the author, (b) comment on the intended audience, (c) compare or contrast this work with another you have cited, or (d) explain how this work illuminates your bibliography topic.

For further instruction on the preparation of an annotated Bibliography you may follow the link from the Library website: <http://library.acadiau.ca/help/writing.html>

Or go directly to the Cornell page entitled “Annotated Bibliography - How To” at http://www.library.cornell.edu/t/help/res_strategy/citing/annotated.html

7. C RESEARCH PAPERS: WRITING AND EVALUATION CRITERIA*****IMPORTANT***

SECOND ASSIGNMENT: ESSAY

Length: Essay: 8-10 pages. (No more than 10 pages) This essay is the continuation of the research begun in assignment one.

I encourage you to take advantage of assistance available at the Acadia Writing Centre.

<http://www.acadiau.ca/writingcentre/contactUs.html>

This is a summary of the questions I ask in evaluating student papers. Research papers are still the most standard form of scholarly communication. An excellent book on writing such papers is Rolf Norgaard's *Ideas in Action* (HarperCollins). Consider using it while writing your paper. The suggestions that Norgaard makes in chapter 5, “Troubleshooting Your Thesis,” are especially useful. If you are trying to improve your writing, it is acceptable to receive help from the Acadia Writing Centre, a friend, or an editor, provided that you (1) acknowledge this assistance in a foot- or endnote, and (2) attach the edited draft(s) signed by your editor.

- **FOCUS & ADEQUACY OF COVERAGE.** Is your response well focused? The biggest single problem in student research papers is that they attempt too much in too small a space. I almost never read a paper that is too tightly focused. So narrow your TOPIC, then cut it in half! Think more about less! Are you aware of the scope of your TOPIC? If you leave out important issues or related issues, say so and justify the omission. Say what are the limitations and scope of your treatment. If there is further work that might be fruitfully done, describe it (usually at the beginning of the paper after the thesis statement and description of the how the paper will proceed OR as part of you conclusion OR both).
- **BASIC IDEAS, ORIGINALITY OF THOUGHT, CRITICAL ACUMEN.** Did you show comprehension of basic ideas and technical terms? *Define every technical, private or ambiguous term, especially*

those that are central to your interpretation. Did you demonstrate that you can go beyond your sources? Pursue your own ideas and insights. Do not be content to parrot others. Think for yourself. Do not write a paper that simply summarizes sources. Did you ask good questions of your data? Were you critical? Do not accept everything you read as authoritative. If you use a theory or framework, don't use it uncritically; question it as well as your data. When you take issue, develop, rather than merely state, your criticisms. If you employed comparisons, were you fair? Did you consider contrasts as well as comparisons?

- **CLARITY AND COGENCY OF THESIS; TREATMENT OF COUNTER-ARGUMENTS.** Did you overtly state and develop a thesis or pose a clear, central question? Did you consider counter-theses carefully? A thesis must *not* be either a truism or a tautology.¹ The clearest way to do so is to articulate a question (or questions) to which most of your paper is a response. Do not write a paper which is merely a description, report, or paraphrase. You may, of course, do some describing, reporting, or paraphrasing, but do so for a purpose and state that purpose clearly. Take a stance in relation to what you report and develop that stance at least as thoughtfully as you present the reported material. Thinking comparatively or else approaching your topic using a theory or framework usually helps develop a distinctive point of view.
- **ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER; QUALITY OF WRITING.** Were the grammar and syntax impeccable? Did you provide concrete illustrations to ground your big generalizations? Was the paper well organized? Make sure divisions, transitions, and development of arguments are obvious and logically coherent. Write clearly. Was the paper in a clear, readable, consistent format? Type. Double-space. Number each page. Staple (paper-clipped pages often get attached to someone else's paper). Leave ample margins for my responses. Did the paper flow? Were its transitions smooth and clear? Was the organization clear? Did you provide illustrations to ground your abstractions and generalizations? Did you use charts, diagrams, and other such aids when they would help clarify?
- **SELECTION AND HANDLING OF SOURCES.** Did you select and handle your sources well? Make it absolutely clear when you are paraphrasing someone else's ideas; inform your reader when the ideas or arguments you are presenting are your own. Do not fuse together bits of paraphrase and bits of original thought. If you synthesize, synthesize ideas, not phrases and sentences. Write in your own words; do not pilfer or imitate the language of your sources, or you will raise the red flag of plagiarism. It is department policy that plagiarism results in an automatic zero. Did you use a standard documentation format and use it consistently? Did you provide all the appropriate bibliographic data formatted correctly? Did you do a good job of integrating READINGS and insights from the course?

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

¹ Example of a tautologous thesis (a statement whose predicate is already contained in the definition of the subject): "Bald men have no hair." Example of a tautologous question: "Do bald men have hair?" Example of a truism (a statement so obviously true that it is not worth making), "These words are printed on a page." Example of a truism in question form: "Are these words printed on a page?"