



Sacred Space: RELS 101 Approaches to Religion

Dr. Brennan Keegan

MWF 9-9:50

Ed. Center 219

Course Description

You can't understand the world today without reference to religion. Religion is in the news every day. There are religious "extremists" and "fundamentalists," religious arguments about politics, sex, death, and human rights. Religion plays a key role in shaping the contours of our increasingly diverse and globalized world. For many religious traditions, religious activity is linked to specific places that have historical, ritual, or mythical significance. These "sacred spaces" may be found in the natural world, the built environment, or even the human body. **But what is sacred space? Do we simply know it when we see it? And what happens if one person's sacred space is not recognized by another?** This course is designed to introduce you to the academic study of religion and to some of the central questions that animate the study of sacred space. In the first unit of the course, you will be introduced to various theories of conceptualizing sacred space. Throughout the rest of the semester, we will explore and evaluate case studies of sacred space through diverse traditions, including Indigenous landscapes, Hindu temples, American Christian churches, Muslim pilgrimage sites, and our own Holy City. Your professor will offer brief contextual lectures, but every class period will include discussion and an opportunity for you to dig into the material. We will push the boundaries of what is considered sacred space by looking beyond houses of worship to places of commemoration and the body, as well as monuments and conceptions of the home. Key concepts such as purity, gender, and ritual will guide us as we explore the various ways communities understand and relate to sacred space. We will evaluate how religion relates to the social, political and economic contexts in which it is embedded—not merely as something people *think* or *believe*, but as something people *do*. We will not attempt to comprehend the breadth and diversity within each of the traditions we encounter, but rather, gain some helpful insights into the questions and issues that religion and the study of sacred space commonly raise.

What's in this syllabus

Course Objectives	2
Course Assignments	2
Schedule	4
Fine Print	8

Required Text:

American Sacred Space, edited by David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). (Available digitally through the library)

Course Objectives

- Evaluate and compare how sacred spaces are created, altered, and fought over in diverse contexts;
- Recognize and discuss how religions and religious practices shape and are shaped by their cultural, economic, historical and political contexts;
- Distinguish diverse practices within a particular religious worldview;
- Improve ability to write and think analytically and comparatively about broad themes and historical moments, as well as specific texts and case studies.

Course Assignments

Participation in Class	200 pts.
Discussion Questions	100 pts.
3-2-1-P Reflections	200 pts.
Two Reflection Papers	200 pts.
Final Paper & Project	300 pts.

Student Learning Outcomes

RELS 101 – Section 4

Dr. Brennan Keegan

Best contact: keeganbl@cofc.edu

Office: 202 at 4 Glebe Street

Office hours: Mondays & Thursdays
via Zoom 2-3pm

- Students will recognize and explain the major theoretical perspectives and key issues of debate in the academic study of religion, evaluated in reflection papers and a final paper;
- Students will demonstrate effective writing skills with the ability to craft a persuasive argument in defense of a coherent thesis statement using and analyzing supporting evidence from primary and secondary sources, evaluated in reflection papers and a final paper.

#Coronavirus Content

Due to social distancing requirements, this class will include a variety of online and technology enhanced components to reinforce continuity of learning for all enrolled students. Before the drop/add deadline, students should decide whether the course plan on the syllabus matches their own circumstances.

The first three weeks of class will be held completely online. We will meet twice a week in synchronous Zoom meetings to discuss the readings and content. These meetings will be recorded via both voice and video recordings. By attending and remaining in this class, you consent to being recorded. Recorded sessions are for instructional use only and may not be shared with anyone who is not enrolled in the class. To make up for your third class of the week, you will be required to watch and engage with short VoiceThread lectures posted on OAKS, usually replacing our Monday meeting. When we meet over Zoom you will be expected to have read the readings noted for that day, as well as watched any posted lectures. Your participation grade will be based on your contributions to both the Zoom meetings and your comments on the VoiceThreads. If we are forced to stay online longer or are required to shift back and forth, I will produce an updated syllabus.

When we transition to in-person classes, we may need to break the class into discussion groups to ensure social distancing. In that case, you will still be required to watch and engage with lectures via VoiceThread and then come to class ready to participate in discussion and in-class activities on your assigned day. We can do this!

#Discussion Questions (100 points)

Your pre-class task. It is very important that you not only read the assigned material, but also that you critically examine and interrogate it. You should take note of the issues and questions that you want to bring to the zoom discussion and post them to the appropriate reading forum here, due before class.

You are responsible for two questions per post. These questions can be drawn directly from the

text or can be the result of thoughts you had by relating this specific text with previous readings you did or experiences you had. The course will have a total of 27 possible posts. You have the right to skip seven without harming your final grade, which means that to **receive the total grade, you will have to post at least 20 times**. If you post fewer than 20 times, I will subtract 5 points per post you missed. **Due before every class period.**

#Participation in class (200 points)

Your in-class task. Active student participation is crucial for the success of this course and the development of your individual learning. We learn best when we learn together. Throughout this course, we'll spend considerable time laying a foundation conducive to respectful but challenging discussion through which we can all grow. We will grapple with complicated, emotional, and thought-provoking topics as a community. In this endeavor, we will seek to be supportive of each other and to actively reflect on our own assumptions. Attendance is mandatory, as is participation in class discussions and work performed in groups. In discussion, aim for substantial contributions over quantity of comments. That is, comments should respond to those made by others—listen to each other, move the discussion forward, and pose new questions for consideration. I trust you to tell me directly any time you are going to miss class due to health issues and in turn, I will trust that the explanation you give for your absence is honest and truthful. If you miss class, make up activities will be assigned. If you are sick for a prolonged period of time, we will work together to determine a plan of action that will benefit your learning.

The College of Charleston community is enriched by students of many faiths that have various religious observances, practices, and beliefs. We value student rights and freedoms, including the right of each student to adhere to individual systems of religion. The College prohibits discrimination against any student because of such student's religious belief or any absence thereof. Please let me know at least a week before the religious holiday so I might make appropriate changes to group work.

#3-2-1-P Reflections (200 points)

Your post-class task. Every week (excluding the first week and Thanksgiving) you will be responsible for a 3-2-1-P reflection post, applying and synthesizing what you learned the previous week. **These are due at 11:59pm on Sundays.** These reflections purposefully bridge units. You will often need to find connections between Hindu and Christian spaces, Christian and Muslim spaces, etc. You are welcome to use bullet points for the 3-2-1 and get directly to the point. You can be informal in style but proofread your writing. You must post 12 times, but I will drop the two lowest grades. That is, you will be graded on the best 10. Each post should contain the following:

- Three** things you learned this week.
- Two** connections to other weeks, courses you've taken, or real-life situations.
- One** confusion or question you still have.

-**Paragraph** of 200-300 words reflecting on the readings for the week. You must note at least two of the readings in your paragraph reflection. What are your thoughts about the topics covered? What about these readings resonated with you? Why? What literature or experience can you share that will expand this conversation on this topic? What did you find puzzling, thought provoking, challenging or interesting?

#Reflection Papers (200 points)

Task: Reinforce and critically apply readings, class discussions, classroom exercises, and any other materials that we discussed in class in a 500 to 750-word paper (2-3 pages). Please double-space. Eleven or twelve-point type is preferred. Upload a digital copy to OAKs before class begins.

Paper 1: Theories of the Sacred. For this essay, analyze the theoretical literature of unit one and defend the strength of one theory in relation to others. You must *describe*, with direct evidence from the texts, at least three of the theories, and also *argue* for why you find one theory to be more persuasive than the others. Be sure to root your argument in examples of specific sacred spaces. **Due September 14 before class.**

Paper 2: Comparing Sacred Spaces. At this point in the semester, we have studied a wide range of sacred spaces, from houses of worship and natural landscapes, to shrines and urban landscapes. Building and complicating your earlier theoretical understanding of sacred space, compare and contrast the production and maintenance of two spaces discussed in class. How do they differ and why? How are they similar? Move well beyond their physical attributes to analyze how communities interact and reproduce the spaces as sacred. **Due October 19 before class.**

Grading Criteria (100 Points Each): *25 Points* – Overall presentation of the paper (grammar, spelling, clarity of prose, and citations, as well as sentence and paragraph structure, flow, transitions, and organization); *35 Points:* Engagement with sources and course material (Does the paper use at least two sources from the course to answer the prompt? Does the paper adequately use quotations or summaries of sources in the explanation? Does the paper use the sources to develop and support a larger argument?) *40 Points:* Development of a thesis/argument (Is there a clear thesis statement? Was the thesis supported with evidence from the readings throughout the paper? Does the thesis answer the prompt? Does this paper go beyond merely restating the prompt to creatively engage with the material?)

#Sacred Space in the Holy City (300 points)

Task: The objective of this assignment is to critically apply the theories and methods of religious studies to a local sacred space. 1) Working in groups of 2-3, you will research a sacred space in Charleston. This might be a house of worship, a shrine or natural landscape, but it must be one recognized as sacred by a community of people. 2) Write a paper *individually* reflecting on the space situated within the readings and class materials, as well as complete any necessary outside research to situate the space in the larger history of the religious tradition and Charleston. In addition, you will need to write 150 to 250-word reflection on the research process. 3) Map your findings *as a group* on our course Padlet, a digital platform that will enable us to share videos, photos, and facts about the Holy City (each group must choose a unique site, shared with the other section of RELS 105). 4) Narrate *as a group* your project by creating a VoiceThread multimedia presentation.

Questions to consider: What makes the space sacred and to whom? How do insiders and outsiders understand the space? How does it fit within a larger (religious) tradition? What is the space's relationship to Charleston? How does it engage with other Charleston spaces, institutions, networks? How do local people produce this space to meet local needs? Using specific ideas made by the theorists from the course, support your claims with evidence from a broad range of primary and secondary sources (the location's website, Charleston histories, newspapers, etc.). Research librarians will be integral in helping you find sources.

Length: The paper must be written **individually** and contain between 1,250-1,750 words (5-7 pages), with references and footnotes included. Please double-space. Eleven or twelve-point type is preferred.

Grading Criteria (300 Points): *100 Points* – Strength of analysis and application of key concepts (texts plus classroom activities/discussion, and extra readings); *70 Points:* Engagement with sources, appropriate use and analysis of quotations, secondary and primary sources (five sources total are required: 3 from outside research and 2 from class theorists) *50 Points:* Organization; clarity; quality of writing; freedom from spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors; *80 Points:* Enterprise, creativity, and coverage in Padlet Mapping Project. **Due December 11.**

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	What to Read/Watch/Do	What's Due
Unit 1: Introduction to Sacred Space			
8/26	Introduction to the Course	Optional Zoom Meet & Greet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Watch “Course and Syllabus Overview” VoiceThread (an account with your CofC address has been created) ○ Take brief Syllabus Quiz on Oaks ○ Read “Best Practices for Virtual Learning” ○ Post any questions or confusions to the “Course Lounge” ○ Introduce yourself to the class by adding to the “Class Introductions” VoiceThread; watch the posts of your classmates 	
8/28	What is sacred space?	First Zoom Discussion Meeting Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Read: Joel Brereton, “Sacred Space,” <i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i>. ○ Come to class with a space you consider sacred in mind 	
8/31	Theories of the Sacred	No Zoom Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Watch and comment on “Theories of Sacred Space” VoiceThreads 	
9/2	Hierophanies	Zoom Discussion Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mircea Eliade, “Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred,” in <i>The Sacred and the Profane</i> (1957), selections. 	Discussion Questions
9/4	Ritual Space	Zoom Discussion Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ JZ Smith, “Bare Facts of Ritual,” in <i>History of Religions</i>. 	DQ 2
9/6	3-2-1-P Reflections Due 11:59pm		
9/7	Recap and Intros to Hinduism	No Zoom Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Watch lectures summarizing theories of sacred space and “Introduction to Hinduism” 	

9/9	Phenomenological Spaces and Places	Zoom Discussion Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belden Lane, "Giving Voice to Place," <i>Religion and American Culture</i>, 53-60, 66-74. Yi-Fu Tuan, "Introduction," <i>Space and Place</i>, 3-7. 	DQ 3
Unit 2: Hindu Spaces			
9/11	Hindu Temples	Zoom Discussion Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vinayak Bharne, "Hinduism and the Hindu Temple," in <i>Rediscovering the Hindu Temple</i>, 1-18. 	DQ 4
9/13	Week 3 Reflections Due 11:59pm		
9/14	Ramayana	No Zoom Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch: <i>Sita Sings the Blues</i> (no discussion section). Turn in Paper 1 	Paper 1
Transition to In-Person Courses			
9/16	Seeing the Sacred	Diana Eck, "Seeing the Sacred," <i>Darsan</i> .	DQ 5
9/18	Sacred Cities	"Chapter Fifty-four: The Greatness of Pisacamacana Tirtha" in <i>The Skanda-Purana</i> . (Primary source)	DQ 6
9/20	Week 4 Reflections Due 11:59pm		
9/21	Digital Spaces	Yael Lazar, "Streaming the Divine: Hindu temples' digital journeys," in <i>Digital Hinduism</i> .	DQ 7
9/23	An American Hindu Space	Joanne Punzo Waghorne, "The Hindu Gods in a Split-Level World: The Sri Siva-Vishnu Temple in Suburban Washington, D.C." in <i>Religion and American Culture</i> (2003).	DQ 8
Unit 3: Christian Sacred Spaces			
9/25	Introduction to Christianity	No Readings: Lecture on Christianities	
9/27	Week 5 Reflections Due 11:59pm		
9/28	Heavenly Churches	Jeanne Kilde, "From Abbey to Great Church," in <i>Sacred Power, Sacred Space</i> .	DQ 9
9/30	Reformed Spaces	No Readings: In-class case study	
10/2	American Christianity	John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630) & Christopher Evans, "Introduction," <i>Histories of American Christianity</i> (2013).	DQ 10
10/4	Week 6 Reflections Due at 11:59pm		
10/5	Lowcountry Religion	Charles Joyner, "Believer I Know: The Emergence of African American Christianity," in <i>Religion and American Culture</i> .	DQ 11
10/7	Catholic Pilgrimage	Brett Hendrickson, "Introduction," and "The Pilgrims and Pilgrimage," in <i>The Healing Power of The Santuario de Chimayó: America's Miraculous Church</i> (2017), selections.	DQ 12
Unit 4: Muslim Sacred Spaces			
10/9	Introduction to Islam	No Readings: Lecture on Islam	
10/11	Week 7 Reflections Due at 11:59pm		

10/12	Sacred Sources	Carl Ernst, "The Sacred Sources of Islam," <i>Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World</i> .	DQ 13
10/14	Mecca	Malcolm X, "Letters from Abroad," (1964) and Basharat Peer, "Modern Mecca," <i>New Yorker</i> . https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/04/16/modern-mecca	DQ 14
10/16	Sonic Spaces	No Readings: In-class case study, "A Call to Prayer"	
10/18	Week 8 Reflections Due at 11:59pm		
10/19	Contested Spaces	In class, watch: <i>The Man Behind the Mosque</i> . (Kanopy)	Paper 2
10/21	Embodied Spaces	Banu Gökarıksel, "Beyond the officially sacred: religion, secularism, and the body in the production of subjectivity," <i>Social and Cultural Geography</i> , (2009).	DQ 15
10/23	Abrahamic Centers	Karen Armstrong, "Jerusalem: the problems and responsibilities of sacred space," <i>Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations</i> 13, no. 2 (2002): 189-96.	DQ 16
10/25	Week 9 Reflections Due at 11:59pm		
Unit 5: Native American Sacred Space			
10/26	Introduction to Native American Religions	No Readings: Lecture on Native American Religions	
10/28	Native Sacred Space	Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) "Thinking in Time and Space," <i>God is Red: A Native View of Religion</i> .	DQ 17
10/30	Created Spaces	Gill, "Place to Begin," in <i>Native American Religions</i> .	DQ 18
11/1	Week 10 Reflections Due at 11:59pm		
11/2	Storyed Spaces	Keith Basso, <i>Wisdom Sits in Places</i> , selections.	DQ 19
11/4	Contested Sacred	Winona LaDuke (Ojibwe), "Gods, Squirrels, and the Universe," <i>Recovering the Sacred</i> .	DQ 20
11/6	Traditional Ecological Knowledge	Robin Kimmerer (Anishinaabe), "Mishkos Kenomagwen, the Lessons of Grass: Restoring Reciprocity with the Good Green Earth," in <i>Traditional Ecological Knowledge</i> .	DQ 21
11/8	Week 11 Reflection Due at 11:59pm		
11/9	Sacred Bodies	Denise Nadeau (Mi'kmaq) and Alannah Earl Young (Musikeginiwak Cree), "Decolonising the Body: Restoring Sacred Vitality," 13-21.	DQ 22
11/11	Contested Spaces	No readings: In-class case study.	
11/13	Local Religion	Kim Knott, "Issues in the Study of Religion and Locality," in <i>Method & Theory in the Study of Religion</i> . *Come to class with idea(s) for final project.	Final Project Idea
11/15	Week 12 Reflections Due at 11:59pm		

Unit 6: American Sacred Space			
11/16	American Sacred Space	No readings: Introduction to “alternative” sacred spaces	
11/18	The Sacred Home	Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860” (1966).	DQ 23
11/20	Sacred Memorials	*Linenthal, “Locating Holocaust Memory: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,” in <i>American Sacred Space</i> .	DQ 24
11/22	Week 13 Reflections Due at 11:59pm		
11/23	America as Sacred	*Chidester, “A Big Wind Blew Up During the Night’ America as Sacred Space in South Africa,” in <i>American Sacred Space</i> .	DQ 25
11/30	Sacred Markets	Jon Pahl, “The Shopping Mall as ‘Stairway to Heaven,’ to Nowhere,” in <i>Shopping Malls and Other Sacred Spaces</i> .	DQ 26
12/2	American Sacred Space	*Sherrill, “American Sacred Space and the Contest of History,” in <i>American Sacred Space</i> .	DQ 27
12/4	Sacred Space	No readings, Final 3-2-1-P Reflections due at class meeting	
12/11	Mapping the Sacred City Projects Due – Watch the VoiceThread productions of your classmates, comment on at least two		

The Fine Print. **Oaks:** OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted. **Grading Scale:** A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73- 76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 61-62 F: 60 or below. **Late Policy:** Assignments are due at the beginning of the class unless otherwise noted. Any assignment turned in after the deadline is considered late. You will be penalized one letter grade (10%) for each day the assignment is late, up to a week. After a week, I will not accept the assignment. **Regarding plagiarism:** Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent. Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>. **Technology Use in Class:** We will be busy in every class session and we don’t need any electronic distractions. Silence your cell phones before you enter the classroom. If it rings, I reserve the right to answer it. Laptops are allowed unless it becomes clear that students are misusing them. **Center for Student Learning:** The Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services provide assistance in study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. Services include tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. The services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu>. **Mental & Physical Wellbeing:** At the college, we take every students’ mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at <http://counseling.cofc.edu> or 843.953.5640 3rd Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit <http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php>, or meet with them in person 3rd Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and

mental health. **Diversity Statement:** Consistent with College of Charleston's commitment to inclusivity, I pledge to do my best to run the class in a manner that is respectful of difference, including but not limited to, physical and mental ability, age, socio-economic status, religious identity, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality and veteran status. Students are expected to be respectful of these differences in their conduct in class and on campus. **Accommodations:** We all learn in different ways. If you know or believe that you need additional help, the College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply for services at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed: <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/>. **Email etiquette:** I am happy to communicate with you via email and will do my best to respond within 24 hours during the week. If it's 3 AM and you're feeling panicked, angry, frustrated, or annoyed, that most likely is NOT a good time to send an email. Ever. To me or anyone else. Take this as an important life lesson. It will serve you well. If you are sure that your questions or comments are professional and appropriate, be sure to include these professional courtesies: 1. In the subject line please indicate the content of the email and 2. Begin your message in the following manner: Dear Professor Keegan... And finish with sincerely, best, thanks, etc. followed by your full name. Do the same for every professor you're in contact with! Professionalism goes a long way.