

CATHOLICISM IN AMERICA

RELS 370: ADV. SPECIAL TOPICS IN AMERICAN RELIGION

TR 9:25-10:40AM (MYBK 220)

Dr. Matthew J. Cressler



“The Blessing of the Mississippi River,” New Orleans, 1990 (Carl de Kreyzer, *God, Inc.*)

THE PROFESSOR

Who am I? Dr. Matthew J. Cressler, assistant professor of religious studies (affiliate faculty, African American studies). You can call me Prof. Cressler, Dr. Cressler, you can even call me Matthew. Just not Mr. Cressler. Please and thank you.

How can you reach me? cresslermj@cofc.edu. Email is my preferred and most frequent form of communication. If you email me on a weekday, I tend to respond within 24 hours. If you email me on a weekend, you’ll have to wait till Monday. You can also call my office (843-953-1026) and leave a voicemail, but my response time will be slower.

When can you see me (online)? Tuesdays between 1-2PM I will host open office hours on Zoom, which means I'll be online and you can chat with me without an appointment. If you would like to schedule a private one-on-one Zoom meeting with me and/or our Tuesday time doesn't work, email me to arrange an appointment.

THE COURSE

What is it about? Catholic Christians have been in the Americas since Europeans and Africans first crossed the Atlantic. Nevertheless, their presence served as a source of conflict through much of United States history. Many Protestant Americans viewed Catholicism as antithetical to "real" U.S. American identity. Meanwhile, many Catholics imagined themselves to be the first, best, and truest Americans. This course will provide a broad history of Catholics and Catholicism in the lands that became the United States. It will also invite students to think through some critical questions in U.S. Catholic studies. How did colonialism and enslavement shape Catholicism as it developed in the Americas? Can we identify a distinctively American Catholicism? Have Catholics become indistinguishable from other U.S. Americans? What does the future hold? This course will seek to answer these questions, and so much more!

How will it run? Well, it's complicated. Technically, this is an in-person course that meets in **Maybank Hall 220 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:25-10:40AM**. However, as you know, all our courses will start the semester online. While we're online, we'll function as a **synchronous online course**. This means a few things. Readings, written reflections, inside jokes, graded assignments, and class conversations will all be completed from the comfort of your computer. This will be a *synchronous* experience, though, which means that it is NOT self-paced—we will move through course material together as a class, week by week. It also means that we will typically meet online in one Zoom session per week. If we return to in-person instruction, we'll meet in a safe and socially distanced way in our originally scheduled classroom and time.

What will you learn? So many things! But here are our course learning outcomes. By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- Chart the general history of Catholicism in North America and the United States
- Recognize the politics and stakes involved in narrating (U.S. Catholic) history
- Identify the ways enslavement, settler colonialism, patriarchy and other social forces and cultural systems shaped Catholics and Catholicism in U.S. America
- Engage in conversation on difficult subjects often deemed “not fit for the dinner table”—namely, religion, race, gender, sexuality, and politics in America
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of arguments about the significance of history (i.e. the meaning the past holds for our present moment)
- Forward your own argument about how we should narrate the past, present, and future of Catholicism in America, and justify that argument with evidence

What will you need? Lots a stuff. Here's a list of the required stuff you'll need.

- **Tech**
 - Regular access to a computer (read: NOT your phone)
 - Regular, reliable access to the Internet
 - A webcam and microphone (these are typically built into your computer, but if they aren't, you can purchase an inexpensive set for \$15)
 - Note to self: this is a synchronous online course, so a computer and reliable Internet access are essential elements for success!
 - You may have heard that there is now a Laptop Requirement for students at the College. For reduced prices, financial aid, and to find potential loaner laptops, [check out this page on IT's website](#).
- **Books**
 - Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *American Catholics: A History* (2020)
 - Note to self: this book is available for purchase via the CofC bookstore and can be found easily elsewhere online. This being an online course, you are welcome to use electronic versions.
 - All other assigned readings will be posted on OAKS under Content.
- **Notebook**
 - Whether you're old school and like taking notes on paper with a pen/cil, or you prefer to take notes digitally (in Microsoft Word, Google Docs, Evernote, or some other digital platform) you're going to need to take good notes! So buy a notebook and/or set up a digital space to keep em.



Ben Wildflower,
Magnificat (2016)

THE CONTRACT

How should you behave online? Here's some netiquette and protocols for our course.

Because online communication often lacks the body language and nonverbal cues we're used to in a normal face-to-face course, it is important to set some expectations for each other in this brave new world we're embarking on.

- Be patient. This is my first (fully) online course. It may be yours too. I have had training and read research on online education, but there will be some glitches.
- Be kind. Treat each other with the full respect and dignity each of you deserve.
- Be forgiving. Go easy on each other. We all make mistakes. We're learning.
- Be ethical. Racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and/or any language or behavior that dehumanizes or degrades others will not be tolerated. Period.
- No, but seriously. Be ethical! Do not take photos or otherwise record classmates without their consent, demean or disparage others' contributions to class, etc.
- Be professional. Even if we're online, this is a class and we should all act like it.
- Help each other. If a peer posts a question and you know the answer, help them!
- Cite your sources. When you're building off or borrowing from others' ideas, give them the credit they deserve, whether it's from a reading or a classmate.
- Take the time to learn the OAKS, Zoom, and Voicethread. If you don't know how to do something, use [the CofC tutorials here](#) to teach yourself before you ask.
- Think and reread before you post (hit enter/reply). Once up, you can't go back.
- Use proper capitalization/punctuation when writing online and keep in mind how people will read what you write. For example, ALL CAPS IS LIKE YELLING!!!
- *What else should we include? We're building this (digital) community together, so you get to add your input too! We'll have time to add to/alter these in Week 1.*

How (often) should you communicate and engage online? Here are some guidelines.

Even if we end up not being together in person, that doesn't mean that we can't cultivate community together. I will work hard to help each of us to get to know one another, trust one another, and learn together. But you can't spell community without *communication*. Ummm, errr... you get the idea. Here's how we can communicate good.

- You should have a CofC email address linked to OAKS. Email is my most frequent and effective means of communication. Make sure you check your email daily! Please include "RELS 118" in the subject line of all emails to me or classmates.
- I tend to respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays—I don't check email on weekends, so if you email me on a weekend your response will wait till Monday. Hence, the sooner you would like a response, the sooner you should write me.
- I will host open office hours on Zoom once a week, on Tuesdays from 1-2PM. "Open office hours" means I'll be online and you can chat with me without an appointment. The link will be posted on OAKS under course resources.
- If you would like to schedule a private one-on-one Zoom meeting with me and/or our Tuesday time doesn't work, email me to arrange an appointment.
- When you attend a Zoom session for our course (whether in office hours with me or in a synchronous session as a class), please try to call from a quiet place

where you won't be disturbed. If your camera is on, please dress appropriately and be aware of your surroundings. Whatever your webcam sees, WE SEE!

- If you have a logistical question about the course (i.e. when is this assignment due? where can I find this reading? etc.) you should follow our "Ask three, then me" policy. First, you 1) check the syllabus. Then, you 2) review our course announcements on OAKS. Then, 3) visit the "Q&A Course Lounge." If you can't find the answer to your question in any of those places, then email me.

How do you College good, online? It'll be harder than you think, but I'm here to help.

Because you'll be engaging this course from the comfort of your computer, you may think the course will be "easier" than a normal course. Wrong! In some senses, it'll feel "harder" (at least at first). That's because so many elements of a face-to-face class now have to be read or typed out online. Here are some tips for how to College good, online.

- It's essential that you maintain an active presence in the class, including showing up for synchronous sessions; posting to and reading discussion board threads; and engaging course material. You should strive to log into the course 4 days a week at minimum in order to be successful.
- It's crucial that you stay on top of our course assignments. I'll post due dates and reminders, but it's your responsibility to make sure you don't fall behind. A three-credit face-to-face class typically entails 2-3 hours of reading and studying for every hour spent in the classroom (i.e. 3 hours in the classroom + 6-9 working hours outside the classroom = 9-12 hours of work per week). The workload and expectations for this class will be the same, except our classroom will be OAKS.
- Since many of our class conversations will be happening asynchronously on our discussion board, they will tend to move at a slower pace than conversations in a physical classroom. Some of our discussions might even extend beyond the days allocated in the schedule. Be patient, pay attention, and participate!
- We are increasingly dependent on our devices and other technologies (now more than ever). However, as I know you know, technology can fail us. Laptops crash, iPads break, servers are sometimes down, etc. So plan ahead! Complete assignments well enough in advance to factor in these variables and remember, always (ALWAYS!) back up your documents!!!
- Just because this course is online doesn't mean your friendly neighborhood professor won't be incessantly asking you to read (and write and think) "critically." You might (rightly!) be wondering what in the world that means. Lucky for you, I've posted a reading guide on OAKS with strategies for critical thinking. Print it out, read it, and tape it to your wall as a reminder.

How will your learning be assessed?

- ✓ **Zoom participation (20%)** You'll be assessed at the end of the semester on how prepared you've been, and how frequently & fully you've participated in Zoom.
- ✓ **Zoom discussion co-facilitator (5%)** Once in the semester you will serve as the co-facilitator (with me and potentially a peer) of our weekly Zoom discussion.

- ✓ **Discussion board participation (15 worth 1% each = 15%)** You'll engage course material and your classmates each week with responses to specific questions.
- ✓ **Discussion board kick-starter (5%)** Once in the semester, you will kick-start the conversation on our weekly course material with the first discussion board post.
- ✓ **Annotated Outline of *American Catholics: A History* (5%)** You'll outline our textbook to critically consider the choices made in constructing its narrative.
- ✓ **Article Review essay (10%)** You'll write a review essay (2-3 pgs) that assesses the arguments made by an assigned text and situates it in the context of the course.
- ✓ **Unessay (40%)** Your final assignment will be either to write an essay (8-10 pgs) or create an unessay with corresponding creator's statement (4-5 pgs) that makes your case for how the history of Catholicism in America should be told.
 - **Meet with professor** to choose your own adventure (by November 1)
 - **Identify your primary and secondary sources** (by November 15)
 - **Choose your medium** (by November 22)
 - **Discuss your work** in progress and offer peer feedback (by December 3)
 - **Submit your final un/essay** via OAKS Dropbox (by December 11)
- ✓ **Where We've Been & What I've Learned video essay (5%)** You'll end the course with a short (meta-cognitive) reflection on what you've learned this semester.
 - **Note on Absences:** There is no attendance policy, but if you **miss 2 or more** of our synchronous Zoom sessions, we'll need to have a check-in.
 - **Note on Zoom participation:** If you have to miss synchronous Zoom sessions, your responsibility is to check-in on how to make them up.

What other course policies do you need to know about?

Disability Accommodation If you have, or think you may have, a documented disability (physical, learning, psychiatric, visual, hearing, etc.) please visit the [Center for Disability Services website](#) here to arrange accommodations.

Religious Accommodation Religious practices differ from tradition to tradition and the demands of religious observance in some traditions may cause conflicts with student schedules. This should be less of a problem with this synchronous online course, but if you require "reasonable accommodation for religious observance" please let me know. [The College's full policy can be found here.](#)

The Center For Student Learning The CSL, located on the first floor of the library, offers a wide variety of tutoring and other academic resources that support many courses offered at the College. Services include walk-in tutoring, by appointment tutoring, study strategies appointments, Peer Academic Coaching (PAC), and Supplemental Instruction (SI). All services are described and all lab schedules are posted on [the CSL website here.](#)

Writing Lab I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants

can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. You can visit [the Writing Lab virtually here](#).

Honor Code And Academic Integrity Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that I will report, if suspected, to the Dean of Students. Students found responsible for academic dishonesty will be disciplined by the Honor Board, accordingly. You should be aware that unauthorized collaboration—working together without permission—is a form of cheating. Unless I specify that you can work together on a graded assignment, no collaboration during the completion of an assignment is permitted. You can access the complete [Honor Code and related processes online here](#).

THE MAP

How will you navigate this course each week? If we return to in-person instruction, this may change. But for the time being, the course has been organized into 15 content modules (one for each week of the semester). Each one will have a checklist in the content section on OAKS to help you stay organized. I encourage you to set your own weekly schedule to work through the material to avoid procrastination. Modules will be organized into submodules that will instruct you to do the following things:

- 1) **Read** (from a required text when bolded, all other readings posted on OAKS)
- 2) **Watch/Listen** (required videos, lectures, podcasts, documentaries, etc.)
- 3) **Answer** (questions to answer in your notebook on what you've read/watched)
- 4) **Discuss** (where and what you'll be posting on for our weekly discussion boards)
- 5) **Zoom** (instructions and links for our synchronous sessions when we have them)
- 6) **Complete** (what assignments will be due by Sunday at 11:59PM)

Note on submodule order: Always complete them in the order listed on OAKS.

No, but, like... how will you navigate this course each week? We'll use a number of tools to facilitate learning and build (digital) community this semester. Here's a quick list of each two, how we're using it, and a link to help you learn how to use it. All of you have access to all these tools for \$Free.99 as CofC students. First things first, here's a link to Student Instructional Tech Services: <http://blogs.cofc.edu/sits/>.

- 1) **OAKS** will be the equivalent of our classroom this semester, so get ready!
 - a) I'll use **OAKS news/announcements** and **email** to update you as we move through the semester, so make sure you check both 4 days a week.
 - b) I'll be posting readings, assignments, and other course materials under **content on OAKS**. There will be checklists to keep you on your toes.
 - c) We'll use the **OAKS discussion board** for both community-building and learning activities, from ice-breakers to discussions and even debates!
 - d) You'll take **quizzes** on OAKS and submit other graded materials via **OAKS assignments/Dropbox**. This is also where you'll be able see your grades and receive feedback from me.
 - e) Here's [a link to a whole bunch of OAKS tutorials](#), if you need help.

- 2) **VoiceThread** will be the equivalent of me lecturing. If you haven't used it before, it is software that allows me to record myself "lecturing" over PowerPoint slides. It also lets you ask and answer questions, as well as interact in other ways. Here's a nice handy explanation of [how you access VoiceThread](#). Short answer is you'll find it on our OAKS course page.
- 3) **Zoom** will be the equivalent of us discussing. Every other week (and occasionally more often) we'll meet as a whole class to engage in discussion of materials. You'll access Zoom (wait for it..., that's right...) on our OAKS course page. Here's a [link to a bunch of one-minute video tutorials on how to use Zoom](#).
- 4) **Kanopy** is how we'll watch most documentaries and films (when they're not on YouTube). I'll link them directly on OAKS (surprise!), but you can also access the full database on our library's website (click "Databases," then "K," and it's there).

What is "a week," even? Time can seem to lose its meaning when we're not meeting together in class every Tuesday/Thursday. For the purposes of this course, our weeks will begin at 12:01AM on Mondays and end the following Sunday at 11:59PM. New content drops at 12:01AM every Monday. All asynchronous material should be completed by 11:59PM each Sunday (unless specified otherwise). Any material listed under a synchronous session should be completed by the time our Zoom session starts.

But what if a hurricane hits? HEAD FOR THE HIIIIILLS!!!! (jk...kinda...) Campus has closed in each of the five years I've been at the College. The good news is, since this is already a synchronous online class, the adjustment should be easier than it would be otherwise. Nevertheless, if a hurricane or some other major event disrupts College life even more (I mean...it *is* 2020, after all), do these things in this order: 1) get and/or stay safe, 2) be patient, 3) wait for instructions, and 4) be prepared for changes to our schedule below.

THE SCHEDULE

[Schedule subject to change with advance notice]

Orientation

- 1) Read
 - a) Syllabus
- 2) Watch
 - a) Introducing your professor
- 3) Complete
 - a) Syllabus quiz (100% required to access all other modules)

Week 1 (August 25): "Allow me to (re)introduce myself, my name is..."

- 1) **Zoom (August 25)**
- 2) **Watch/Listen**
 - a) YouTube: Chimamanda Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009)
 - b) Podcast: Keeping It 101, "Religion in the Time of Corona" (2020)

- 3) **Answer** questions in your notebook
- 4) **Zoom (August 27)**
- 5) **Discuss** our class icebreaker

Week 2 (September 1): Crash course on Catholics

- 1) **Watch**
 - a) VoiceThread: Sacraments, Saints, and Stuff
- 2) **Read**
 - a) Andrew Greeley, "The Sacraments of Sensibility" (2000)
 - b) Robert Orsi, "Belief" (2015)
- 3) **Answer** questions in your notebook
- 4) **Discuss** what you (don't) know about "Catholicism"
- 5) **Zoom (September 3)**

Week 3 (September 8): The Baggage

- 1) **Watch**
 - a) VoiceThread: Crash course on *American Catholics*
- 2) **Read**
 - a) Jay Dolan, "Introduction" to *In Search of An American Catholicism* (2002)
 - b) Begin **Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *American Catholics: A History* (2020)**
- 3) **Answer** questions in your notebook
- 4) **Discuss** what constitutes an "American" Catholic
- 5) **Zoom (September 10)**

Week 4 (September 15): The Narrative

- 1) **Zoom (September 15)**
- 2) **Read**
 - a) Finish **Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *American Catholics: A History* (2020)**
- 3) **Answer** questions in your notebook
- 4) **Discuss** the narrative of (U.S.) American Catholic history
- 5) **Complete**
 - a) Annotated Outline of *American Catholics: A History*

Week 5 (September 22): Remapping, Retelling

- 1) **Read**
 - a) Timothy Matovina, "Remapping American Catholicism" (2010)
- 2) **Answer** questions in your notebook
- 3) **Discuss** what it means to start with Latinx Catholics



4) Zoom (September 24)

Week 6 (September 29): Settler Colonialism

1) Listen

- a) Podcast: "The Case" from *This Land* (2019)

2) Read

- a) Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, "This Land" (2015)
- b) Emma Anderson, "A Spectacle for Men and Angels" (2013)

3) Answer questions in your notebook

4) Discuss what it means to frame U.S. America as a settler colony

5) Zoom (October 1)

Week 7 (October 6): Enslavement

1) Listen

- a) Podcast: "The Fight for a True Democracy" from *1619* (2019)

2) Read

- a) Michael Pasquier, "'Though Their Skin Remains Brown, I Hope Their Souls Will Soon Be White': Slavery, French Missionaries, and the Roman Catholic Priesthood in the American South, 1789-1865" (2008)
- b) Maura Jane Farrelly, "American Slavery, American Freedom, American Catholicism" (2012)

3) Answer questions in your notebook

4) Discuss what it means to frame U.S. America as founded on enslavement

5) Zoom (October 8)

Week 8 (October 13): Patriarchy

1) Read

- a) Kathleen Sprows Cummings, "American Saints: Gender and the Re-Imaging of U.S. Catholicism in the Early Twentieth Century" (2012)
- b) Diane Batts Morrow, "'Undoubtedly a Bad State of Affairs': The Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Josephite Fathers, 1877-1903" (2016)

2) Answer questions in your notebook

3) Discuss the role of women in the making of U.S. Catholicism

4) Zoom (October 15)

5) Read

- a) Laura McTighe and Megan Raschig, "Introduction: An Otherwise Anthropology" (2019)
- b) Un/essay instructions

Week 9 (October 20): Anti-Black Racism

1) Read

- a) Shannen Dee Williams, "'You Could Do the Irish Jig, But Anything African Was Taboo': Black Nuns, Contested Memories, and the 20th Century Struggle to Desegregate U.S. Catholic Religious Life" (2017)

- b) Matthew J. Cressler, “‘Real Good and Sincere Catholics’: White Catholicism and Massive Resistance to Desegregation in Chicago, 1965-1968” (2020)

2) Watch/Read

- a) Sarah Maslin Nir, “A Racist Attack Was Caught on Camera. Nearly 45 Years Later, It Still Stings” in *The New York Times* (2020)

3) Answer questions in your notebook

4) Zoom (October 22)

5) Discuss how whiteness and white racism connects with Catholicism

6) Complete

- a) Article Review essay

October 21-23: Francisco Cantu, author of *The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border*, “visits” “campus” for The College Reads! program.



Week 10 (October 27): Sexual Abuse

1) Watch

- a) *Spotlight* (2015)

2) Read

- a) “Religion and Sex Abuse Within and Beyond the Catholic Church,” Special Issue of *The Revealer* (2020)

3) Answer questions in your notebook

4) Discuss clerical sex abuse and what the conspiracy to hide it teaches us

5) Zoom (October 29)

6) Complete

- a) Un/essay: Meet with me to choose your own adventure

Week 11 (November 3): American Catholic Otherwise

NO CLASS, NO COLLEGE, GO VOTE: Tuesday, November 3

1) Read

- a) Alejandra Molina, "Who is Junipero Serra and Why are California Protestors Toppling Statues of this Saint?" (2020)
- b) Alejandra Molina, "We Have a Story To Tell: Indigenous Scholars, Activists Speak Up Amid Toppling of Serra Statues" (2020)
- c) Alejandra Molina, "California Bishops Say Protestors 'Failed the Test' of History in Toppling Junipero Serra Statues" (2020)

2) Answer questions in your notebook

3) Discuss (and debate!) the debate surrounding St. Junipero Serra

4) Zoom (November 5)



Week 12 (November 10): American Catholic Otherwise

1) Read

- a) Julie Byrne, "Introduction" to *The Other Catholics* (2016)

2) Watch/Explore

- a) *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican* (2011)
- b) Explore CatholicWomenPreach.org

- 3) **Answer** questions in your notebook
- 4) **Discuss** the feminist critique of and response to the (U.S.) Catholic Church
- 5) **Zoom (November 12)**
 - a) Ft. special guest Erin Saiz Hanna (former executive director of the Women's Ordination Conference)
- 6) **Complete**
 - a) Un/essay: Identify primary and secondary sources

Week 13 (November 17): American Catholic Otherwise

- 1) **Watch**
 - a) YouTube: "Sister Thea Bowman addresses US Catholic Bishops" (1989)
- 2) **Read**
 - a) Shannen Dee Williams, "The Global Catholic Church and the Radical Possibilities of #BlackLivesMatter" (2015)
 - b) Olga Segura, "What Black Lives Matter Can Teach Catholics About Racial Justice" (2019)
- 3) **Answer** questions in your notebook
- 4) **Discuss** the potential impact of #BlackLivesMatter on U.S. Catholicism
- 5) **Zoom (November 19)**
- 6) **Complete**
 - a) Un/essay: Choose your medium



Week 14 (November 24): Thanksgiving

LAST DAY OF ON CAMPUS INSTRUCTION: Tuesday, November 24

- 1) **Answer** questions in your notebook
- 2) **Discuss** your Unessay

NO CLASS, NO COLLEGE, GO HOME AND BE THANKFUL: Thursday, November 26

Week 15 (December 1): American Catholic Otherwise

- 1) **Read**
 - a) Kristy Nabhan-Warren, "Brown Catholicism and Brown America" (2016)

- 2) Answer questions in your notebook
- 3) Discuss your Unessay
- 4) Zoom (December 3)
- 5) Complete
 - a) Un/essay: Peer feedback on un/essays

LAST DAY OF ONLINE INSTRUCTION: Friday, December 4

Unessay Due By
Friday, December 11 by 11:59PM

