



# Sacred Space: HONS 175 Approaches to Religion

Dr. Brennan Keegan

T/TH 10:50-12:05

Maybank 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	6

## 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.

## Your Professor

**Dr. Brennan Keegan**

**Best contact:** keeganbl@cofc.edu

**Office:** 202 at 4 Glebe Street

**Office hours:** Tuesdays & Thursdays  
12:30-1:30

## 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.

## Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will recognize and explain the major theoretical perspectives and key issues of debate in the academic study of religion;
- Analyze and synthesize information within and across disciplines;
- Students will demonstrate the ability to create and communicate analytic arguments in defense of a coherent thesis statement using and analyzing supporting evidence from primary and secondary sources;
- Design and implement a major research project that reflects a high level of proficiency in methods of inquiry and ways of thinking.

## #Coronavirus

For now, this is a 100% in-person class. We do not have excessive space in our classroom and therefore cannot fully socially distance. **You must be wearing a mask at all times** and are *strongly encouraged* to get vaccinated to protect yourself and your classmates. You will not be allowed to eat in class and if you must take a drink, do so and very quickly put your mask back on. Even if you have had COVID in the past, vaccinations are the only way that we are going to fully move away from this pandemic. Vaccinations are available for free twice a week on campus: [learn more here](#). Only students quarantining due to a COVID positive test will be allowed to join class via Zoom. If you have been exposed to COVID, get tested. “I might have COVID” is not the same as “I have COVID.” Please do not take advantage of the pandemic to simply not come to class. In-person attendance is required, this is not a hybrid course. Before the drop/add deadline, students should decide whether the course plan on the syllabus matches their own circumstances.

Due to the reality of COVID, we may be required to change tactics and move the course fully online. This may include a shift in course requirements and due dates, but we will do what we need to ensure the safety of students and instructor and you will be given all necessary information in a timely fashion. We will remain flexible and vigilant—we got 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 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 25 possible posts. You have the right to skip five 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 midnight before class.**

## #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. **If you have more than two-unexcused absences, you will lose 20 points per absence.** 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 when we have breaks) 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. There are 12 possible options to post, but you only need to **post 10 times**. 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. The paper must be clearly cited and sourced throughout, in addition to a works cited page. This means, every new fact you learn and paraphrase, in addition to each quotation, must be directly connected to a clearly cited source. MLA in-text or Chicago footnotes. 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 due 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 November 2 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 three 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 pairs, 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).

**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 at the time of our Final Exam, December 13 at 8 AM.** (We will not meet during this time.)

## Course Schedule

Date	Topic	What to Read/Watch/Do	What’s Due
<b>Unit 1: Introduction to Sacred Space</b>			
<b>T 8/24</b>	Introduction to the Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Check out OAKS and Syllabus</li> <li>o Post any questions or confusions to the “Course Lounge”</li> <li>o Come to class with a space you consider sacred in mind</li> </ul>	
<b>Th 8/26</b>	Sacred and Profane	Emile Durkheim, “Definition of Religious Phenomena and of Religion,” <i>Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> , (1912).	DQs 1
<b>T 8/31</b>	Hierophanies	Mircea Eliade, “Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred,” in <i>The Sacred and the Profane</i> (1957), selections.	DQs 2
<b>Th 9/2</b>	Ritual Space	JZ Smith, “Bare Facts of Ritual,” in <i>History of Religions</i> .	DQs 3
<b>S 9/5</b>		<b>3-2-1-P Reflection 1 Due 11:59pm</b>	
<b>T 9/7</b>	Phenomenological Spaces and Places	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.	DQs 4
<b>Unit 2: Hindu Spaces</b>			

<b>Th 9/9</b>	Intro to Hinduism	Diana Eck, "Seeing the Sacred," <i>Darsan</i> . & Primary Source: "Chapter Fifty-four: The Greatness of Pisacamacana Tirtha" in <i>The Skanda-Purana</i> .	DQs 5
<b>S 9/12</b>	Reflection 2 Due 11:59pm		
<b>T 9/14</b>	Modern Retellings	In-Class, Watch <i>Sita Sings the Blues</i>	Paper 1
<b>Th 9/16</b>	Hindu Temples	Vinayak Bharne, "Hinduism and the Hindu Temple," in <i>Rediscovering the Hindu Temple</i> , 1-18.	DQs 6
<b>S 9/19</b>	Reflection 3 Due 11:59pm		
<b>T 9/21</b>	Digital Hinduism	Yael Lazar, "Streaming the Divine: Hindu temples' digital journeys," in <i>Digital Hinduism</i> .	DQs 7
<b>Th 9/23</b>	Sacred Cities	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).	DQs 8
<b>S 9/26</b>	Reflection 4 Due 11:59pm		
<b>Unit 3: Christian Sacred Spaces</b>			
<b>T 9/28</b>	Introduction to Christianity	David Chidester, <i>Christianity: A Global History</i> , selections.	DQs 9
<b>Th 9/30</b>	Heavenly Churches	Jeanne Kilde, "Historicism, Modernism, and Space," in <i>Sacred Power, Sacred Space</i> .	DQs 10
<b>S 10/3</b>	Reflection 5 Due 11:59pm		
<b>T 10/5</b>	American Christianity	Chris Evans, "Introduction," in <i>Histories of American Christianity</i> . Primary Sources: John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630) & Frederick Douglass, "Appendix," to <i>Life of an American Slave</i> .	DQs 11
<b>Th 10/7</b>	Lowcountry Religion	Charles Joyner, "Believer I Know: The Emergence of African American Christianity," in <i>Religion and American Culture</i> .	DQs 12
<b>S 10/10</b>	Reflection 6 Due 11:59pm		
<b>T 10/12</b>	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 13
<b>Unit 4: Muslim Sacred Spaces</b>			
<b>Th 10/14</b>	Introduction to Islam	Laith Saud, "Religious Structures: Tawhid," in <i>An Introduction to Islam in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</i> .	DQ 14
Fall Break - October 18-19 - No classes			
<b>Th 10/21</b>	Mecca	Basharat Peer, "Modern Mecca," <i>New Yorker</i> : <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/04/16/modern-mecca">https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/04/16/modern-mecca</a> Primary Source: Malcolm X, "Letters from Abroad," (1964)	DQ 15
<b>S 10/24</b>	Reflection 7 Due 11:59pm		
<b>T 10/26</b>	Embodied Spaces	Banu Gökarkınel, "Beyond the officially sacred: religion, secularism, and the body in the production of subjectivity," <i>Social and Cultural Geography</i> , (2009).	DQ 16

<b>Th 10/28</b>	Jerusalem	Karen Armstrong, "Jerusalem: the problems and responsibilities of sacred space," <i>Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations</i> 13, no. 2 (2002): 189-96.	DQs 17
<b>S 10/31</b>	Reflection 8 Due 11:59pm		
<b>T 11/2</b>	Sonic Spaces	No Readings: In-class case study, "A Call to Prayer"	Paper 2
<b>Unit 5: Native American Sacred Space</b>			
<b>Th 11/4</b>	Intro to Native Amer.	Gill, "Place to Begin," in <i>Native American Religions</i> . & Settler Timeline	DQs 18
<b>S 11/7</b>	Reflection 9 Due at 11:59pm		
<b>T 11/9</b>	Storyed Spaces	Keith Basso, <i>Wisdom Sits in Places</i> , selections.	DQs 19
<b>Th 11/11</b>	Contested Sacredness	Winona LaDuke (Ojibwe), "Gods, Squirrels, and the Universe," <i>Recovering the Sacred</i> .	DQs 20
<b>S 11/14</b>	Reflection 10 Due 11:59pm		
<b>T 11/16</b>	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> .	DQs 21
<b>Unit 6: Secular (?) Sacred Space</b>			
<b>Th 11/18</b>	Local Religion	Kim Knott, "Issues in the Study of Religion and Locality," in <i>Method &amp; Theory in the Study of Religion</i> . In-class final project workshop	DQs 22
<b>S 11/21</b>	Reflection 11 Due at 11:59pm		
<b>T 11/23</b>	Popular Culture & Sports Gods	Eric Mazur and Kate McCarthy, "Finding Religion in American Popular Culture," & Vernon L. Andrews, "Rituals of the African American Domus: Church, Community, Sport, and LeBron James," in <i>God in the Details</i> . No in-person class, Dr. Keegan at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting	DQs 23
<b>Thanksgiving Break – November 24-28 – No classes</b>			
<b>T 11/30</b>	Southern Spaces	Wade Clark Roof, "Blood in the barbecue: food and faith in the American South," in <i>God in the Details</i> . Guest speaker: Ben Garbee, Owner of Lewis Barbecue	DQs 24
<b>Th 12/2</b>	Magical Spaces	Eric Michael Mazur and Tara K. Koda, "The Happiest Place on Earth: Disney's America and the Commodification of Religion," in <i>God in the Details</i> .	DQs 25
<b>S 12/5</b>	Reflection 12 Due 11:59pm		
<b>Final Paper and Project Due December 13 at 8 AM</b>			

**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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.