



Course Description

This course has a dual purpose. One, we will explore the religious history and diversity of Charleston and the Lowcountry. We will engage the deep history and diversity of the “Holy City,” as well as interrogate how enslavement, discrimination, and intolerance have shaped the city and its people. We will engage religion not just as something people believe, but something they do, with attention to how religion is both local and transnational. Two, you will be trained with hands-on ethnographic field methods. Throughout, we will encounter and learn to critically analyze a wide range of ethnographies and theories, from which to build on when completing your own projects. These two objectives will culminate in your own original ethnographic project, presenting an ethnography of a religious community in Charleston.

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Course Objectives

- Examine and critically interrogate ethnographies and theories of ethnographic methods;
- Understand and engage with the practices included in “ethnographic methods,” including a consideration of ethics, interviews, fieldnote techniques and participant observation, as well as writing up field reports;
- Gain literacy and appreciation for the religious history and diversity of Charleston and the Lowcountry;
- Create an original ethnographic research project.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture, evaluated in fieldnotes and final ethnographic project;
- Students will examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing fieldnotes and a final ethnographic project.

Course Assignments

Participation in Class	200 pts.
Fieldnotes	300 pts.
Ethnography	500 pts.

Required Text

- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2nd Edition, (University of Chicago Press: 2020).
- Field notebook, recommended: softbound, 5x8” or 8x11”

Optional Text

- Spickard, Landers, and McGuire, *Personal Knowledge and Beyond: Reshaping the Ethnography of Religion*, (New York University Press, 2002).

RELS 253

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Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays
3-5pm & by appointment

#Coronavirus Content

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 are therefore *strongly encouraged* to get vaccinated to protect yourself and your classmates and *not allowed* to come to class during your isolation period if you contract COVID, per [college guidelines](#). Vaccinations are available for free 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. Rapid tests are reliable and readily available. “I might have COVID” is not the same as “I have COVID.” Please do not take advantage of the situation to simply not come to class. In-person attendance is required, this is not a hybrid course. On site visits, we will follow the rules of the community to the letter. If they want us to be masked to enter, you must be masked, no exceptions. 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. 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!

#Participation in class and site visits (200 points)

Active student participation is crucial for the success of this course and the development of your individual learning. 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. Although I am not asking you to post questions to OAKS before class, I do expect you to **bring at least two questions interrogating the texts or the ideas presented for in-class discussion**.

You will have seven site visits. When we meet for a site visit, we will occasionally skip an in-person class for one of our scheduled weekly meetings to make up for this extra time. These site visits are mandatory, if you cannot attend with the class you will need to work with the professor and community to schedule an alternative date. Life happens, just be sure to communicate to me as soon as possible. If you already know that you will not be able to attend two of the site visits, you will not be able to take this class this semester.

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

#Fieldnotes (300 points)

Task: Throughout the semester you will be learning to write and think ethnographically. This will include showing proof of progress at four points throughout the semester. In the first instance, you will turn in your literal jottings within your notebook, for the remaining three fieldnote reports you must type up and submit a copy to OAKS before class begins. Double-space, eleven or twelve-point type is preferred.

- I. jottings (see “In the Field”) (worth 25 points)
- II. fieldwork experiences worksheet (worth 25 points)
- III. descriptive fieldnotes (see “Writing Fieldnotes I”) (worth 50 points)
- IV. descriptive & reflective fieldnotes (see “Pursuing Members’ Meanings”) (worth 100 points)
- V. descriptive & reflective fieldnotes II (worth 100 points) (Mosque or Pentecostal Church)

#Ethnography (500 points)

Your final project will be an ethnography of your own design on a single religious community in Charleston. These must be unique communities; each student will work alone. The point is to identify a community and investigate what their beliefs, practices, social norms, codes, linguistic patterns, demographics, likes/dislikes, ideologies and ethics are (just to name a few). You will complete this project throughout the semester, with regular check ins and smaller assignments to ensure you stay on track. You must visit your site a minimum of three times and must complete at least two semi-structured interviews with members of your study population. In addition to a participant-observation driven ethnography, you must situate your community within the broader history of Charleston and the religious tradition. How does this community fit within a larger religious tradition? Does it have a global presence? Does Charleston’s community have any distinct practices or beliefs? What is the community’s relationship to Charleston? What are the demographics in comparison to greater Charleston? How do they engage with other Charleston spaces, institutions, networks? How do local people produce this community to meet local needs? See OAKS for a full prompt.

- i. Positionality statement (20 points) Due September 20
- ii. Research design (50 points) Due October 4
- iii. Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative IRB Training (20 points) Due October 18
- iv. Informed consent form (20 points) Due October 18
- v. Jottings from site visit (50 points) Due October 25
- vi. Annotated bibliography (50 points) Due November 10
- vii. Interviews (40 points) Due November 17
- viii. Presentation (50 points) November 29 or December 1
- ix. Written Ethnography (200 points) Due December 8

Course Schedule (*indicates pdf available on OAKS)

Date	Topic	What to Read/Watch/Do	What’s Due
Unit 1: What is ethnographic fieldwork?			
8/23	Introduction to the Course	Read the syllabus.	
8/25	Ethnography	Read before class: Julian M. Murchison, “What is Ethnography?” in <i>Ethnography Essentials</i> , 3-18. And James V. Spickard and J. Shawn Landres, “Wither Ethnography?” in <i>Personal Knowledge and Beyond</i> , 1-14.	Bring field notebook with two questions from the readings
8/30	Fieldwork	“Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research” in WEF, 1-20. And ethnography example: Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, “Hula Hoop	

		Spiritualities" https://www.quotidian.pub/hula-hoop-spiritualities-social-media/	
9/1	Religion in Charleston	Lewis P. Jones, "Religion in South Carolina: An Overview," 1-17. *What are things we should keep in mind about completing fieldwork in Charleston?	
9/6	Jottings	"In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes" in WEF, 21-43. *In-class activity: jotting in the wild	
Unit 2: American Judaism			
9/8	Judaism in Charleston	Leonard Greenspan, "Judaism in South Carolina." Shari Rabin, "Space, Place," <i>Immanent Frame</i> : https://tif.ssrc.org/2020/02/28/space-place-rabin/ Explore "Mapping Jewish Charleston": https://mappingjewishcharleston.cofc.edu/ *In-class: site visit etiquette	
9/9	Friday Shabbat Service and Tour at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, 6 PM		
9/13	No class due to site visit		
9/15	Reflecting on Fieldwork	Selections from Malinowski (1922), Stross (1971), Textor (1973), Landsman (1988), Hill (1972) *Reflections on site visit	Jottings Due & Fieldwork Experience worksheet
Unit 3: American Christianity			
9/20	Fieldnotes	"Writing Fieldnotes 1: At the Desk, Creating Scenes on a Page" in WEF, 45-87.	Positionality statement
9/22	Eastern Orthodoxy in the South	Alexander Kitroeff, "Introduction" in <i>The Greek Orthodox Church in America</i> , 1-16. And ethnography example: Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, "Introduction," <i>Between Heaven and Russia: Religious Conversion and Political Apostasy in Appalachia</i> , 1-16. Explore: https://www.goarch.org/introduction	
9/25	Sunday Divine Liturgy at Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 10 AM		
9/27	Ethnographic Ethics	Melissa Wilcox, "Dancing on the Fence," 47-59 and Karen McCarthy Brown, "Writing about 'the Other' Revisited," in <i>Personal Knowledge and Beyond</i> , 127-133.	Descriptive Fieldnotes
9/29	No class due to site visit (Keegan at fellowship meeting in NM)		
10/4	Research Design	"Pursuing Members Meanings," in WEF, 129-169. *In class research workshop: writing reflective fieldnotes	Research design
10/6	Religion, Race, and Tragedy at Mother Emmanuel	Keisha Blain, "Religious Life, Spirituality, and Racial Identity," 57-60; Manisha Sinha, "The Long and Proud History of Charleston's AME Church," 69-70; Eddie Glaude, "From African American Religion: A very Short Introduction," 78-85; Chad Williams, "Contemporary Perspectives on Race and Racial Violence," 269-272; and Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honorable Reverend Clementa Pickney," 273-279 in <i>Charleston Syllabus</i> .	
10/9	Sunday Services at Mother Emanuel AME Zion		
10/11	Native America & Christianity	Vine Deloria, Jr. "Anthropologists and Other Friends," in <i>Custer Died for Your Sins</i> , 130-7. And Suzanne Crawford O'Brien, "Christianity" in <i>Religion and Culture in Native America</i> , 181-204.	
10/13	Native American Pentecostals	Angela Tarango, "Introduction" in <i>Choosing the Jesus Way: American Indian Pentecostals and the Fight for Indigenous Principle</i> , 1-20.	Descriptive + reflective fieldnotes
10/16	Road trip to Little Rock Holiness Church in Cottageville, SC, leave campus by 8:30 AM		

Unit 4: American Islam			
10/18	<i>No Class due to site visit</i>		CITI IRB Training & Informed consent form
10/20	American Islam	Edward Curtis, "Across the Black Atlantic: The First Muslims in America" and "Muslim Americans after 9/11" in <i>Muslims in America: A Short History</i> (2009).	
10/25	Embodied and Gendered Islam	Karaman and Christian, "Should I wear a headscarf to be a good Muslim woman?": Situated meanings of the hijab among Muslim college women in America," in <i>Sociological Inquiry</i> , 225-243.	Jottings from project site visit
10/27	<i>No class due to site visit - we will either go today or Friday to prayers, TBD</i>		
10/30	Friday prayers at Central Mosque		
11/1	Religious Minorities in the South	Charles Lippy, "Tactics for Survival: Religious Minorities," in <i>Religion and Public Life in the South</i> , 125-140. *In class research workshop: learning to find sources	Descriptive + reflective fieldnotes II
11/3	<i>No class due to site visit</i>		
November 7-8 No Classes - Fall Break			
Unit 5: Buddhism in the South			
11/10	Buddhism in the South	J. Wilson, "Introduction" and "Buddhism with a Southern Accent," in <i>Dixie Dharma: Inside a Buddhist Temple in the American South</i> . Optional: Van Schaik, "An Introduction to the Practice of Tibetan Buddhism," 1-10.	Annotated bibliography
11/13	Charleston Tibetan Buddhist Society Meditation Class, 8:30 AM		
11/15	Ethnographies	"Writing an Ethnography," in WEF 201-242.	
11/17	Writing	Danielle Elliot, "Writing," in <i>A Different Kind of Ethnography</i> , 23-44.	Interviews
11/22	<i>No class due to site visit</i>		
November 23-25 No Classes: Thanksgiving Break			
11/29		Presentations I	
12/1		Presentations II	
12/8		Upload to OAKS by Exam Time: 1pm, no meeting during exams	Ethnography

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.