

RELS 451 Capstone Colloquium (SPRING 2022)

Monday 12:00 – 12:50pm in Maybank 119

[For RELS Majors who have completed Senior Seminar and are preparing for graduation.]

Professor: Lenny J. Lowe, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 11am-2pm and By Request

Course Description, Goals, and Learning Objectives

This course is designed to provide a capstone experience for majors in Religious Studies. Rather than a typical course, this one hour per week colloquium serves as a “meta-course” in which students will reflect upon the cumulative achievement and experience of being a religious studies scholar and student. Students will be asked to consider how work in RELS might bear upon future academic, personal, and professional life. Students will engage in self-assessment, reflection, and analysis of the significance of their students through engagement will assigned readings and special guest lectures.

Specific Learning Objectives include:

- 1) Gaining a fuller understanding of *what brought you to the study of religion, how your interests have changed over time, what theoretical and methodological insights have been most influential, and the future trajectory of these interests.*
- 2) Producing *an intellectual biography, a professional resume/CV, a short film promoting Religious Studies*
- 3) Evaluating and assessing *how the study of religion fits into your broader college learning experience, informs and interacts with other fields and topics, and the suitability of RELS curriculum in terms of structure, requirements, and purported goals.*
- 4) Articulating *how the study of religion has prepared you for future work and as individuals, citizens and members of various communities.*

This course follows RELS 450 (Senior Seminar), and it is designed as a *colloquium* which will feature many special guests, including alumni, who will tell their stories or introduce the topic for the day and guide our conversations. Because this course is the final capstone, it is an opportunity to think about the transition to graduate school, full-time employment, or other professional opportunities that require adaptation of your education.

Course Requirements and Policies

Textbook:

None. All reading materials will provided on OAKS.

Attendance:

Since this is a once-per-week course, your attendance is crucial. Three absences will negatively impact your grade (-5% pts), 4 absences (-10%), and 5 absences will result in you being dropped from the class. Emergencies and illness will obviously be considered “excused” on a case-by-case basis. Make every reasonable effort to be present and communicate in a timely and clear way regarding necessary absences.

Technology Troubles?

If you are having trouble with any particular link in the course shell, you may contact me directly via email at lowelj@cofc.edu or via the “General Q&A” discussion thread if you believe your question is relevant to other class members. For tech troubles related to your CofC login, OAKS, or computer problems, please contact the CofC IT department at helpdesk@cofc.edu or by phone at (843) 953-3375.

Accessibility:

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of CofC. If any student requires assistance or academic accommodations for a disability, please be sure to visit the Center for Disability Services to obtain proper documentation prior to our meeting. More information can be found at <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu>. However, in an online setting, what all of this means suddenly becomes much more opaque. So, please reach out to me if you have specific needs, and we will work it out!

Religious Observances and Accommodations:

Religious observances will be accommodated in accordance with the Student Attendance Policy.

College of Charleston Honor Code and Academic Integrity:

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

If the instructor determines the student’s actions are related to misunderstanding, it will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to 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 XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

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](http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php)

Assignments and Grading

This course will utilize a 100 point grade system to allow for easy grade monitoring for both students and professor. Individual grade categories are as follows:

*** Active Participation (10 pts.)**

Asking questions, offering ideas during discussions; demonstrating reading preparation.

*** Weekly OAKS Discussion Board (20 pts.)**

Most weeks, we will have a posted discussion question which will require your thoughtful response and interaction with classmates.

*** Resume/CV (20 pts.)**

Due via OAKS by MARCH 20th

*** Intellectual Autobiography (40 pts.)**

Draft due via OAKS by FEB. 28th / Final Version Due via OAKS APRIL 11th

*** 2-3 Minute Promotional Film (10 Pts.)**

Due via OAKS by Last Class Day

Total: 100 Pts.

Grading Scale: 93-100 (A), 90-92 (A-), 88-89 (B+), 83-87 (B), etc.

CLASS SCHEDULE

1/10 "Why Am I a RELS Major?"

READ: "On Being a Religious Studies Major" MacArthur (OAKS)

DO: Discussion #1 (OAKS – Due Sunday night)

1/17 NO CLASS (MLK DAY)

DO: Get a jump on your reading?

- 1/24 “Identifying Changes in Thinking and Being”
 READ: “Threshold Concepts in Religious Studies” Mosurinjohn (OAKS)
 DO: Discussion #2 (OAKS – Due Sunday Night)
- 1/31 Guest Alum: “TBD” Katie Brown
 READ: TBD
 DO: Discussion #3 (OAKS – Due Sunday Night)
- 2/7 In Defense of Religious Studies
 READ: AAR Statement; “Talking Religion at 30,000 Feet” Altman
 DO: Discussion #4 (OAKS – Due Sunday Night)
- 2/14 Guest Alum: “Science Writer to Story Teller in NC” with Andrew Aghapour
 READ: TBD
 DO: Discussion #5 (Due Sunday night via OAKS)
- 2/21 Guest Alum: “From Undergraduate Interest to PhD” with Madison Tarleton
 READ: TBD
 DO: Discussion #6 (Due Sunday night via OAKS)
- 2/28 Know Thyself, Part 1.
 READ: Martin Marty, “Half a Life in Religious Studies: Confessions of a Historical Historian” (OAKS)
 DO: Turn in draft of “Intellectual Autobiography”; bring copy for peer review in class
- 3/7 Guest Alum: “From International Education to Project Management” with Madeline “M.J.” Welch
 READ: TBD
 DO: Create Draft of Professional Resume/CV (Due Sunday night via “Assignments”)
- 3/14 Guest: “Get a Job!” with Jim Allison, Executive Director, CofC Career Center
 READ: “What are you going to do with that?” Wilcox; “What does the AAR-Teagle Survey...Tell Us?” Matthewes
 DO: Revise Resume/CV (Due Sunday night via “Assignments”)
- 3/21 Guest Alum: “From Academia to Activism in Alabama” with Dr. Mike Altman
 READ: TBD
 DO: Discussion #7 (Due Sunday night via OAKS)
- 3/28 Guest Alum: “Using Critical Theory to Build a Business” with Kenny Richards
 READ: TBD
 DO: Discussion #8 (Due Sunday night via OAKS)

- 4/4 Guest Alum: “How to Read in Israel and New York” with Mads Leibin
 READ: TBD
 DO: Discussion #9 (Due Sunday night via OAKS)
- 4/11 Guest: “RELS, Interfaith, and Career” with Mary Ellen Geist
 READ: TBD
 DO: Discussion #10 (Due Sunday night via OAKS); Intellectual Autobiography
 Final version due via “Assignments”)
- 4/18 Finding Closure and Finding Openings
 READ/WATCH: David Foster Wallace, “This is Water”
 DO: Promotional Films
- 4/25 Revisiting Threshold Concepts over lunch
 READ: none
 DO: Short Promotional Films in preparation for “final”

Intellectual Autobiography Assignment Description

During our time together, you will have multiple opportunities to reflect upon the ways that your thinking has evolved from the time you took your first RELS class until now. This “autobiography” is an opportunity for you to reflect on the specific ideas, events, individuals, scholars, professors, colleagues, etc. that have shaped you as a Religious Studies Major.

This essay should serve as a “map” of your thinking about the study of religion during your time at the College of Charleston (or before). As you look back at your first course in Religious Studies, what was it that first grabbed your attention? What made you decide to major in RELS? What important themes have emerged? How have your studies changed the way you think about the world more generally – about other humans, about culture, about politics, about economy, etc.?

As you reflect and begin to craft your autobiography, you should aim to be as specific as possible engaging specific theories or theorists, methods, or religious traditions that have been important to you. What authors, teachers, classes or experiences influenced you the most?

Finally, you will want to reflect critically on how these influential experiences will play a role in your future. Where might all of this lead you? What do you hope to achieve? How might the things you have learned in RELS allow you to achieve these aims differently or better?

(Please note: This is not a “personal” autobiography; it is an *intellectual* autobiography. Generally, you should avoid telling your “life story” except as it might relate specifically to your intellectual development as a RELS major. Short anecdotes may be used, but they should all support your primary “thesis.”)

Rather than grading you on the “content” of this essay, you will be graded for how deeply you have considered your own development, how well you articulate this development, and the extent to which you gave this essay sincere effort and attention. You will turn in an early draft of this essay about which you will receive feedback from two of your peers. Then, you will turn in a final version toward the end of the semester. Grading will generally follow the rubric below:

35 – 40 pts. = *At least 6 pages, thoughtfully constructed and devoid of common errors, on-time first draft, on-time second draft showing evidence of revision, participated in peer-review.*

30-34 pts. = *Insufficient content OR did not adequately proofread, or late submission of either draft, OR shows no evidence of revision, OR did not participate in peer-review*

25-29 pts. = *No first draft OR Significantly inadequate content OR carelessly written*