

SCAR 2RN3 – FRENEMIES: SCIENCE & RELIGION IN THE NEWS Winter 2023



Instructor: Jeremy Cohen

Email: cohenj10@mcmaster.ca

Office: UH 129

Office Hours: By appointment in-person, or via Teams or Zoom

Lecture: BSB B136 - Tuesdays @ 7:00PM-9:00PM

Lecture audio released as podcast each week + ppt slides

CONTENTS

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	2
COURSE OVERVIEW	3
COURSE OBJECTIVES	3
COURSE EVALUATION	4
REQUIRED TEXTS	4
LECTURE INFORMATION	4
COURSE EVALUATION – DETAILS	4
INTRODUCTION (5%):	4
SELF-ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION (10%):	5
SELF-DIRECTED MEDIA JOURNALS (20%):	5
MEDIA ANALYSIS SUBMISSION (30%):	5
FINAL ASSIGNMENT – SCIENCE AND RELIGION OP-ED (35%):	5
WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS	6
WEEK ONE: JAN 10TH	6
WEEK TWO: JAN 17TH	6
WEEK THREE: JAN 24TH	6
WEEK FOUR: JAN 31ST	6
WEEK FIVE: FEB 7TH	7
WEEK SIX: FEB 14TH	7
WEEK EIGHT: FEB 28TH	7
WEEK NINE: MARCH 7TH	8
WEEK TEN: MARCH 14TH	8
WEEK ELEVEN: MARCH 21ST	8
WEEK TWELVE: MARCH 28TH	9
WEEK THIRTEEN: APRIL 4TH	9
WEEK FOURTEEN: APRIL 11TH	9
STUDENT RESOURCES	10
CAMPUS RESOURCES	10
HOW TO CITE	10

HOW TO AVOID UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM.....	10
HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY & PUNCTUATION RULES	10
COURSE POLICIES.....	11
SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS	11
GRADES.....	11
LATE ASSIGNMENTS	11
AVENUE TO LEARN	11
UNIVERSITY POLICIES.....	12
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT	12
AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION.....	12
COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT	13
ONLINE PROCTORING	13
CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS	13
ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.....	14
REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK	14
ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)	14
COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING.....	14
EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES.....	14

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I recognize and acknowledge that McMaster University is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Has science and technology replaced religion in modern life? Is the conflict between religious cosmologies and scientific paradigms a real or manufactured issue? What role does news media, past and present, play in perpetuating the conflict thesis?

We begin by tracing the historical context of the cultures of science and religion. This includes arguments for keeping religion and science apart; relationships between science, the media, and the paranormal; and the evolution/creationism controversy.

We then explore the interaction of science and religion in the news media by focusing on colonial imaginaries, religion and politics, fake news, human clones, our speculative technological futures, and news presentations of specific religious traditions.

Course Objectives

This is an introductory course offered by the Department of Religious Studies (SCAR). I do not assume you have any prior knowledge of the topics discussed, or any background in the social scientific study of religion. All are welcome!

1. **Introductory Survey:** To provide you with an introductory survey of the nature and interrelationship of science and religion, and how this is approached by contemporary media.
2. **Media Literacy:** You will improve your digital and media literacy skills through course readings, tutorial discussions, and assignments.
3. **Critical Thinking:** In true anthropological fashion, this course will make the strange familiar and make the familiar strange by cultivating your analytical, reflective, and critical thought.
4. **Intersections:** By the end of the course, you will be familiar with the many intersections of science and religion, including the basis for the tensions between science and religion.

Course Evaluation

You are responsible for completing all the assigned weekly readings, attending lectures, and attending tutorials. Movies are watched on your own time. These will prepare you for the course assignments.

As part of an effort to make grading fairer, participation is not based on tutorial attendance alone. More information on Avenue.

Required Texts

Journal articles can be found on the [McMaster Library](#) website. Book chapters are on Avenue as .pdf files. Videos are all publicly available.

Lecture Information

Lectures: This course is offered in person and uses Avenue2Learn. It is your responsibility to check A2L on a regular basis.

Recorded Lectures: The lecture audio will be recorded and released on Avenue each week. The audio files will be accompanied by PowerPoint slides. This is being offered for students who cannot make it to campus and for students who miss a class.

Tutorials: Our tutorials are in person.

In case of illness, class & tutorials may take place online.

Course Evaluation - Details

Introduction (5%):

Introduce yourself and answer the following questions: Who are you? Why are you taking this course? What are your learning objectives this semester and how will you reach them? What is one academic skill that you most want to improve (ex: writing, reading comprehension)?

Due Date: January 25th @ 11:59pm

Self-Assessment Participation (10%):

Participation in this course can take several forms, including attending tutorials, speaking in class/tutorials, and optional discussion posts on Avenue.

Participation grades will be based on your learning objectives, a self-assessment, and input from TAs. More information available on Avenue.

Self-Directed Media Journals (20%):

Throughout the semester keep a digital journal where you catalogue news stories and provide brief commentaries related to each week's theme.

Media Analysis Submission (30%):

You will use your weekly journal for tutorial discussions, and you will submit entries from your journal for grading twice during the semester.

Due dates: February 27th, & April 3rd @ 11:59PM

Final Assignment – Science and Religion Op-Ed (35%):

Relying on the theories and methods learned in class, as well as your media analysis journal, write an op-ed for a major Canadian news organization on a topic of your choice (related to science and religion).

While your op-ed can be in traditional, text-based form, you are welcome to record and edit your piece as a radio or TV news feature.

Due date: April 14th @ 11:59PM

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS

Week One: Jan 10th

INTRODUCTIONS

- Overview of the course, assignments and learning objectives.
-

Week Two: Jan 17th

WHAT IS RELIGION? WHAT IS SCIENCE?

- Livingston, Ira. 2018. "Introduction." In *Magic Science Religion*. 1-24.
 - Barbour, Ian G. 2002. "On Typologies for Relating Science and Religion." *Zygon* 37: 345-360.
-

Week Three: Jan 24th

A DISENCHANTED UNIVERSE?

- Henry, John. 2010. "Religion and the Scientific Revolution." In *The Cambridge companion to science and religion* 39-58.
 - Josephson-Storm, Jason Ananda. 2017. "Enchanted (Post) Modernity" In *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*. 22-37.
-

Week Four: Jan 31st

THE CONFLICT THESIS

- Gould, Stephen Jay, 1997. "Nonoverlapping magisteria." *Natural History* 106: 16-22.
- Harrison, Peter. 2006. "Science" and "Religion": Constructing the Boundaries." *The Journal of Religion* 86: 81-106.

Week Five: Feb 7th

DIFFERENT WAYS OF KNOWING

- **Watch:** "[Indigenous knowledge meets science to take on climate change](#)"
 - Harding, Sandra. 2018. "One Planet, Many Sciences" In *Constructing the Pluriverse*: 39-61.
-

Week Six: Feb 14th

MONKEY BUSINESS: EVOLUTION ON TRIAL

- **Watch:** "[Flock of Dodos: The Evolution-Intelligent Design Circus](#)"
 - Weiss, Kenneth M. 2007. "The Scopes Trial." *Evolutionary Anthro* 16: 126-31.
 - Parks, Perry. 2015. "Summer for the Scientists? The Scopes Trial and the Pedagogy of Journalism." *Journalism & Mass Communication* 92: 444-67.
-

Week Seven: FALL BREAK!

Week Eight: Feb 28th

READING AND WRITING THE NEWS CRITICALLY

- Schaefer, Jame. 2004. "Reporting Complexity: Science and Religion." In *Quoting God How Media Shape Ideas about Religion and Culture*, 211-232.
 - Mitchell, Jolyon. 2012. "Religion and the News: Stories, Contexts, Journalists and Audiences." In *Religion and the News*. 7-30.
-

Week Nine: March 7th

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS: CANADIAN COLONIALISMS

- Armour, Ellen. 2021. "Decolonizing Spectatorship: Photography, Theology, and New Media." In *Beyond Man: Race, Coloniality, and Philosophy of Religion*: 127-150.
 - Maggie Perzyna & Harald Bauder. 2022. "Threats from within and threats from without: Wet'suwet'en protesters, irregular asylum seekers and on-going settler colonialism in Canada." *Settler Colonial Studies*. 1-24.
-

Week Ten: March 14th

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS: RELIGION AND POLITICS

- Douglas, Christopher. 2018. "Religion and Fake News: Faith-Based Alternative Information Ecosystems in the US and Europe." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16: 61-73.
 - George, Cherian. 2019. "Journalism in a climate of hate." *Journalism* 20: 106-109.
 - Sraieb-Koepp, Nadia. 2018. "The Role of Media in Public Advocacy and Countering Violent Extremism." In *The Routledge Companion To Media and Humanitarian Action*: 261-267.
-

Week Eleven: March 21st

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS: BLINDED BY (WEIRD) SCIENCE

- **Watch:** ["Playing God: the faces behind controversial baby cloning"](#)
- Agrama, H. Ali. 2021, "Secularity, Synchronicity, And Uncanny Science: Considerations And Challenges," *Zygon* 56: 395-415.
- Alcibar, Miguel. 2008. "Human Cloning and the Raelians: Media Coverage and the Rhetoric of Science." *Science Communication* 30: 236-65.

Week Twelve: March 28th

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS: RELIGION & TECHNOLOGY

- **Watch:** [“Why ‘upgrading’ humanity is a transhumanist myth”](#)
 - Stolow, Jeremy. 2013. “Religion, Technology, and the Things in Between.” In *Deus in Machina* 1-24.
 - Cheong, Pauline Hope. 2021. “Robots, religion and communication” *Religion in the Age of Digitalization*. 86-96.
-

Week Thirteen: April 4th

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS: OUR FUTURE IN SPACE

- Torres, Emile P. 2022. [“Understanding “longtermism”: Why this suddenly influential philosophy is so toxic”](#)
 - Shoffstall, Grant W. 2021. “Policing Hybridity: Cryonic Suspension at the ‘Nexus’ of Religion and Technoscience.” *Nova Religio* 25: 87-113.
-

Week Fourteen: April 11th

NO CLASS – OFFICE DROP IN

Student Resources

CAMPUS RESOURCES

- [Food Collective Centre](#)
- [Indigenous Student Services](#)
- [Sexual Violence Response Coordinator](#)
- [Equity and Inclusion](#)
- [Online Learning Support](#)
- [Writing Support](#)
- [Student Success Centre](#)
- [Ontario Crisis Resources and Helplines](#)
- [Canada Suicide Prevention Service](#)

HOW TO CITE

- [MLA](#)
- [Chicago](#)
- [APA](#)

HOW TO AVOID UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM

- [Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism](#)

HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY & PUNCTUATION RULES

- [How to Write an Essay](#)
- [Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes](#)
- [13 Rules for Using Commas](#)
- [How to use the Semi-Colon](#)

COURSE POLICIES

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue in .docx or .pdf format (NO .pages).

GRADES

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Everyone has a 24-hour extension leeway to submit their assignment. If you need more than 24 hours, please contact your TA. Late assignments (past 24 hours) may be penalized at the discretion of the TA and/or professor.

AVENUE TO LEARN

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this

course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other

software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to the [Office of Academic Integrity website](#).

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

[McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The university reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.).

McMaster University, Department of Religious Studies, SCAR 2RN3

Changes will be communicated through regular mcmaster communication channels, such as mcmaster Daily News, A2L and/or mcmaster email.