



## RELI 235-K01: Religion and Literature (of Native America) Religious Studies, George Mason University, Fall 2022

instructor: *Prof. Garry Sparks*  
class days/times: *Me&W 10:30am – 11:45pm*  
class room: *G212*

e-mail\*: *gsparks@gmu.edu*  
office: *G607*  
office hours: *3:30pm – 5pm*  
*(or by appointment when available)*

\* If emailing after 5pm do not expect a reply until at least after 9am of the next work-day.

### Course Description

Referred to by some as “the Bible of the ancient Maya,” the Popol Wuj (or Popol Vuh, “Book of the Council”) is the oldest and most complete collection of religious epics and creation stories written by any Native American group in either North or South America. Compiled and edited into a single volume by Maya elites in the 1550s, this set of Maya myths and pre-Hispanic history has become an increasingly influential text since its rediscovery in the 1850s. Archeologists use it as a lens to interpret scenes depicted on ancient murals and pottery. Ethnohistorians (historians interested in Native accounts of the Americas prior to and immediately during the arrival of Europeans) comb it for Indigenous understandings of society, time, and the cosmos. Latin American authors—namely in modernism and magical realism—were inspired by its non-linear and fantastical narratives. Post-colonial theorists cite it as evidence of Native resistance to Spanish and Catholic hegemony since the sixteenth century. And present-day Maya and other Native American activists—many within the Catholic and Protestant churches—make it a core of religious and social movements that in 1992 critiqued the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus’s first voyage and the subsequent “doctrine of discovery.”

The first portion of this course will center on a close reading of the Popol Wuj in light of the wider literary (particularly poetic) and religious traditions of the Highland Maya of Guatemala, especially until and during the initial period of contact with Hispano-Catholicism in the early sixteenth century. From this understanding, in the latter portion of the course, three other ancient Indigenous religious texts will be comparatively studied – that of the Mexica (aka Aztec) of central Mexico, and the Hopi and Diné (aka Navajo) of the U.S. Southwest.

## Learning Objectives and Goals

Students who complete this course will:

- become familiar with one of the most important Indigenous texts of the Americas (e.g., its history, content, structure, and wider literary and socio-political influences);
- become familiar with Indigenous (Mesoamerican) genres and poetics;
- become familiar with basic features of Indigenous Mesoamerican religions;
- begin to critically (re)assess histories of and in the Americas with Indigenous sources (i.e., become introduced to the field of ethnohistory);
- learn how to conduct comparative, critical, and close reading of primary texts;
- appreciate and critically assess the nuanced tensions within and problems behind any translated material...
  - even in unfamiliar languages (such as K'iche' Maya), and
  - especially complex literature like myth and religious “scripture”;
- learn how to locate and evaluate different qualities of secondary/scholarly source materials for research papers; and
- hone professional (i.e., argument-oriented) research and writing skills.

## Methods of Instruction

The core of this course will consist of close readings of foundational primary texts. You will be expected to have read thoroughly and reflected on all texts assigned every week prior to coming to class. Each class will consist of lectures germane to the topic of the texts but may not necessarily always be on the texts themselves. Lectures will be accompanied by discussing and exploring together the claims made in the assigned texts, what resources they draw upon, what specific assumptions they make, et cetera. Though class will also involve close as well as comparative readings of the assigned texts; therefore you are required to bring the relevant assigned book(s) in hardcopy (no e-book versions allowed) to every class.

Note: By now the amount and diversity of literature (primary and secondary) on pre-contact Indigenous religions is extensive and highly variable in quality. The readings selected for this course are among the more significant and academic for the purposes of this course. You are welcome to seek out used copies, but please do so with enough time to complete the readings and assignments before class – late work will not be accepted due to book delivery delays.

For required readings found on Blackboard (Bboard) as PDFs: *you must print, read, mark up, and bring to class hard copies* – consulting electronic versions of these texts on your **computer, smart phone, or equivalent device during class is not allowed**. In this respect, *please have all computers and phones turned off* (and not merely on “vibrate” as this is still distracting from your learning and to those around you) and put away prior to the start of class (exceptions—including the need to audio record class lecture-discussions—will be made only with prior approval by the instructor; please speak with me to discuss your accommodation needs).

## Semester Outline of Topics (to be divided appropriately between class times every week)

*Note that I (the instructor) reserve the right to change the syllabus during the term if and/or when need arises (e.g., to meet the learning outcomes of the course). You are responsible for checking for such changes (checking Bboard often) and updating your copy of the syllabus.*

### Week 1 – Introducing the Maya and Mesoamerican Literature

Aug. 22 & 24

- **read** and discuss (found on Bboard):

**the course syllabus (PDF)** – *you shouldn't sign a legal deed or a loan agreement without first reading through the contract; during this first week be sure to read through the whole syllabus.*

Martin, Laura. "Mayan Language History," *Revue* 27 no. 4 (June 2015). (PDF)

Tedlock, Dennis. "Introduction," "Early Mayan Writing," "The Alphabet Arrives in the Highlands," *2000 Years of Mayan Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 1-10, 25-30, 297-304. (PDF)

Christenson, Allen J. "Introduction," *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 26-42. (PDF)

### Week 2 – Maya Poetics and High-Registers of Discourse

Aug. 29 & 31

- **read** and discuss (found on Bboard):

Christenson, Allen J. "Introduction," *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (New York: O Books, 2003), 42-52. (PDF)

Sam Colop, Luis Enrique. "Poetics in the *Popol Wuj*," *Parallel Worlds* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2012), 283-309. (PDF or e-book at Fenwick Library)

Tedlock, Dennis, trans. *Popol Vuh*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 63-66 and 214-220 (i.e., the **endnotes**; also note **glossary**, 336-362).

**OR**

Christenson, Allen J., trans. *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 59-66 (including the **footnotes**).

- suggested reading:

Christenson, Allen J. "The Use of Chiasmus by the Ancient K'iche' Maya," *Parallel Worlds* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2012), 311-336. (PDF or e-book at Fenwick Library)

Hull, Kerry. "Poetic Tenacity: A Diachronic Study of Kennings in Mayan Languages," *Parallel Worlds* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2012), 73-122. (PDF or e-book at Fenwick Library)

### Week 3 – Popol Wuj (Highland Maya)

Sept. 5

Note: No class on Wed., Sept. 7 (Fall Recess).

- **read** and discuss:

Tedlock, Dennis, trans. *Popol Vuh*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 63-74 and 214-238.

**OR**

Christenson, Allen J., trans. *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 59-90.

- suggested reading:

Tedlock, Dennis, trans. “Preface” and “Introduction,” *Popol Vuh*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 15-60; 201-214.

### Week 4 – Popol Wuj (Highland Maya), continued

Sept. 14

Due by beginning of class Wed. (9/14): Topic for Research Paper 1 on Mesoamerican Religion.

Note: No class on Mon., Sept. 12 (Fall Recess/Harvest Moon Festival).

- **read** and discuss:

Tedlock, Dennis, trans. *Popol Vuh*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 77-88 and 238-249.

**OR**

Christenson, Allen J., trans. *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 91-111.

### Week 5 – Popol Wuj (Highland Maya), continued

Sept. 19 & 21

Due by beginning of class Wed. (9/21) Short Assignment 1: Maya Poetics in the Popol Wuj

- **read** and discuss:

Tedlock, Dennis, trans. *Popol Vuh*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 91-142 and 249-288.

**OR**

Christenson, Allen J., trans. *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 112-191.

### Week 6 – Popol Wuj (Highland Maya), continued

Sept. 26 & 28

Due by beginning of class Wed. (9/28) Draft of Research Paper 1 (2 copies = 10% of paper grade).

- **read** and discuss:

Tedlock, Dennis, trans. *Popol Vuh*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 145-175 and 288-315.

**OR**

Christenson, Allen J., trans. *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 192-252.

## Week 7 – Popol Wuj (Highland Maya), continued

Oct. 4 & 5

Due by beginning of class Tue. (10/4) Short Assignment 2: Outline of Structure & Themes of the Popol Wuj.  
Note: No class on Mon., Oct. 3 (National Foundation Day) but instead on Tue., Oct. 4.

- **read** and discuss:

Tedlock, Dennis, trans. *Popol Vuh*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 179-198 and 315-335.

**OR**

Christenson, Allen J., trans. *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 253-305.

- suggested reading:

Sachse, Frauke. “Over Distant Waters: Places of Origin and Creation in Colonial K’iche’an Sources,” *Pre-Columbian Landscapes of Creation and Origin*, John Edward Staller, ed. (New York: Spring Science+Business Media, LLC, 2008), 123-160. (PDF)

## Week 8 – “Legend of the Suns” (Mexico [Aztec])

Oct. 12

Due by beginning of class Wed. (10/12) Final Version of Short Research Paper 1 on Mesoamerican Religion.  
Note: No class on Mon., Oct. 10 (Hangul Proclamation Day).

- **read** and discuss:

Bierhorst, John, trans. *History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1992), 83-138, 1-16.

## Week 9 – “Annals of Cuauhtitlan” (Mexico [Aztec])

Oct. 17 & 19

Due by beginning of class Mon. (10/17) Short Assignment 3a Draft: Comparative Cosmogenesis Chart

- **read** and discuss:

Bierhorst, John, trans. *History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1992), 23-78.

## Week 10 – “Annals of Cuauhtitlan” (Mexico [Aztec]), continued

Oct. 24 & 26

Due by beginning of class Wed. (10/26) Short Assignment 4: Outline of the “Annals of Cuauhtitlan.”

- **read** and discuss:

Bierhorst, John, trans. *History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1992), 78-138.

**Week 11 – “Creation of the Four Worlds” (Hopi)**

**Oct. 31 & Nov. 2**

**Due by beginning of class Mon. (10/31) Short Assignment 3b Draft: Comparative Cosmogenesis Chart**

- **read** and discuss:

Waters, Frank. *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), ix-27. (PDF).

**AND**

Courlander, Harold. *The Fourth World of the Hopis* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 9-42. (PDF)

**Week 12 – *Diné bahane’* (Diné [Navajo])**

**Nov. 7 & 9**

**Due by beginning of class Mon. (11/7) Short Assignment 3 Final Version: Comparative Cosmogenesis Chart**

- **read** and discuss:

Zolbrod, Paul G. *Diné bahane’: The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 35-78.

- suggested reading:

Zolbrod, Paul G. *Diné bahane’: The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), xi-29, 341-346.

**Week 13 – *Diné bahane’* (Diné [Navajo]), continued**

**Nov. 14 & 16**

**Due by beginning of class Wed. (9/14): Topic for Research Paper 2 on Native (non-)Mesoamerican Religions.**

- **read** and discuss:

Zolbrod, Paul G. *Diné bahane’: The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 81-168.

- suggested reading:

Zolbrod, Paul G. *Diné bahane’: The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 346-360.

**Week 14 – *Diné bahane’* (Diné [Navajo]), continued**

**Nov. 21 & 23**

- **read** and discuss:

Zolbrod, Paul G. *Diné bahane’: The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 171-278.

- suggested reading:

Zolbrod, Paul G. *Diné bahane’: The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 381-407.

Week 15 – *Diné bahane'* (Diné [Navajo]), continued

Nov. 28 & Dec. 2

- **read** and discuss:

Zolbrod, Paul G. *Diné bahane': The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 281-339.

- suggested reading:

Zolbrod, Paul G. *Diné bahane': The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 407-416.

Week 16 – *Diné bahane'* (Diné [Navajo]), continued

Dec. 5

Due by beginning of class on Mon. (12/5) Research Paper 2 Draft on Native (non-)Mesoamerican Religions.  
Note: Monday is the last class; no class on Wed. (12/7).

Week 17 – Research Paper 2 (& extra credit essay) due by no later than...

5pm Fri., Dec. 9

Final Short Research Paper 2 (and the optional extra credit essay) should be submitted via email as a PDF, Word.doc, or Word.docx attachment.

## Methods of Evaluation (a.k.a. Grading)

- **Four (4) short assignments** will each consist of **10%** (thus 40% of your total course grade).
  1. The first short assignment will focus on the use of Maya poetics, parallelism, and chiasmic structures within the Popol Wuj, especially your ability to correctly identify various different kinds of parallelism in Indigenous American religious discourse.
  2. The second short assignment will focus on the content and overall narrative structure of the text of the Popol Wuj (Highland Maya).
  3. The third short assignment will consist of an analytical comparison between the cosmogonic stories of three influential Mesoamerican peoples: Maya, Mexica, and Hopi.
  4. The fourth short assignment (because four is the magic number) will focus on the content and overall narrative structure of the text of the *Annals of Cuauhtitlan* (Mexico). While the first two short assignments are not officially due until Weeks 5 and 7, they are designed to aide your deeper reading of the Popol Wuj and should be begun by Week 2 and completed gradually as you continue to read and reread the stories. These are short assignments but will become “big” ones if you wait until the weekend before they are due to begin them (i.e., don’t do that). More detailed instructions for each of these short assignments will be provided as the course progresses, but note the due dates for each in the course syllabus (late assignments risk grade deduction).
- **Two (2) short research papers** of 5-6 pages will each contribute **25%** to the course grade (thus 50% of your total course grade). More detailed prompts for each of these research papers will be posted to Blackboard (Assignments). While you should include and use readings from this course, each research paper must also use at least two additional scholarly publications from academic (e.g., peer-reviewed) journals and/or books – **NO Internet sources are permitted**. Finally, each paper should be well-written pieces of professional, academic writing (i.e., an argument) as specified in this syllabus (pages 10-11) and discussed in class (see handouts on types of appropriate sources and on argument-oriented writing).
- **Weekly postings** to the Discussion Board on the course Blackboard site will consist of **10%** of your total course grade. Each posting should focus on some section or aspect of the assigned reading(s) for that week *before* it has been discussed in class (e.g., by 9a.m. prior to either class on Monday or Wednesday). In other words, a posting should **not** consist of merely a summary of what has already been discussed, though you **may** incorporate, apply, relate, and make connections with ideas or points made in previous class sessions, comment on other students’ postings (i.e., you may post a reply to a post by one of your classmates), or even incorporate insights from other courses or readings beyond this course. Each post should consist of at least a short paragraph that demonstrates your engagement and initial insights into that week’s reading(s), and may even consist of questions, confusions, or doubts that the readings raise for you. Each post is worth 1 point with a minimum of 10 postings required for an A (i.e., 9=A-, 8=B, 7=C, 6=D, 5-=F).
- *One optional extra credit assignment* will be due toward the end of the course for up to **five (0-5) extra points** added to your course final grade. The extra credit assignment will consist of an optional additional paper (*ca.* 5 pages) in which you will analyze and interpret the now-classic independent film “El Norte” through the lens of any of the readings. However, unlike the two assigned course papers, no outside research is required for the extra credit paper; though, it is highly recommended that you watch the extra features included on the Criterion Collection edition of this film. <https://www.criterion.com/films/972-el-norte>.

- Note that there is no mid-term or final exam for this course and, due to the nature of the reading, your first assignments are not due until relatively late in the semester. It is your responsibility to keep up with the readings (have them completed prior to class), attend and actively participate (e.g., take notes during, engage in discussions, etc.) all class sessions, and attend to any changes made in the schedule of the syllabus.
- Also note that as a college-level course it is assumed that students are both literate and numerate (can and will have thoroughly read the course syllabus and are able to track and calculate your own course grade based on the returned assignments). Graded work is returned to you with constructive comments, which you should read to know how to improve your work for the future; but grades are not posted to Blackboard. You are responsible for constantly tracking your learning (and the graded evaluation of it) in this course based on the formula breakdown (percentages) stated in this syllabus. To discuss your grade (or any particular aspect of the course material) please take advantage of office hours.
- Finally, as a college-level course, it is assumed that for every credit hour spent in class (either on campus or online; most courses are three credit hours) you are to dedicate on average three hours per week on a course (i.e., 1:3::3:9 – *three credit hours in class per week :: nine hours outside of class on a course per week*; though, this ratio may differ with lab courses and increases with graduate level courses). This is the standard average for all courses whether at a community college, private liberal arts college, or private or public university. Your time outside of class to maximize your learning should, therefore, consist of:
  - reading (at least twice), underlining (best done in pencil on the page), and taking notes (best if handwritten) on the assigned material *prior* to class sessions;
  - reading any related footnotes or endnotes in the readings;
  - looking up any unfamiliar terms or names found in the readings;
  - forming a study group with 2-3 other classmates that meets regularly (e.g., weekly) to:
    - review in-class lectures and discussions, handouts, and Blackboard course content,
    - collaboratively reading through and correcting class notes, and
    - exchanging drafts of assignments and papers for critically constructive and corrective comments *prior* to submitting them for a grade;
  - reading classmates' postings on the Blackboard Discussion Board and posting yours;
  - conducting research via Fenwick Library resources for papers;
  - drafting and revising assignments and papers; and
  - meeting with the course instructor to discuss course material and assignments.

In other words, please be sure to come to every class having read well that week's material with questions and/or comments to discuss.
- Finally, finally, reading a text on a screen (e.g., e-book, PDF, etc.) does not foster the same deep comprehension as reading a hardcopy and manually annotating it (e.g., underlining key parts, indexing the text in the margins with key words of a paragraph or section, noting your thoughts and questions about the text in the margins, etc.). Please do not hesitate to write, critically engage with, and appropriate your readings. Likewise, taking notes (e.g., in class) on a computer is not really "taking notes" but rather merely stenography; you will learn more and better by taking notes by hand during class whether it in in-person or online class sessions. For this reason, no electronic devices are allowed (minus a computer for online sessions) during class.

## Policy on Expectations

All visual materials (such as charts, graphs, or pictures) used in class will be posted onto Bboard along with additional images and resource links. These are to be used for any missed classes as well as further exploration into the issues addressed as the course unfolds. However, lecture notes will not be posted; please secure notes for any missed classes from a couple of classmates.

All written assignments prepared for this class should be:

- typed (no handwritten work will be accepted),
- in a 12 point (vs. 11 point or 10 point) and standard serif font (i.e. Garamond, Palantino, or Times New Roman vs. a sans serif font like Arial, Helvetica, or Gill Sans or a non-standard serif font like Papyrus or Cracked),
- double spaced (Note: if the default setting on a computer automatically inserts an additional half-spaced leading after a paragraph you will need to change on your document),
- 1" margins all around,
- left aligned (not full justification),
- with your full name and page number in either the header or footer on every page.

These should be well-crafted and revised written pieces,

- free of typos and grammatical errors;
- use only inclusive language unless you are writing about something that is a gender-specific topic (i.e. Catholic priesthood);
- contractions (i.e. “can’t,” “aren’t,” “won’t,” etc.) are inappropriate for professional and academic writing (unless part of a direct quote from another source);
- use of the first person singular pronoun (e.g., “I”)—but also for the most part first person plural (“we”) and second person (“you”)—should be generally avoided with rare exceptions.

To achieve these standards please use the writing center, peer-reviewers, as well as discuss with me a drafts of your assignments during office hours (I’m more than happy to do so). **Major points (e.g., one letter grade) may be deducted from unprofessionally written assignments.**

To help understand what is meant by crafting a piece of argument-oriented writing and correctly documenting the literary evidence required in professional (including academic) genres, students should purchase and use the following *highly* recommended sources:

1. Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Eighth Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) (older editions will also work);
2. Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein and Russel Durst. *“They Say / I Say”: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company) (any edition);

as well as:

- Booth, Wayne C. *The Craft of Research*;
- Gould, Jon B. *How to Succeed in College (While Really Trying): A Professor’s Inside Advice*;
- Lipson, Charles. *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success*; and
- Lipson, Charles. *Succeeding as an International Student in the United States and Canada*.

Whether or not you read these specific books and are familiar with what they cover, as a college student you are expected to *know, understand, and agree* with these standards and expectations.

## Academic Integrity

“I was thrown out of NYU my freshman year for cheating on the metaphysics final... I looked within the soul of the boy sitting next to me.” – Woody Allen<sup>1</sup>

“Academic honesty boils down to three simple but powerful principles:

- When you say you did the work yourself, you actually did it.
- When you rely on someone else’s work, you cite it. When you use their words, you quote them openly and accurately, and you cite them, too.
- When you present research materials, you present them fairly and truthfully. That’s true whether the research involves data, documents, or the writings of other scholars.”<sup>2</sup>

Violation of the academic honor code (i.e. plagiarism or cheating on any course assignment) will not be tolerated in any degree and will be referred to the Office on Academic Integrity.

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited. All written work is to be your original thoughts on the assigned texts with references and occasional cites from that text. The format and style rules of all of your assignments should be typed and conform to the *MLA Handbook* or *Chicago Manual of Style* (including *Turabian*). A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting.

While it is often quipped that “it is better to apologize afterwards than ask for permission before,” this does not hold in academia; please feel free to ask for clarification regarding any of the expectations for this course **before** due dates. It is expected that students adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code as it relates to integrity regarding coursework and grades. The Honor Code reads as follows: “To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this Honor Code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.” More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found on the Committee of Academic Integrity’s website at <https://masonkorea.gmu.edu/resources-and-services/cai/overview>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 3.

## Privacy Policy

Students must use their MasonLive email account (aka [@gmu.edu](mailto:@gmu.edu)) to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. Per university policy, unless your e-mail to faculty is from your MasonLive email account course instructors will not be able to reply. Please see <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

## Class Absences

Students are responsible for any assignments, announcements, or materials presented during class. Absence from class does not excuse that obligation. Notifying the professor of an absence does not excuse the absence. Students should find other students in the class from whom they can obtain reliable notes in the event of an absence. The professor is not obliged to provide information to students about what they missed in class.

## Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason Korea’s Deputy Title IX Coordinator pursuant to University Policy 1202 and 1412. If you would like to speak confidentially with the Mason Korea counselor, please see <https://masonkorea.gmu.edu/resources-and-services/counseling-and-wellness> for more information. For more information about what Title IX is, please see <https://masonkorea.gmu.edu/resources-and-services/title-ix>.

## Regarding Diversity

The academic study of religion includes the analytical (dissecting in various ways) and critical (bringing various criteria to bear) reflection on a diversity of religions and cultures including, in particular, their diverse order of values – including one’s own. The question, therefore, is not whether or not you (dis)believe, (dis)like, of (dis)agree any particular religion or even some aspect of it (let alone “religion” all together) but rather whether you understand “religion.” This requires thick description along with respectful engagement with a diversity of peoples, thought, and values.

To this end...

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

The reflection of Mason’s commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach.

Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.

## Classmate Contacts:

Name

E-mail

Phone

---

---

---

---