

SENIOR SEMINAR
REL 4933
TUES 5:00-8:00 pm
Anderson 0101

Prof. Rachel Gordan
Dept. of Religion
Office: Anderson Hall, 107F
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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3-6 pm, and by appointment

Description: This course is a capstone seminar for religion majors. Our aim is to engage in both the field of religious studies and important religious issues in the larger society. This semester our course will compare and contrast how different contemporary scholars of American religion conceive of religion.

Required Texts:

Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of A Modern Notion*
Saba Mahmoud, *Politics of Piety*
Gallagher and Tabor, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America*
Winnifred Sullivan, *Impossibility of Religious Freedom*

Grading:

Attendance 10%
Participation: 15%
Leading class discussion 10%
In-class essays 30%
Midterm 15%
Take-home final 20%

Attendance & Participation: This grade is meant to encourage you to be a thoughtful and engaged seminar participant. Staying focused on discussion, taking notes, and following-up on classmates' comments, are excellent ways to earn a high A&P grade. Before the midterm, you will receive a provisional A&P grade to give you an idea of your standing, with time to improve. Occasionally, class will begin with a very short writing exercise based on the reading – this is part of your P&A grade and it will not be a problem if you've done the reading.

Communicating with the professor: Please do not hesitate to be in touch with the professor, by email (rgordan@ufl.edu). Emails should be addressed to Professor Gordan.

Technology in the classrooms: phones should not be on the desk or visible during class. Professor Gordan strongly prefers that you do not bring a laptop to class, and instead take notes by hand, because the laptop is a source of distraction, and recent studies show benefits to taking notes by hand: <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/take-notes-by-hand-for-better-long-term-comprehension.html>
<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/17/08/note-taking-low-tech-often-best>

The use of laptops and similar electronic devices is strongly discouraged during class, and the use of cell phones is absolutely forbidden. We have much ground to cover collectively, and the temptations of the Internet are too great for us all. Let's view class time as an opportunity to unplug. I hope the absence of a laptop might also free students from the burden of viewing class lectures as extended dictation sessions. Rather than taking down everything I say, try to focus on key themes and figures that we discuss in class and encounter in our readings. If you do decide to use a laptop or e-reader, you may use it during class only to view readings and to take notes.

For the **in-class essays**, you will be given the question(s) in advance, and you are allowed to bring one notecard of notes to class to write your essays. A higher level of clarity of ideas and writing is expected than if this were a typical in-class essay. Length of essays is not as important to your grade as the quality of the content.

Leading class discussion: At the beginning of the semester, you will choose a reading for which you will be responsible. You are free to organize your presentation as you like: you may choose to take the class through some main points and/or provide a handout, and/or raise discussion questions. Keep in mind that you want to keep discussion flowing, so if you do provide us with questions, have some of your own answers on-hand, in case you encounter silence from the group ☺. 12-15 minutes.

The midterm and final are based on both the readings and our class discussions.

Caveats and additional information

Syllabus: Depending on time constraints and other factors, the instructor may alter the syllabus during the semester. Students will be given notice of such alterations.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance>.

For grading policies, please see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>."

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu>

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio>

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student. Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center, 392-1161. University Police Department: 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
<http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

Students are invited to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open.

Note: Course Content is Subject to Change

Schedule:

- 1) Tuesday, August 19
Introduction and Thinking about Judaism and the category of religion
- 2) Tuesday August 24 Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of A Modern Notion*, Chapters 1 and two
- 4) Tuesday, September 3, Boyarin: Chapters 3-5

- 5) Tuesday, September 10, Boyarin: Epilogue and Randall Balmer talk at Pugh Hall
 - 6) Tuesday, September 17, Saba Mahmoud, *Politics of Piety*, Preface and chapter 1
 - 7) Tuesday, September 24, Essay 1
 - 8) Tuesday, October 1 Mahmoud,
 - 9) Tuesday, October 8 Midterm
 - 10) Tuesday, October 15 Mahmoud,
 - 11) Tuesday, October 22 Gallagher and Tabor, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America*
 - 12) Tuesday, October 29 Gallagher and Tabor, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America*
 - 13) Tuesday, Nov 5th Essay #1
 - 14) Tuesday, November 12 Winnifred Sullivan, *Impossibility of Religious Freedom*
 - 15) Tuesday, November 19 Winnifred Sullivan
 - 16) Tuesday, November 26 Winnifred Sullivan
 - 17) Tuesday, December 3 Essay #3
- Take-home final due to rgordan@ufl.edu: Tuesday, December 8th, 5:00 pm