

## RS 499: Religious Studies Honours Seminar

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

Department of Religious Studies

MW 2:30-4 pm, SJ1 3013

**Instructor:** David Seljak **Office:** SH 2028 **Phone:** STJ 884-8111, ext. 28232

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**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 9:30-11 am or by appointment. I have an open door policy, so do not hesitate to ask if we might have a conversation.

**Laptop rules and etiquette:** This is a seminar course and the use of laptops, tablets, phones, etc. is not permitted.

This course is designed as a “capstone” course for Religious Studies majors at the University of Waterloo. **RS 499 is a writing-intensive course**, and each student will be asked to write—a lot. They will also be asked to openly share their written work with me, the class, and/or other students. They will allow others to ask questions, make comments, and offer constructive criticism. The goal is to improve not just our writing about religion, but also our overall communication skills. The focus of each class will be dedicated to review of students’ written work, and some classes are designated as writing workshops.

### Required Reading

- As negotiated between the course instructor and the student

### Requirements and Evaluation

#### Class Participation 40%.

We will meet weekly for 90 minutes to discuss readings and progress on writing. Several sessions will be organized as writing workshops. Attendance is mandatory for all sessions. Any unexcused absences will mean a 10% (10/40) deduction of your grade.

**Revise-and-Resubmit Assignment 60%.** Each student will submit what they consider to be one of their best undergraduate papers from a University of Waterloo Religious Studies course. Students will read and comment on one another’s work, and I will edit the paper as if it had been submitted to an academic journal for publication. Over the course of the semester, the student will revise the paper in several steps and provide a finished paper on the last day of class.

The grade will be based partly on the original submission and partly on how much you have improved the work.

- Have you added to the work with additional research?
- Have you made the work theoretically more sophisticated?
- Have you made the argument more clear or cogent?
- Have you improved the structure and flow of the argument?
- Have you eliminated repetitions, digressions, and unnecessary material?
- Have you addressed all spelling and grammatical errors?
- Have you improved the writing?

### **This process includes the following steps:**

Step one: On **January 15 before 10 am**, submit a paper electronically in MS Word or Open Office

- Why did you choose this paper?
- What did you like about it? What frustrated you?
- How might you think it could be improved?

Step two: Review the work of other students and make comments, corrections, and suggestions to discuss in class on **January 22**

Step three: Review comments, corrections, and suggestions received from instructor and other students

Step four: On **February 12**, present an outline of a plan for revision, which will include:

- An oral presentation (10 minutes) and 250-word written plan for revision
- An annotated bibliography of additional research that is being done

Step four: On **March 4**, make an oral presentation (3-5 minutes), giving an update on progress made

Step five: On **March 11**, make a 15-minute presentation of your project

Step six: On **April 1**, submit the revised, final product

**Late Penalty.** A late penalty of one mark per day (out of 60) at each step applies to all submitted work. The late penalty can sometimes be avoided simply by contacting me before the deadline.

### **Policy regarding Illness and Failure to Meet Requirements**

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations

([www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf](http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf)) state that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at [www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health\\_Services/verification.html](http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html).
- If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

### **Academic Integrity**

**Please note:** I have a zero-tolerance policy on academic offenses. It is the responsibility of the student to understand what an academic offence is. In order to facilitate such understanding the University of Waterloo provides a number of web sites, workshops, and other resources. You may always contact me if you are uncertain. The required SJU/UW language below explains the issue in detail.

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

**Discipline:** All students registered in courses at St. Jerome’s University are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under St. Jerome’s University Academic Discipline Policy and UW Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome’s University Grievance Officer. Read St. Jerome’s University Handbook, Section 4, item 8, [www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU\\_handbook/grievance\\_policy.html](http://www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU_handbook/grievance_policy.html).

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under St. Jerome’s University Academic Discipline Policy or Grievance Policy if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome’s University Appeals Officer. Read St. Jerome’s University Handbook, Section 6.4, [www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU\\_handbook/examinations\\_grades\\_standings\\_and\\_appeals.html](http://www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU_handbook/examinations_grades_standings_and_appeals.html).

**Academic Integrity website (Arts):** [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic\\_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

**Academic Integrity Office (UW):** <http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>

**Note for students with disabilities:** The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

**Class Schedule** (Note: These dates, with the exception of due dates, are subject to change.)

**January 6, 8** Introduction to the course.

**January 15** Submit paper for revision: Why this paper? What did you like about it? What frustrated you? How might you think it could be improved?

**January 22** Class discussion of revisions to papers

**Monday January 27** Writing workshop: note MONDAY class

**February 5** Update on research

**February 12** Presentation of plans for revision and writing workshop

**February 17-21 Family Day and Study Break**

**February 26** Update on research and writing

**March 4** Update on research and writing

**March 11** Oral presentation on progress and writing workshop

**March 18** 15-minute presentation of your research project with Q&A

**March 25** Update on research and writing workshop

**April 1** Final paper due