

Senior Capstone Seminar:

SACRIFICE

REL 490 | SPRING 2017

M 3:30-5:50 PM | MANLY 207

Dr. Michael J. Altman
maltman2@ua.edu
205-348-7223
@michaeljaltman

Office: 205 Manly Hall
Office Hours: Monday 10-11am or by
appointment
Dept. Office: 212 Manly Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This semester REL 490 will focus on sacrifice. Moving between social theory and case studies we will ask a number of questions. What is a sacrifice? What is the social function of sacrifice? Where can we find sacrifice in the modern world? Thus, we will explore sacrifice as theory, practice, and rhetoric.

We will also be thinking about where we can find sacrifice in the past and present. To that end, the final project in this class will be a collaboratively produced podcast. To prepare you for producing an original podcast segment, we will listen to a variety of podcast episodes throughout the semester, have tutorials on audio equipment and software, and complete three preliminary audio assignments.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will...

1. recall major theories of sacrifice.
2. evaluate theories of sacrifice
3. synthesize theories of sacrifice
4. apply theories of sacrifice to cultural phenomenon
5. produce digital audio stories for a general audience

REQUIRED WEB SERVICES.

UA Box: <http://oit.ua.edu/oit/ua-box-welcome/uaboxinfo/>

All course readings beyond the required books will be in [a shared Box folder](#). We will also use it to store and share files for your podcast project and audio assignments.

Blackboard

I will be using the Blackboard grade book.

Padlet

We will be using Padlet as a class bulletin board (think Pinterest but less recipes) to share ideas, apps, videos, audio, brainstorm, and anything else that will help us

throughout the semester. The course Padlet is at:

<https://padlet.com/michaeljaltman/REL490>

Podcast App

You will need an app of your choice that allows you to easily find, download/stream, and stream the podcast episodes assigned each week. If you have trouble ask me and I can recommend one.

Audio Software

You will need some free and basic audio software to complete the assignments in this class. I will give out details on where to find the software and which apps might work best for you as the semester progresses.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Bataille, Georges. *Theory of Religion*. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 1989.

Bloch, Maurice. *Prey Into Hunter: The Politics of Religious Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, .

Hubert, Henri and Marcel Mauss. *Sacrifice: It's Nature and Functions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Wilson, Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2009.

READINGS AND PODCASTS

Readings and podcasts are listed underneath each date on the schedule. Complete the readings and listen to the podcasts before you come to class that day.

Readings from outside the required books are in the course's UA Box folder:

<https://alabama.box.com/v/REL490SP2017>

PRINT THE READINGS. I recommend you annotate your readings. **Write in your book. Write on the article. Make notes, underline, and highlight things.**

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading Responses 25%

For every class you must bring a response to the reading to class. Your response should be a paragraph or two in length, between half a page and a page. In it, you should engage the reading by offering an analysis, a critique, or raising any questions the reading left you with. These responses will set the table for our discussions in class, I may ask you to read or summarize what you wrote in your response as part of our class discussion. **Responses should be typed in 12 pt. font and double-spaced.** Responses will be graded as pass/fail.

A passing response will:

- Demonstrate that the student has read the material.
- Do more than summarize, but also critique or analyze the reading material.

- Use specific examples from the reading.

Audio Assignments 30% total

To prepare you to produce a compelling piece of audio scholarship for your final project, you will complete three assignments asking you to experiment with both the tools and methods of audio scholarship.

Assignment 1 5%

Assignment 2 10%

Assignment 3 15%

Final Project 45%

Your final project in this class will be a 10-15 minute piece of audio scholarship that focuses on applying theories of sacrifice to some cultural phenomenon past or present.

GRADE SCALE

A+	95-100%	C	70-74
A	90-94	D+	65-69
B+	85-89	D	60-64
B	80-84	D-	50-59
C+	75-79	F	below 50

GROUND RULES**Attendance**

You are expected to attend class. I will take attendance. Your attendance is expected unless there is an emergency outside of your control. You may miss up to 3 classes during the semester without penalty. **Every missed class after 3 will result in a 2-point reduction of your final grade.** I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. If an issue arises that will cause you to miss a number of classes, please talk to me as soon as possible so we can work something out.

Late Work

I do not accept late work. I do give extensions in the case of extraordinary circumstances, but I expect that you will ask for the extension promptly. Do not email asking for an extension unless it is under extreme circumstances outside of your control (like a relative died over the weekend and you need to leave immediately. See technology policy regarding technological "emergencies.") I allow for make up exams in extraordinary circumstances and only with appropriate documentation that a student missed the exam for reasons outside of their control.

Technology policy

Let's face it: technology breaks. Servers go down. Transfers time out. Files become corrupt. The list goes on and on. These are not considered emergencies. They are part of the normal production process. An issue you may have with technology is no excuse

for late work. You need to protect yourself by managing your time and backing up your work.

USE UA BOX OR GOOGLE DRIVE

If you bring a laptop to class, use it for class. I reserve the right to ask anyone with a laptop or tablet to use it to Google something or lookup something to amend our class. There will be lots of times when we need devices to do our work. But there will also be times when we need to put all the devices away, dig into the reading, and talk face to face.

Accommodations

Students with a documented physical and/or learning disability should contact the professor outside of class time as soon as possible to review documentation and discuss accommodations. Also, students should familiarize themselves with the Office of Disability Services at <http://www.ods.ua.edu>.

In Case of Emergency/Weather

UA's primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at www.ua.edu. In the event of an emergency, students should consult this site for further directions. In the event of an emergency, I will use Blackboard to provide additional course information.

Honor Code

Academic misconduct is a serious offense and is taken very seriously at UA and in the class. Suspected cases of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. You are bound by UA's [Honor Code](#) in this class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (This is going to change.)

- Jan. 23: Introductions
- Jan. 30: Jill Robbins "Sacrifice" (Box)
Kathryn McClymond "Sacrifice and Violence" (Box)
Michael J. Altman "Podcasting Religious Studies"
LISTEN:
Startup #16: The Secret Formula
<https://gimletmedia.com/episode/16-the-secret-formula/>
- Feb. 6: Sanford Media Center Day
- Feb. 13: E. B. Tylor "From *Primitive Culture*" (Box)
William Robertson Smith "From *The Religion of the Semites*" (Box)
James G. Frazer "From *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*" (Box)
Audio Assignment 1 Due
- Feb. 20: Hubert and Mauss *Sacrifice*
LISTEN:
Mystery Show Case #2 Britney
<https://gimletmedia.com/episode/case-2-britney/>
Mystery Show Case #3 Belt Buckle
<https://gimletmedia.com/episode/case-3-belt-buckle/>
- Feb. 27: Emile Durkheim "From *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*" (Box)
LISTEN:
Reply All Episode #50 The Cathedral
<https://gimletmedia.com/episode/36-todays-the-day/>
Reply All Episode #38 Today's the Day
<https://gimletmedia.com/episode/36-todays-the-day/>
- March 6: Georges Bataille "From *The Accursed Share*" (Box)
Bataille *Theory of Religion* beginning through Part I
LISTEN:
Welcome to Night Vale Episode #2 Glow Cloud
<http://nightvale.libsyn.com/2-glow-cloud>
Welcome to Night Vale Episode #26 Faceless Old Woman
<http://nightvale.libsyn.com/26-faceless-old-woman>
Welcome to Night Vale Episode #74 Civic Changes
<http://nightvale.libsyn.com/74-civic-changes>
Audio Assignment 2 Due

SPRING BREAK

- March 20: Bataille *Theory of Religion* Part II to the end.
Jean-Luc Nancy "The Unsacrificeable" (Box)
(I suggest you finish *Baptized in Blood* by this week)
- March 27: Maurice Bloch *Prey Into Hunter*
- April 3: Nancy Jay "From *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity*" (Box)
Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle "Blood Sacrifice and the Nation" (Box)
Audio Assignment 3 Due (Requires you to have read *Baptized in Blood* to complete)
- April 10: **Podcast Workshop**
- April 17: **Podcast Workshop**
- April 24: Listening Party
Final Podcast Segments Due