

ARCH CITY RELIGION

Religious Life and Practice in St. Louis



THEO 2930-01

T-Th 12:45-2pm Xavier G14

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Saint Louis University

Spring 2018

@archcityreligion / #archcityreligion

www.archcityreligion.org

Course Description

Saint Louis is among the most religiously diverse cities in the American Midwest. It boasts mighty cathedrals, towering minarets, synagogues old and modern, extravagant temples, humble storefronts, and endless domestic shrines, altars, and prayer corners. The sounds of the city and county are pierced with voices in song, protest, and prayer. The story of the city—from empire, settlement, and immigration, through civil rights, manufacturing, the arts, and, of course, beer and baseball—is intimately wound up with communities of faith and religious practices.

This course places the religious life of St. Louis at the center of the city's history, civic landscape, and public life. While anchored in the local context, the course engages a wide range of global religious traditions and diasporic communities in the city as well as the intersections of local, regional, and global issues, identities, and politics. As such, many of our readings and conversations come directly from the local context, while others explore themes and issues in the study of religion that address religious life and practice in the metro through comparison with other locations.

In addition to the instructional content of this course, students will contribute to the Arch City Religion website, an ongoing teaching project that researches lived religion in the metro, through self-guided and collective audio and visual storytelling projects. We will learn to accumulate, process, and convey information (textual, material, ethnographic, historical, aural, and visual) about religion in St. Louis and beyond. Arch City Religion is a team-based, collaborative project with cascading deadlines over the course of the semester.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will:

- Be familiar with the history of religious communities and traditions in St. Louis and its environs
- Demonstrate facility with concepts and ideas in the cultural analysis of urban religion
- Think critically about the role of religion in local, regional, and national life and culture
- Demonstrate the ability to accumulate, analyze, and convey information about complex issues and ideas relating to religion

Required Texts

Matthew John Cressler, *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic: The Rise of Black Catholicism in the Great Migration* (NYU, 2017) ISBN 9781479880966

Katie Day and Edd Conboy, *Faith on the Avenue: Religion on a City Street* (Oxford, 2014) ISBN 9780199860029

Robert A. Orsi, *Gods of the City* (Indiana UP, 1999) ISBN 9780253212764

All other assigned readings are available in the reading folder on Blackboard. All readings are **required** and should be read actively in advance of class on the day they appear on the syllabus.



Course Requirements and Grading

This course is graded out of a semester total of 500 points. Please create a shared Google folder labeled THEO 2930-03 S18 [Last Name] where you will organize and submit your semester work portfolio.

1) Attendance and Participation (25 points)

Active, prepared, and respectful attendance is critical to your successful completion of this course. 3 unexcused absences will result in a loss of 10 points; 4 unexcused absences will result in a loss of 20 points; 5 unexcused absences will result in the loss of all attendance and participation points.

That said, I know life happens outside of the classroom. Please make every effort to contact me if you will be absent at least two hours advance of class and I will review each instance on a case-by-case

basis. Make up work is not allowed for unexcused absences. I reserve the right to revise my policy as needed.

Completion of assigned material, including readings and exercises, prior to the start of class is expected. Prepare actively and come to class ready to discuss texts or assignments, the issues they raise, and questions you have.

Participation in this class is very important. Attendance and participation is reserved for students who actively contribute to the intellectual life of this class.

Laptops and tablets are allowed so long as they are used for notes and class-related activities. This may change if needed.

2) Discussion leader (25 pts)

Once this semester you and a classmate will be in charge of leading discussion of the day's assigned material. Prepare a list of at least 5 generative, substantive questions about the week's topic, exercises, and readings as well as any related content you want to introduce for discussion or comparison. Bring at least one **annotated** copy of your questions to class to submit for credit and be mindful of your presentation (including dress, clarity, and time). Annotations should include your summary of the relevant text/material, larger themes or issues you see the material engaging, and key terms/concepts/ideas/arguments you want to address in discussion.

3) Class Case Study (25 points)

Missouri Botanical Garden "Bible Garden." For this assignment, we will visit MoBot as a class to observe, document, reflect, and analyze one feature of "lived religion" in St. Louis. Working in teams, the class will produce audio and visual content, textual descriptions, and historical information about the Bible Garden in the Missouri Botanical Garden. **February 6-9.**

4) Final Reflection (25 points)

Due Friday, May 4, by 5pm. In this 2-3 page essay, reflect on this course and what you have learned over the course of the semester. Some questions to get you going include: What was the most surprising thing I learned in this course? Did the course meet my expectations? Is there anything that I disagreed with? What was the most difficult part of the course? What would I change?

PORTFOLIO

The majority of your semester points (will be earned through a multimedia portfolio of religious life in St. Louis. There are four main components to this portfolio: field journal, sound recordings, visual media, and final creative project.

5) Field Journal (100 points)

Due Tuesday, 4/24. Throughout the semester, you will keep a field journal of sites we visit (journals will be distributed on the first day of class). I will collect them at midterms and again at the end of the semester, but it is your responsibility to keep up with your notes. I recommend using both a physical journal that you can take with you on class and personal visits to area religious spaces and regularly transcribing your notes electronically for better organization of subheadings and metadata.

In general, researchers use field journals to record two classes of information: their **descriptions** and their **reactions**. It is important to keep these notes distinct from one another. Your journals are not

essays and do not need to be polished writing, but you should strive to be thorough in both your descriptions and in your reactions (see Guidelines).

6) Podcast (50 points)

Due Tuesday, 3/27 by 5pm. After reading assigned sections of Cressler's *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic*, create a 3-5 minute podcast (using skills developed in workshops) that addresses the book's key arguments and applies it to Catholic life and culture in St. Louis. Practice writing a script, recording audio, inserting appropriately licensed audio content, and editing with Audacity. Include a brief producer's statement that narrates your creation process and editorial decisions.

7) Sounds of St. Louis (100 points)

DUE 4/17 by 3pm. Throughout the semester, we will be attending to sound as a mode of religious experience, practice, and research. You and your semester partner will select four sites (including at least one interview) to record while practicing responsible research methods. At least two of your sites should not be class visits.

Your Sounds of St. Louis reports must include the following data and metadata:

- Recording:
 - 30 seconds to 2 minutes of **edited** sound
 - raw footage of your sound
- Full written citation of the site, including location, time of day, religion/denomination, space classification, and sound type.
- Three or more substantive photographs of the location and/or specific space and context of your sound (be aware and respectful of your site and people in attendance).
- A brief, 1-2 paragraph contextual analysis of your site and sound.
- *Completion of provided metadata Google form* in class on 4/19.

8) Final Creative Project: Visual or Audio Storytelling (150 points)

For your major assignment, you will work with a partner and **choose one of two options:**

Podcast: Your group may opt to create a podcast on some aspect of religious life and/or practice in St. Louis. The final product must be at least 10 minutes in length and will be evaluated by industry standards as well as intellectual content.

Documentary: Your group may opt to create a short documentary on some aspect of religious life and/or practice in St. Louis. The final product must be at least 10 minutes in length and will be evaluated by industry standards as well as intellectual content.

Project Timeline:

Meet with Dr. Lindsey (25 points): Schedule one meeting with Dr. Lindsey before 2/15 to discuss your ideas for your project, and one meeting on or before 4/10 to discuss your progress.

Proposal (25 points): Due 2/15 by 5pm. Identify your topic, storytelling method, research question, and plan for research.

Sources/bibliography (25 points): Due 3/22 by 5pm. Identify at least 8 sources that you will use in your project. At least 4 of these must be primary sources.

Draft (25 points): Due **in class** 4/24. This draft must be a penultimate, or next to last, draft of your final project. It should be mostly complete and ready for feedback on the final stretch.

Final product (50 points): Due 5/1 in class. Time to celebrate! We will have an exhibit of class projects in class. Your projects should be ready to share.

Course Policies

Technology:

This class requires use of free, publically available software and university-provided hardware. Every effort will be made to supply the equipment needed to conduct your research and complete your assignments. Audio recording equipment is provided through Saint Louis University and through a generous loan from Ohio State University as part of their American Religious Sounds Project. Any recorders you check out are your responsibility to return promptly and in the condition in which they were loaned. Any theft, loss, or damage must be reported immediately.

If you do not have a personal laptop or computer, or if you choose not to use your device for these projects, Saint Louis University's instructional media center in Pius library is an excellent resource to utilize. We will spend time in the labs as a class and you are also free to reserve meeting spaces for small group or individual work throughout the semester.

Technology makes many aspects of academic work more efficient, but it can also break down, become interrupted, or otherwise fail. In most instances, technological disruptions are not acceptable excuses for late work. Back up your work often and leave yourself enough time to respond to any hiccups. Back up your work often on university-provided cloud subscriptions as well as to accessible local drives.

Email

I do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours of receipt. Emails received after 8pm will likely not be read until the following day. If an emergency arises and you need to reach me immediately, you may call the Theology Department office at 977-2881.

When corresponding with professors, supervisors, officials, or other professionals on campus and in your career, please make it your habit to address the recipient formally according to their title (Dr., Professor, Ms., Mr., Esq., etc.) and to follow standard rules of grammar, syntax, and structure. A good rule of thumb is to use the title on the syllabus.

Assignment Submissions:

I do not accept late work. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments must be shared in your folder or loaded to Blackboard by the published deadline.

Every assignment should include your name, the date, the assignment name or your title, and, if written, page numbers. As a rule of thumb, use 12-point font and 1-inch margins on all written academic work. *I will not grade papers or assignments that do not have these basic elements.* Double-check your work for spelling and grammatical errors before submitting.

Academic Honesty:

Only submit your own original work. This is a fun class and you will have ample opportunity to be creative—don't channel your creativity into nefarious actions. I am your advocate as well as a resource. If you are struggling with the class, starting to feel overwhelmed, something comes up or happens, or you are just burnt out, come see me first. For the official SLU policy on academic integrity follow this link: <http://www.slu.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences-home/undergraduate-education/academic-honesty>. The Student Success Center is also a great campus resource for all stages of learning: <http://www.slu.edu/student-success-center>.

Civility:

We are going to be discussing some hefty topics in this course. Please remember to respect your classmates and their point of view. Vigorous debate may occur, and at times will be encouraged—we learn, after all, through exposure to new ideas and experiences. You don't have to agree with everyone—authors, each other, me—all the time but please work to critique ideas and statements rather than malign or impugn the people raising them.

Unit 1: Gods of the City

Week 1: Orientations

- T 1/16: Introductions
- Th 1/18: Michel DeCerteau, "Walking in the City," *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 91-110
["A Brief History of St. Louis"](#)
Walking Tour (weather permitting)

Week 2: Religions in and of the City

- T 1/23: Orsi, *Gods of the City*, 1-13 + assigned section of introduction
Wallace Best, "The South in the City," *Passionately Human, No Less Divine*, 35-70
- Th 1/25: Diane Winston, "'The Cathedral of the Open Air': The Salvation Army's Sacralization of Sacred Space, New York City, 1880-1910," in *Gods of the City*, 367-392

Week 3: Workshop 1: Soundscapes and Audio Storytelling as Religious Studies

- T 1/30: Isaac Weiner, "From Sacred Sounds to Public Nuisance," *Religion Out Loud*, 19-39
Spencer Miller, "Radio and Religion" (1935)
"St. Louis University Radio Service" (1922)
"Communications: Broadcasting Catholic Doctrine," *America*, June 14, 1924
Frank Absher, "SLU Ushered Radio into a New Era," *St. Louis Journalism Review*, April 2006
- Th 2/1: ***Working with Audacity: Meet in Media Hub, Pius Library***
James Andean, "Toward an Ethics of Creative Sound"
Michael J. Altman, "Podcasting Religious Studies"

Week 4: Workshop 2: Maps, Infographics, Visual Media: Modes of Visual Storytelling as Religious Studies

- T 2/6: Day and Conboy, *Faith on the Avenue* Introduction + assigned chapter
In-class: *The Big City* (1956)
- Th 2/8: Maps, Infographics, Visual Media: Modes of Visual Storytelling in Religious Studies
Meet in Media Hub, Pius Library

Week 5: Documenting Religion Case Study: Missouri Botanical Garden’s “Bible Garden”

- T 2/13: “Plants of the Bible at the Missouri Botanical Garden,” Henry Shaw (1884)
Materializing the Bible website
Site Visit: Meet at the Missouri Botanical Garden
- Th 2/15: **Creating a Virtual Tour: Meet in Media Hub, Pius Library**
*****Semester Project Proposals Due by 5pm*****

Unit 2: Religions in and of St. Louis

Week 6: “A City of Steeples”

- T 2/20: Thomas Tweed, “Diasporic Nationalism and Urban Landscape: Cuban Immigrants at a Catholic Shrine in Miami,” in *Gods of the City*, 131-154
“[When the Saints Came Marching In](#)’: Mormon History in St. Louis, 1831-2017,” *Deseret News*, June 2, 2017.
- Th 2/22: **Site visit: Meet at St. Mary and St. Abraam Coptic Church**

Week 7: Jews in the City

- T 2/27: Lila Corwin Berman, “Jews and the American City,” *Metropolitan Jews*, 1-17
- Th 3/1: **Site visit: Meet at Central Reformed Congregation (CWE)**

Week 8: Buddhists and Hindus in the Heartland

- T 3/6: Joanne Punzo Waghorne, “The Hindu Gods in a Split-Level World: The Sri Siva-Vishnu Temple in Suburban Washington, D.C.,” *Gods of the City*, 103-130
- Th 3/8: Jeff Wilson, *Dixie Dharma: Inside a Buddhist Temple in the American South*, skim introduction + read chapter 5

*******SPRING BREAK*******
3/10-3/18

- Read: Cressler, *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic: The Rise of Black Catholicism in the Great Migration*, Introduction + at least two more chapters.
- Watch: [“St. Alphonsus ‘the Rock’ Catholic Church,” *Living St. Louis* \(2008\)](#)
- Create: 5-7 minute podcast about Cressler’s book that explores it’s contribution to understanding St. Louis religious history and/or culture. Practice writing a script, recording audio, inserting appropriately licensed audio content, and editing with Audacity. Include a brief producer’s statement that narrates your creation process and editorial decisions. Due 3/27.

Week 9: Muslims along the Mississippi

- T 3/20: “Twenty Years of Bosnian Identity in St. Louis and in the Homeland,” *St. Louis on the Air*, April 11, 2013: <http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/twenty-years-bosnian-identity-st-louis-and-homeland>
- “America’s Hidden Muslims,” *BBC Magazine*, October 2016
- “Fully Half of the Area’s Muslims are Bosnians,” *St. Louis Public Radio*, March 27, 2014
- “Saint Louis Muslim Women: One Religion, Many Cultures,” *St. Louis Public Radio*, March 27, 2014
- “[Spray-paint artist shakes up Benton Park restaurant with Renaissance-like mural](#),” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 14, 2017.
- Th 3/22: *****Project Bibliographies Due*** (No class)**
- FRIDAY 3/23: **Site visit: Nur Mosque**

Week 10: Cardinals Nation

- T 3/27: Gary Laderman, *Sacred Matters* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 43-62.
- Laderman, “Is Baseball Sacred?” *Huffington Post* (2013).
- David Walstein, “An Incubator of Baseball Talent,” *New York Times* (October 20, 2011).
- “Cardinals: Why are there Christian Symbols on the Field at Busch Stadium?” *Riverfront Times* (June 25, 2013).
- “Cardinals Manager Mike Matheny on Baseball, Manhood, and Faith,” *The Gospel Coalition*, interview (February 2014).
- Christina Settimi, “The Best Fans in Baseball,” *Forbes* (March 25, 2015).
- Maury Brown, “The Insane Holy War Over Flat Brims in Baseball,” *Forbes* (August 17, 2015).
- ***Podcasts + Producer’s Statement due by 5pm*****
- Th 3/29: NO CLASS: EASTER BREAK 3/29-4/2

Week 11: The Veiled Prophet

- T 4/3: Chad Seales, *The Secular Spectacle: Performing Religion in a Southern Town* (Oxford, 2013), 1-20, 66-86
- Scott Beachamp, “The Mystery of St. Louis’s Veiled Prophet,” *The Atlantic*, September 2, 2014.
- “History,” *Veiled Prophet Organization*, website, www.veiledprophet.org
- Th 4/5: **Site visit: Meet at the Missouri History Museum Library and Research Center to explore the archival collection of Veiled Prophet ephemera**

Week 12: Religion on Display

- T 4/10: S. Brent Plate, *Religion in Museums*, Introduction
Lauren Turek, “Religious History Objects in Museums,” in *Religion in Museums*
Judith Weisenfeld, “Religion on Display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture,” *Sacred Matters*
In Class: Visit to SLUMA
- Th 4/12: NO CLASS (Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting). Project Time.

Unit 3: Projects

Week 13: Sounds of St. Louis

- T 4/17: Sounds of St. Louis DUE by 3pm
Extra Credit: Attend one or more sessions in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium (details TBA) and write a 1-2 page reflection for up to 5 points extra credit.
- Th 4/19: Sounds of St. Louis Share + In-Class metadata forms

Week 14: Semester Projects

- T 4/24: Field Journals Due + Project Drafts Due in Class
- Th 4/26: Project time

Week 15: It's a Wrap!

- T 5/1: Exhibit of Semester Projects
- Th 5/3: Debriefing: What does it mean to study religion in St. Louis?

*****Final Reflection: Due Friday, May 4, by 5pm*****