

R1B: Reading and Composition, Fall 2024

Religion, Race and Law: Exploring the Religious Other

INSTRUCTOR

Yael Plitmann

EMAIL

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OFFICE HOURS

In person after class
Tu, Th. 3:30 to 4:30pm
Sign up [here](#).

Zoom office hours are by
appointment via email.

TIME AND LOCATION

Tu-Th from 2-3:30pm; Room 72 – Evans Hall

COURSE OVERVIEW

I write because I am a reader. I want to give others what writers have given me, a chance to hear the voices of people I will never meet.

—Pat Mora, Nepantla

This class will give students an opportunity to improve their writing and reading skills by exploring the various ways law and religion create and understand the “other.” By bringing together several strands of scholarly discussion that are seldom read alongside each other: the legal, sociological, anthropological, and theological, we will examine the relationship between law, religion, and othering: What are the religious roots of our racial and legal orders? How do religions work to exclude, but also include, “others”? By considering possible answers to these questions, we will reflect not only on the subject matter of this course, but also on how knowledge is constructed differently in each tradition. We will ask: what writing strategies, vocabularies and literary techniques are used in each discipline? How do those differ from one another? How do they correspond with the scientific approach and institutional commitments of their authors? We will explore these themes through students’ attentive reading, reflective writing, class discussions and final empirical research paper.

This class is designed to guide you in the development and improvement of your writing skills, using the academic debates around religion, race, and law as a useful example for exploring a scholarly topic from varying angles. We will work primarily in a seminar environment where exchange among us will be a key feature of the learning process. You are expected to read the class materials and complete the assignments for each week. The course assignments build on each other and will later inform your final research paper. I will provide each student with extensive written and verbal feedback on your assignments, and I expect you to implement that feedback and to consult with me regularly via office hours. At regular intervals you will participate productively in workshops on each other’s works, and at the end of the semester you will present your final empirical project.

GRADING

Component	% Final Grade
Participation	10%
Diagnostic Essay	10%
8 Mini assignments	20%
Book review	20%
Final presentation	10%
Final Essay	30%

Class participation will be evaluated on the basis of active engagement in class discussions. Active engagement includes: on-time attendance, actively and thoughtfully engaging with the readings for the week, providing constructive feedback and help to your classmates during workshops, and asking questions when you have them. Mini assignments will be graded for on-time completion only. However, keep in mind that the more you put into your mini assignments, the more I can provide feedback that will assist you in your final paper. Each major essay will be evaluated on a number of criteria, including:

- Conciseness and clarity of writing;
- Precision and sophistication of ideas;
- Implementing feedback from previous assignments;
- Quality and treatment of the empirical data you collected;
- Organization;
- Spelling and grammar.

COURSE POLICIES

In-person attendance is required unless you are ill. Please arrive on time. You may use your computers for note-taking during lectures and workshops, *but not during discussions*. Please do not use your laptop to do other work during class (it is often obvious and is distracting both to fellow students and to the instructor).

DISABILITY AND RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

If you need accommodation for a disability, please let us know as soon as possible. You will need to be evaluated by the Berkeley Disabled Students Program, which will recommend the appropriate accommodations. If you will need accommodation based on your religion, please let me know as well.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Please check out the services at Berkeley's student learning center: <https://slc.berkeley.edu/writing>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Th., Aug. 29 Class 1: Introduction

WEEK 2

Reading: Robert Cover, "Nomos and Narrative"

Tu., Sep. 3 Class 2: How to read socio-legal materials

Th., Sep. 5 Class 3: Essay writing workshop in preparation for the Diagnostic Essay

Fri., Sep. 6 Submit: [Diagnostic Essay](#)

WEEK 3

Reading: Kathryn Gin Lum, Heathen: Religion and Race in American History

Tu., Sept. 10 Class 4: Reading workshop and group work: [Mini Assignment #1](#)

Th., Sept. 12 Class 5: Class discussion on *Heathen: Religion, Race and Law*

WEEK 4

Reading: Melissa Borja, Follow the New Way: Refugee Resettlement Policy and Hmong Religious Change

Tu., Sept. 17 Class 6: Reading workshop and group work: [Mini Assignment #2](#)

Th., Sept. 19 Class 7: Class discussion on *Follow the New Way*

WEEK 5

Reading: Judith Weisenfeld, A New World A-Coming - Black Religion and Racial Identity during the Great Migration

Tu., Sept. 24 Class 8: Reading workshop and group work: [Mini Assignment #3](#)

Th., Sept. 26 Class 9: Class discussion on *A New World A-Coming*

WEEK 6

Reading: Atalia Omer, Days of Awe: Reimagining Jewishness in Solidarity with Palestinians

Tu., Oct. 1 Class 10: Reading workshop: [Mini Assignment #4](#) + preparation for book review

Th., Oct. 3 Class 11: No class due to Rosh Hashanah holiday (Online discussion on *Days of Awe*)

WEEK 7

No reading: start drafting your book review and talk with me about it

Tu., Oct. 8 Class 12: Individual consultations about your book review

Th., Oct. 10 Class 13: Final Reading workshop and class reflections on the four books

Fri., Oct. 11 Submit: [Second Major Essay: book review](#)

WEEK 8

Read the book review assigned to you on bCourses and come prepared to provide feedback on it in class

Tu., Oct. 15 Class 14: Class discussion and constructive feedback on students' book reviews

Th., Oct. 17 Class 15: Introduction to the final essay process and requirements

WEEK 9

Reading: Yael Plitmann, How One Religious Community Remade State Law

Tu., Oct. 22 Class 16: Class discussion on my piece as one example of empirical socio-religio-legal work

Th., Oct. 24 Class 17: Individual consultations about choosing a site for your final essay

WEEK 10

Mo., Oct 28 Submit: [Mini Assignment #5](#)

Read the field notes uploaded by your classmates to bCourses

Tu., Oct. 29 Class 18: Class discussion and feedback on field notes

Th., Oct. 31 Class 19: Class discussion of field notes + preparation for interviews

WEEK 11

Reading: Sharlene Hesse-Biber, "In Depth Interviewing" in The Practice of Qualitative Research

Tu., Nov. 12 Class 20: Lecture and discussion - How to conduct interviews?

Th., Nov. 14 Class 21: Lecture and discussion - How to code interviews?

WEEK 12

Mo., Nov. 4 Submit: [Mini Assignment #6](#)

Read the interview questions uploaded by your classmates to bCourses

Tu., Nov. 5 Class 22: Discussion of interview questions

Th., Nov. 7 Class 23: Discussion of interview questions

WEEK 13

Mo., Nov 11 Submit: [Mini Assignment #7](#)

Read the coded transcripts uploaded by your classmates to bCourses

Tu., Nov. 12 Class 24: Discussion of coded transcripts

Th., Nov. 14 Class 25: Discussion of coded transcripts

WEEK 14

Reading: Kristin Luker "Reviewing the Literature" in Salsa Dancing into the Social Science

Mo., Nov. 18 Submit: [Mini Assignment #8](#)

Tu., Nov. 19 Class 26: Discussion of mini literature reviews

Th., Nov. 21 Class 27: Discussion of mini literature reviews + preparation for final presentations

WEEK 15

Plan for your final presentation and first draft

Tu., Nov. 26 Class 28: Individual consultations for the final paper

Th., Nov. 28 Thanksgiving: no class

WEEK 16

Mo., Dec. 2 Submit: [Final Presentation slides and optional Draft of Final Essay](#)

Tu., Dec. 3 Class 29: Students' presentations

Th., Dec. 5 Class 30: Students' presentations

FINAL ESSAY

Tu., Dec. 10 Submit: [Final Empirical Essay](#)