



beyond  
drinking the  
kool-aid  
religion 390  
fall 2018



**course description:**

On November 18, 1978 over 900 people died in a murder-suicide at Jonestown in Guyana. Forty years later, many people only remember this event, if at all, through the cautionary phrase: "Don't Drink the Kool-Aid." In this half-semester course, we go beyond this superficial understanding. Rather than focusing only on the end of Jonestown, our primary source-based reading and research foregrounds how members of Peoples Temple lived and constructed meaningful lives. In taking this approach, you will hone your skills as scholars of religion and contribute to the scholarship on Peoples Temple as we approach the fortieth anniversary of its demise.

"Our task is not to reach closure. Indeed, at present this is factually impossible, for we lack the majority of necessary data. We know the pornography of Jonestown; we do not know its mythology, its ideology, its soteriology, its sociology—we do not know almost everything we would need to know in order to venture a secure argument."  
~J.Z. Smith

## advice for religion 390

To successfully accomplish the course learning objectives, remember to work hard, ask for clarification when necessary (if something is unclear, it is your responsibility to ask me about it!), and keep the following information in mind:

\*\*All assignments must be completed in accordance with the Wake Forest Honor Code. Failure to abide by the Honor Code will result in failure of the assignment.

\*\*Plagiarism is a violation of the honor code. "To put your name on a piece of work any part of which is not yours is plagiarism, unless that piece is clearly marked and the work from which you have borrowed it is fully identified" (WFU English Department). Plagiarism violations will result in failure of the assignment.

\*\*If you have a learning disability that requires an accommodation, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) and provide me with the appropriate documentation as soon as possible.

\*\*Use your resources, especially Office Hours (Wingate 205 W/F 12: 15-1:30) and The Writing Center!



**learning objectives:  
by the end of the semester, you will be able to:**

*LO1:* create critically empathetic visual and textual narratives that challenge stereotypical accounts of Peoples Temple by analyzing primary and secondary sources.

*LO2:* analyze and evaluate the decision-making processes that shape the construction of scholarly narratives.

*LO3:* help build interesting and complicated discussions, which will advance our understanding of the topic, increase your ability to articulate your ideas, and improve everyone's final projects.

**Course Grade Scale: A (100-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-88), B (87-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-78), C (77-73), C- (72-70), D (68-65), F (64-0). \*I do not round up final grades.\***

| Course Objectives    | Course Assessment  |
|----------------------|--|
| Learning Objective 1 | Participation & Professionalism<br>Research Reports<br>Final Project & Process |
| Learning Objective 2 | Research Reports<br>Participation & Professionalism<br>Final Project & Process |
| Learning Objective 3 | Participation & Professionalism<br>Research Reports<br>Final Project & Process |

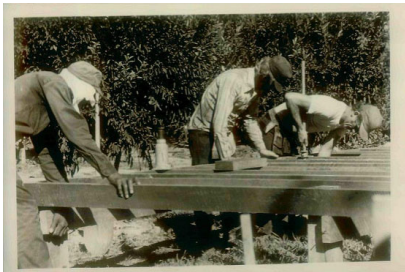
*“Successful students estimate spending 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour spent in class.”*  
~CliffsNotes



## course requirements:

### participation & professionalism (25%).

Attendance at and active contributions to each class is expected. Studies show that talking about your ideas enhances your learning. Further, **discussing issues and hearing varying perspectives broadens your thinking and helps sharpen your analytical skills.** Speaking and sharing ideas with each other is a vital part of learning. It also helps you cultivate a variety of professional skills that are important in the workplace—listening and responding to others, expressing your ideas, discussing areas of agreement and disagreement, empathizing with others, etc.



### expectations:

You enter the class with a “C” for participation. You earn a higher

**participation grade by enriching each class with your reading, research, questions, and ideas.** To demystify this process, I have created a Participation & Professionalism Rubric (in your folder and available on Sakai) that outlines expectations, and we will periodically be discussing “participation” in class.

**disagreement** is expected in class, especially in a class about religion. We must learn how to talk with each other to enhance our learning and this includes disagreement. Use disagreement constructively and respectfully by focusing on the ideas presented. You can say: “You made a good point about X topic, but I disagree because...” or “I respect this position, but it seems to overlook...”

**professionalism: attendance & sick days:** The WF Bulletin states that students are “expected to attend classes regularly and punctually.” **As with a job, attendance is the expected norm.** However, occasions of illness or ‘other events’ can at times prevent you from attending. Thus, you are allowed one “sick day” in our half-semester course. More than 1 sick day will lower your Participation & Professionalism grade, and a significant number of absences will result in a failing grade for this portion of the course.

### professionalism: timeliness and class conduct:

To enhance your collective learning and acquisition of professional skills, you are expected to be on time (3 tardies=1 absence) and to commit to enhancing our class by listening and contributing. This also means minimizing disruptions, such as leaving to get a drink, take a phone call, visit the restroom, etc. These actions disrupt and distract our learning community and will lower your overall Participation & Professionalism grade.



**learning and technology:** Many of our readings and much of our research will be conducted online, so you are encouraged to bring computers to class; however, please close your computers when not in use and be mindful of how your use of computers impacts our learning community. Should computers become a learning distraction, this policy will be revised.

## research & reading reports (rrs) (25%):

I have designed a series of research and reading reports (RRs) that ask you to reflect on the reading, and subjects related to the assigned topic. Your task is to complete each RR as directed. These RRs are designed to support your final project research and your contributions to class discussions.

### purpose:

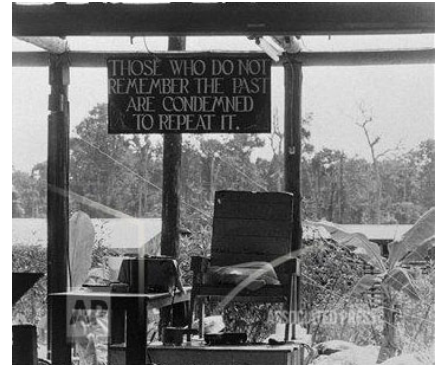
(1) To engage the reading and topic in active ways, (2) To improve your research skills, (3) To improve your skills in assessing various types of sources, (4) To build more interesting and complex in-class discussions.

**logistics:** RRs will be posted in Sakai at least two days prior to their due date. RRs should be typed, single-spaced, with 1-inch margins, and they should show evidence of having completed all of the assigned tasks and answering all of the questions in a thorough and thoughtful manner.

To receive credit for your completed RR, you must print it out, attend the class in which it is due, and turn it in at the END of that class in the designated folder. **If you DO NOT ATTEND CLASS, regardless of the reason, then you will not receive credit for an RR.**

**note:** To receive full credit for your RRs, your responses should demonstrate thorough engagement with the questions. Your answers should be specific, thought out, and go beyond what is obvious. **Not meeting these standards will result in partial or no credit for your RR.**

**\*\*Printers fail, so if you attend class, but are unable to print your RR, you may email it to me twice during the course.**



Grading: There are ten RR opportunities in this half semester course. RRs will be evaluated each time you turn them in and will be graded overall based on the number that you successfully complete in the course.

### GRADING:

10 rrs =100

9 rrs=90

8 rrs=80

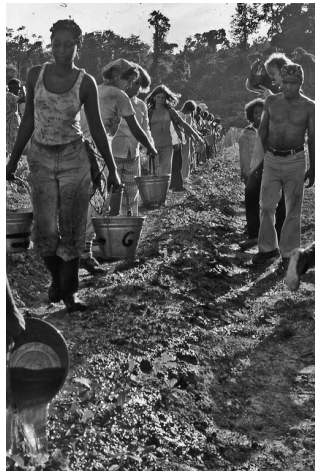
7 rrs=70

6 rrs=60

Fewer than 6 completed rrs will result in a zero for this portion of your grade.

**NOTE: Even if you choose not to do a specific RR, you should look it over as it will help you prepare for class.**

**final project (25%):** The course project focuses on your contribution to the scholarship on Peoples Temple through the creation of a three-minute digital story that focuses on one small part of this religious movement's history—a person, a moment, an event, a dimension of their theology, etc. Project details can be located more fully in the final project handout in your folder and on Sakai.



**purpose:** (1) To strengthen your skills in analyzing and interpreting primary sources, (2) To create your own piece of religious studies scholarship about Peoples Temple, (3) to analyze and evaluate the decision-making process that informs religious studies scholarship, (4) To discover and utilize a different form of scholarship—digital storytelling.

**final project process (fpps) (25%):** To help support your scholarly success on the final project, you will be completing a series of smaller assignments throughout the course. Completion of these smaller assignments (fpps), in a regular and ongoing way, will keep you on task and moving toward project completion in a timely and thorough manner. These assignments are available on Sakai. They will also, at times, become the focus of our class discussions.

**purpose:** (1) To strengthen your primary and secondary research skills, (2) To improve your ability to identify and research a chosen topic, (3) To cultivate your scholarly voice, and (4) To enhance your ability to participate in and reflect on the research process.



**grading:** Each fpp has a weight of 2.5, 10, or 20 points for a total of 100 points. If you successfully complete each fpp as outlined in the directions and turn it in on time, you will earn the full points possible. Each fpp is due by the start of class. If your fpp is late or attempts to, but does not completely succeed in, successfully completing the fpp, you will earn a percentage of the available points.

**POINT ALLOCATION:**

- FPP#1: 10pts
- FPP#2: 10pts
- FPP #3, 4, 6, & 10: 2.5 pts
- FPP#5: 20pts
- FPP#7: 20pts
- FPP#8: 20pts
- FPP#9: 10 pts

**Schedule:** Each fpp assignment is due at the start of class. This information is noted in the course outline and in the more detailed Final Project Process handout.

## course outline

| date:   | readings & viewings:   | assignments:  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>wednesday august 29<sup>th</sup></b><br>creating our learning community                            | syllabus<br>miller "narrative"   | rr#1  |
| <b>friday august 31<sup>st</sup></b><br>researching jonestown   | *smith, "the devil in mr. jones"<br>*hall, "introduction: the cultural puzzle of jonestown"<br>*moore video, "what are the biggest misconceptions...?"   | rr#2  |
| <b>wednesday september 5<sup>th</sup></b><br>contextualizing your research                            | *wessinger, "1978—jonestown"<br>*"jonestown and peoples temple"<br>*examine 2-3 different image albums from peoples temple's history<br>*moore video, "what are the challenges..."                                       | rr#3<br>fpp#1   |
| <b>friday september 7<sup>th</sup></b><br>reconceptualizing history as narrative                      | *tweed, "introduction: narrating u.s. religious history" (pp. 1-10)<br>*holley & colyar, "under construction: how narrative elements shape qualitative research"<br>*watch 2 of the digital story videos linked in Sakai | rr#4<br>*continue researching possible topics!            |
| <b>wednesday september 12<sup>th</sup></b><br>creating a humanizing historical narrative              | *maaga, "who were the members of peoples temple?"<br>*stephenson, "seekers, believers, and gatherers"  | rr#5<br>fpp#2   |
| <b>friday september 14<sup>th</sup></b><br>researching & refining your topic                          | *read, think about, analyze 2 primary sources collected for your research<br>*read 1 secondary source collected for your research  | rr#6<br>fpp#3   |
| <b>wednesday september 19<sup>th</sup></b><br>moving from primary source to story script: peer review | *lambert, "storyboarding" (ch. 4)<br>*bring at least 3 print copies of your script to class  | fpp#4<br>fpp#5<br>*begin compiling and editing your story |
| <b>friday september 21<sup>st</sup></b>   | *concerned relatives, "accusations"  | rr#7<br>fpp#6   |

|  |  |                              |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| narrating jonestown and finding your voice and                                       | *blakely "affidavit"<br>*"letters from pat grunnet"<br>*robbins, "finding your voice as an academic writer" or<br>macphail, "the art and science of finding your voice"                                      | *continue editing your story |
| <b>wednesday september 26<sup>th</sup></b><br>workshopping & supporting your stories | *bring 2 copies of your revised script to class<br>*consultants brianna derr & jeff nichols will be in class to troubleshoot and provide input.<br>*tech troubleshooting<br>*q&a<br>*additional perspectives | fpp#7                        |
| <b>friday september 28<sup>th</sup></b><br>practicing & peer reviewing               | present 1.5-minute draft of digital story  | rr#8<br>fpp#8                |
| <b>wednesday october 3<sup>rd</sup></b><br>identifying the "so what" of your story   | *lincoln & mamiya, "the cult as political religion"<br>*mcguire, "everyday religion as lived"<br>*moore, "american as cherry pie"<br>*moore video, "why is jonestown important to study?"                    | rr#9<br>fpp#9<br>fpp#10      |
| <b>friday october 5<sup>th</sup></b><br>remembering jonestown                        | *neal, "re-scripting the past"<br>*neal, "jonestown on television"<br>*viewing assignment: watch one of the episodes listed on sakai.  | rr#10                        |
| <b>wednesday october 10<sup>th</sup></b><br>making your research public              | present your 3-minute digital story to the class   |                              |
| <b>monday october 15<sup>th</sup></b>  | <b>final digital story &amp; accompanying analysis due by 5pm in your google drive folder.</b>   |                              |

### other course information:

dr. lynn s. neal

email: [nealls@wfu.edu](mailto:nealls@wfu.edu) (M-F 8-5, not on weekends)

oh: wednesday/friday 12:15-1:30 or by appointment in wingate 205

course readings and viewing assignments: available via Sakai

\*please bring assigned readings to class (print or computer)

NOTE: At times, components of the may be adapted to meet the needs of our class.