Apostasy and Self

Through much of history, people changed religion because a ruler or head of a kinship group did so, whether as a result of military defeat or as a form or alliance. Late antiquity saw the emergence religious conversion as a means of expressing religious, political, intellectual, or social identities. When we talk about conversion today, we usually mean the self-determined conversion of an individual from one form of orthodoxy to another. As a rule, this kind of spiritual or intellectual transformation is radical and complete, a casting off the old and replacing it with a new self, often sealed with a change of name. And since late antiquity, conversion is also the stuff of stories, whether written or oral. This course will examine the conceptualization, representation, narration, and reception of converts and conversion in Europe from the middle ages through modernity, ending with Trotsky and Malcolm X.

**Written assignments**: Academic writing demands that you make your arguments in a clear and precise manner and that you back them up with evidence. Thus, written assignments will be graded on the basis of **style as well as content**. Completion of the written assignments is **absolutely required**. Late assignments **will not** be accepted without penalty. Please make every effort to apprise the instructor of adverse circumstances that affect your ability to attend class or complete assignments on time. Official documentation is required to excuse an absence and to schedule make-up assignments. Unless otherwise noted, assignments will be collected at the end of the precept session for which they are assigned. Do not submit your work to via email – written work must be presented in hard-copy.

**Attendance**: Students are expected to attend class regularly and arrive for lecture promptly. A penalty will be imposed on students who arrive late for class. Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will be penalized in the following manner: you will be permitted three absences over the course of the term; every absence thereafter will lower your grade by one third. Absences will be excused if students provide proper documentation.

**Conduct** **PLAGIARISM** and will not accepted in this class because it violates the University of Florida’s honesty policy. Please review the policy at [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/).

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation
must first register with the Dean of Students Office (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Please turn off your cell phones. If your cell phone rings or if you spend your time texting, you will be asked to leave the class and this will count as an unexcused absence.

**Online Course Evaluation Process:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results.

**Suggested books:**
There are no required books for this course. As much as possible, secondary readings, course materials, and other information will be made available through Canvas. The following books are recommended.

- Ryan Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative*
- Karl F. Morrison, *Understanding Conversion*
- Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief*

**Course Requirements:**

**Attendance is mandatory**

Participation — 10%

Two 5-7 page papers — due 4 February and 24 March

A final research paper – 15-20 pages – due 29 April

**Grade scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87–89</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77–79</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67–69</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below 60</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93–100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83–86</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73–76</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63–66</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90–92</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80–82</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70–72</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–62</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I 7 January

William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, lectures 8-10


II 14 January

Exodus 1-14, 19-20, 24, 31

Maccabees I 1-5


1 Thessalonians

Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*, Chapter 1, 10, and 14
Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*, Chapters 1, 3, and 5

III 21 January – MLK Day, no class

IV 28 January
Augustine, *Confessions*, selections
Morrison on Augustine
Karl Morrison, “Posing the Question: Perspectives from a Historian’s Desk” in *Understanding Conversion* (University Press of Virginia, 1992), 1-27

V 4 February
Ryan Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative* (University of Pennsylvania, 2012)

VI 11 February
Hermannus quondam iudaeos, *Opusculum de conversione sua*,

VII 18 February
Luther, “The Ninety-five Theses”;
Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, excerpts;
Brad Gregory, “‘To the point of shedding your blood’: The Bible, Communities of Faith, and Martyrs’ Resistance to Conversion in the Reformation Era” in *Conversion: Old and New Worlds* ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (University of Rochester Press, 2003), 66-86.

Descartes, *Meditations*

VIII 25 February
Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief*


IX 4 March – Spring Break

X 11 March
Malcolm X, [http://www.malcolm-x.org/docs/let_mecca.htm](http://www.malcolm-x.org/docs/let_mecca.htm)


XI 18 March
TBA

XII 25 March
TBA

XIII 1 April
TBA

XIV 8 April
TBA

XV 15 April
TBA

XVI 22 April
TBA