Land, Spirit, Pilgrimage

An Interdisciplinary Seminar in Creative Writing & Religious Studies

Professor Todd Lewis
Office Hours: Smith 425; Mondays 5:30-6; Tues/Wed. 1-2; E-mail: tlewis@holycross.edu
Professor Leila Philip:
Office Hours: Fenwick 315 Tues 2:30 – 3:30; Thurs 2:30 – 4:30 E-mail lphilip@holycross.edu

Course Description:
Human beings have always sought the sacred in unusual or extraordinary places, and gone on pilgrimages to mountain tops, rivers, waterfalls and caves. This course explores traditional and modern examples of pilgrimage in places as different as India, Japan, China, and Tibet and as close as Walden Pond. Readings will include case studies of pilgrimage, pilgrimage literature and literary models of pilgrimage, and journey writing. Students will encounter the phenomenon of pilgrimage in context through texts, films, and lectures, as well as experience pilgrimage through planned course sojourns. These include visits to: a mosque, a Buddhist meditation center, a Hindu temple, and several sacred locations in the American landscape. Students will do weekly writing assignments and engage the pilgrimage experience as they study about it. The course will culminate in a final project in which students conduct and write the stories of their own pilgrimage.

Course Requirements: (Instructions for each assignment will be given)
- **Weekly Reading Response Journal** – ideas/thoughts, pilgrimage response, evolving thoughts on site of personal pilgrimage and goals – that week’s question – collected on 3/10 (5 entries) and again on 5/5. Entries are 2 pages each:
  - Response to pilgrimage literature (1 page)
  - Response to literary models (1 page)
- **Pilgrimage Research Presentation:** teams of 3 will make 10 minute presentations, including PowerPoint and handouts; Due: In Class, Monday, March 17
- **Pilgrimage Prospectus of Capstone Project** – 2-3 pages (outlining place of pilgrimage, intent, duration, etc.) Due: Monday, March 31 (or before)
- **Capstone Project** – Illustrated Pilgrimage narrative of your own design; 15 pages plus reflection of 3 pp. Due: Monday, May 12
- **Attendance and Participation in extra-class trips/pilgrimages**

Course Grading:
- Class participation 20 points
- Weekly journal 30 points
- Class Presentation 15 points
- Pilgrimage Prospectus 5 points
- Capstone Project 30 points
- 100 points.
Course Books: (All have been ordered from the Holy Cross Bookstore)
Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*.

Moodle Course Readings [MCR]

Schedule of Seminars and Readings

Session 1. January 27th: Defining the Course, Possibilities and Expectations
TL: Religious Traditions; Sacred/Profane; Belief/Practice; Pilgrimage in 4 Dimensions
LP: Writing; Journey Narratives;/ The Thoreauvian Tradition Overview

**Required Reading:**
Annie Dillard "Total Eclipse” [MCR]
Gary Vikan, *From The Holy Land To Graceland*, 1-58

Session 2. February 3: Islam and the Hajj [1]
Caner Dagli Lecture; Film; Discussion

**Required Reading**
Excerpt “Islam,” from *World Religions Today*
*Hajj reading* [MRC]
*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, 1-183.

Session 3. February 10: Ritual in Theory and Practice
LP: Writing Session #1  Dillard discussion

**Required Reading**
*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, 184-end.
*Hajj Guidelines reading* [MRC]

Trip to Worcester Mosque

Thursday Feb 20: Peter Trachtenberg Reading: 7:30 PM Rehm Library
Session 5. February 24: Pilgrimage in the Ancient Greek World; Pilgrimage Narratives
Prof. Thomas Martin, Classics Department
LP: Analysis of Elements of Pilgrimage Narrative [cont.]

Required Reading
Martin Readings, tba

MARCH 3: Spring Break, no class

TL: Lecture on Hindu Doctrines and Pilgrimage Practices & Film
LP: Kailash Journal discussion/ Elements of the Pilgrimage Narrative

Required Reading
“Hinduism,” excerpt from World Religions Today [MCR]
Swami Satchidananda, Kailash Journal: Pilgrimage in the Sacred Himalayas of Tibet

Session 7. March 17: Student Research Presentations on Pilgrimages
7 team reports, (3-4 in each team)
Possible Student Research Topics: (some can include spring break visits)
North America: Ste. Anne de Beaupre (Quebec); Graceland, in Memphis, Tennessee; Disneyworld; Salt Lake City, Utah; Guadalupe, Mexico City; Chimaya, New Mexico
Europe: Lourdes, France; Rome, Italy;
Middle East: Jerusalem, Karbala, Konya (Turkey)
Nepal: Baudhba, Pashupati, Swayambhu
India: Amritsar, Varanasi, Gaya
Tibet: Lhasa, Crystal Mountain, Samye
Sri Lanka: Kataragama, Adam’s Peak/Sri Pada
China: WuTai Shan, Puto Shan, Tai Shan

Friday, March 21:
Journal entry on visit to Ashland Temple Due

Session 8. March 24: Christianity: Compestella de Santiago, Lourdes, Antiquity
Required Reading
From The Holy Land To Graceland, 61-82

Session 9. March 31: Modern Pilgrimages I: American Civil Religion, Graceland, etc.
Required Readings
Robert Bellah, “American Civil Religion” [MRC]
Edward Abbey excerpt [MRC]
National Parks as pilgrimage sites [MRC]
From The Holy Land To Graceland, 83-178.

Pilgrimage Prospectus Due
Session 10. April 7 Japan I: Shinto
Professor D’Angelis lecture on Ise
LP: Sacred lands/ discussion of landscape as pilgrimage site
Required Reading
Ian Reader, *Shinto Introduction* [MRC]
Buddhist Doctrine; Shikoku History
Peter Matthieson, *Snow Leopard* (finish book)

Session 11. April 14 Japan II: Shikoku
6-7:30 PM: Worcester Zen Temple
Required Reading
Excerpts from Ian Reader, *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* [MRC]

Special Session: TBA Case Study in Tibet: Shambhala
TL: Buddhism in Tibet lecture & Film
LP: Journey Narratives/ *Snow Leopard* & Trachtenberg discussion
Required Reading
Peter Matthieson, *Snow Leopard* (1st 2 chapters)

Monday April 21: No class, Easter break

Session 12. April 28: Modern Pilgrimages II: Walden, Mt. Wachusett, Thoreau
LP: Transcendentalism / The Thoreauvian Tradition
Required Reading
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature”
Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* and “Walking”

Session 13. Saturday May 3: Class Pilgrimage to Mt. Wachusett and Walden Pond
9 AM-3 PM

Final Session, May 5: Student Presentations of their Individual Journeys

📅 May 12 by Noon: Final Papers Due