

Sacred Spaces, Bryn Mawr and Beyond
Bryn Mawr College
Fall 2026

Instructor:

Wendy Cadge (she/her)

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Office Location: Taylor Second Floor

Office Hours:

Sept 10	3:30-4:30	Oct 29	3:30-4:30
Sept 17	10:15-11:15	Nov 5	2:45-3:45
Sept 24	3:30-4:30	Nov 13	10:00-11:00
Sept 29	3:30-4:30	Dec 10	4:00-5:00

And by appointment – email Caroline – cbyerman@brynmawr.edu

Teaching Assistant:

Charlie Taylor (they/she)

Office Location: Taylor 208

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10a-12p

Email: ctaylor2@brynmawr.edu

Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:40-1:00pm, Taylor Hall Seminar Room

Course Description

What makes a space sacred? What is sacred space? How do people engage with spaces they consider sacred and what happens when there are conflicts in or over such spaces? This course explores the concept of sacred space with particular attention to the presence (or absence) of such spaces at Bryn Mawr College. Our explorations will take us across campus – into archives and attics – as we learn about the College historically and in the present. Assignments will enable students to look carefully at college space and traditions, consider how spaces and practices have evolved over time, and compare thinking across different generations of students. Questions about pluralism, difference, and multi-vocality are central to the conversations we will have throughout the course.

By the end of the semester you will be able to:

- Provide substantive and functional definitions of the concepts of sacred and profane and explain – verbally and in writing – how these approaches have been considered by scholars in the past one hundred years.
- Engage in class discussion and make clear written arguments about where and how individuals and groups in the United States and at Bryn Mawr College

experience sacred space, how this is changing, and how issues related to pluralism, difference, and multi-vocality have been addressed in specific examples.

- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources as well as among evidence ranging from opinion to historical fact to social scientific data in making and defending written arguments.
- Develop and practice writing analytically to develop arguments about a range of class related topics including through rough drafts, feedback, revision, peer collaboration, appropriate use of citations, etc.

This course is built around course readings, ongoing discussion, on campus field explorations, occasional guest speakers, and several writing assignments that ask you to bring theoretical ideas into conversation with the College's history and lived realities both verbally and in a series of writing assignments.

Course Readings

All required course readings are available through Moodle including those listed with web addresses that can also be located that way.

Course Requirements

1. **Attendance** is required. Please be on time out of respect for us and your classmates. Your class attendance counts as 5 points towards your final grade. If you miss zero or one class, you will receive 5 points. If you miss 2 classes, you will receive 4 points. If you miss 3 classes, you will receive 3 points. If you miss 4 classes, you will receive 2 points. If you miss 5 classes, you will receive 1 point. If you miss more than 5 classes, you will receive 0 points. The only absences that will not influence your grade are those for religious holidays that you email us about at least one week in advance. If you are not feeling well, please email to let us know you are ill.
2. **Reading** is required. All course readings must be done for each class meeting as outlined on the syllabus.
3. **Class Participation** is central to this class, and we ask that you participate fully in class. Please mute and put away your cell phones at the start of class. Laptop use in class is allowed only on request or for accommodations. Class participation will count as ten points toward your final grade. Students using cell phones or computer for non-class work will be asked to leave and marked absent for that class period. Feel free to check in about your participation grade at any point in the semester.

4. **Written Assignments:** There are four graded writing assignments in this class. Deadlines for each are as follows:

- a. Assignment one, **September 24**
- b. Assignment two, **October 22**
- c. Assignment three, **November 19**
- d. Assignment four, **December 14**

We will spend time in class workshoping thesis statements for each paper, providing feedback on rough drafts and otherwise supporting one another as we develop as writers. Additional details about each assignment including the proper use of citations will be shared on the dates indicated on the syllabus. If you have any questions at any point, please do not hesitate to raise them.

Papers are due through Moodle at the beginning of class on the due date. Papers turned in after this are late. You will lose one full letter grade for each 24 hours after the due date that the assignment is turned in. The fourth assignment is due by noon on December 14.

5. **Final Grades** will be based on your class attendance (5 points), class participation (10 points), Paper 1 (20 points), Paper 2 (20 points), Paper 3 (20 points) and final exam (25 points). Final grades will be calculated using the following point distribution:

98-100 A+	77-79 C+
94-97 A	74-76 C
90-93 A-	70-73 C-
87-89 B+	67-69 D+
84-86 B	64-66 D
80-83 B-	60-63 D-
	<60 F

There are numerous written assignments in this class so that you can improve over the course of the semester. If you are struggling or are not happy with how you are doing, please see us sooner rather than later so we can work together to help you improve.

****All written assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in this class****

Additional Information

1. **Academic Accommodations:** Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations should follow the steps [here](#). Please come to office hours or schedule an appointment with me as early as possible to share the verification form and so we can make appropriate arrangements. Please note that

accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information is on the [Access Services](#) website.

2. **Academic Integrity:** Academic Integrity is a key part of the Honor Code that guides student conduct on campus. Please make sure you are familiar with the Honor Code and relevant processes [here](#).
3. **AI Use:** All work submitted in this course must be your own. The purpose of this class is to help you (not AI) develop your writing skills which is why this is the approach. The Honor Code [states](#), “Generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of any course assignments, exams, or written work, including laboratory work, unless an instructor for a given course has specifically and explicitly authorized their use for the assignment in question. Presenting AI-generated content as original student work, submitting AI-generated content without citing its source in artificial intelligence tools, and relying on generative AI tools for closed-book quizzes, tests, and exams all constitute violations of the Honor Code.” Use of any AI or text-generating software is not permitted and use of this software on writing assignments will be treated as an academic integrity violation, in accordance with the College’s Honor Code. We will talk about AI and sign an AI contract in the first week of the semester.
4. There are many resources to help you succeed in this class and throughout your time at the College. Please do not hesitate to ask for help – even if you never did in high school.
 - a. You are encouraged to use the [Writing Center](#). If you would like to work weekly over six or more weeks with a specific Writing Partner, please email the student coordinator Ella Horvath '27 (ehorvath@brynmawr.edu)
 - b. There are no required texts for this class. If there are for other classes and it poses financial hardship, please reach out to the [Student Assistance Fund](#).
 - c. The [Academic Support](#) Office has so many ways to help you academically no matter the class. Look at their resources and stop by their office hours every day 3-4p.
 - d. Support with a range of transitional and personal issues is available in so many places. Check out [Student Support Services](#), the [Health and Wellness Center](#) (i.e The Well), [Residence Life](#), [Student Engagement](#), the [Impact Center](#), and more!

Course Outline

I. Getting Started: Conceptualizing and Studying Religion and Spirituality

September 1, 3. Introductions

Tuesday:

- Introductions
- Reflection Paper assigned: Pick a space/place that is or could be considered sacred to you. Write one page single spaced in which you describe how you think about the word/concept “sacred” and what about this space/place makes it sacred to you. Feel free to include a photo of the space/place if helpful – due on Tuesday, September 8. No citations or references – just your opinion. Not graded.

Thursday:

- Read: The Cross at Wren Chapel (A), The Pluralism Project, Harvard University.

September 8, 10. Initial Concepts

Tuesday:

- Read: Steensland, Brian. Jaime Kucinkas and Anna Sun. 2022. “Eminently Social Spirituality: Context, Practice, and Power” in Steensland et al eds. *Situating Spirituality: Context, Practice and Power*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 3-19.
- Reflection Paper 1 due.

Thursday

- Read: Driven by Faith Case (A), The Pluralism Project, Harvard University
- Assignment 1 assigned. Final draft due Thursday September 24.

September 15, 17. Scholarly Approaches

- Read: Eliade, Mircea. 1957. “Introduction” in *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harper One, p. 8-18.
- “How We Gather” Report
- Please bring to class a written draft of your thesis statement for Assignment 1 and the three central pieces of evidence you will use to make your argument.

Thursday:

- Durkheim, Emile. 1995 [1912]. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. The Free Press (p. 22-25, p. 62-63)
- Please explore the website of [Boston’s Hidden Sacred Spaces](#) and engage with one of the immersive experiences [here](#)

September 22, 24. Secular Spaces?

Tuesday

- Tuesday: Please bring to class a rough draft of Assignment 1. We will workshop papers in class.

Thursday

- Klinenberg, Eric. 2018. *Palaces for the People: How social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life*. New York: Broadway Books. (c. 1 A Place to Gather, p. 25-53)
- Assignment 1 Due

September 29, October 1. Civil Religion

Tuesday

- Bellah, Robert. 1970. *Belief: essays on religion in a post-traditional world*. New York: Harper & Row. (c. 9 *Civil Religion in America*)

Thursday

- Select an inaugural address by one of the ten Bryn Mawr Presidents and come to class ready to talk about it.
- Assignment 2 assigned. Final draft due October 22.

October 6, 8. Writing

Tuesday

- Please bring to class a written draft of your thesis statement for Assignment 2 and the three central pieces of evidence you will use to make your argument.

Thursday

- Please bring to class a rough draft of Assignment 2. We will workshop papers in class.

October 13, 15 No Class. Fall Break

II. Turning the Lens on Bryn Mawr College

October 20, 22. History and Context

Tuesday:

- Horowitz Helen Lefkowitz. 1993. *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s*. University of Massachusetts Press (chapters 8 and 9, p. 105-133).\
- Tour by [Jeffrey Cohen](#), Growth and Structure of Cities

Thursday:

- Assignment 2 Due

October 27, 29. Layered Histories and Visiting the Archives

Tuesday

- Lang, Mabel. 2000. "Taylor Hall in the Beginning"
- Please read about [Old Library's Renaming](#) and the [ARCH Project](#)

Thursday

- Visiting the Archives
- Please read, "[How Do Archivists Organize Collections](#)" before class
- Browse college historical materials [here](#)

November 3, 5. Exploring the Archives

Tuesday:

- Research time in the archives
- Assignment 3 assigned. Final draft due November 19

Thursday:

- Please bring to class a written draft of your thesis statement for Assignment 3 and the three central pieces of evidence you will use to make your argument.

November 10, 12. Lantern Night

Tuesday:

- Close Reading of College Lanterns over the generations – Readings TBD
- Thursday: Please bring to class a rough draft of Assignment 3. We will workshop papers in class.

November 17, 19. Exploring the Cloisters

Tuesday:

- Visiting the Cloisters with [Jeffrey Cohen](#), Growth and Structure of Cities

Thursday:

- Assignment 3 due in class

III. Connecting the Dots

November 24, 26

Tuesday:

- Class workshop on connecting the dot
- Final assignment assigned, due December 14

Thursday

- No class, Thanksgiving

December 1, 3

Tuesday:

- Workshopping ideas for Assignment 4

Thursday

- Class time in the archives or peer conferences

December 8, 10

Tuesday:

- Final Presentations

Thursday

- Final Presentations

Assignment 4 is due on December 14 at noon.