"It's really important to get somehow into the mind and make it move somewhere it has never moved before. That happens partly because the material is mysterious or unknown but mostly because of the way you push the material around from word to word in a sentence.... Given whatever material we're going to talk about, and we all know what it is, how can we move within it in a way we've never moved before, mentally? That seems like the most exciting thing to do with your head."

- Anne Carson

Description
The term “martyrdom” appears widely in contemporary religious and political cultures. While it is clearly recognizable, it is also a concept whose precise definition and appropriate deployment feel impossible to pin down. Martyrdom is never simply a single act, but a cultural system forming and being formed by an audience or community of interpreters. This course traces the development and use of martyrdom as a religio-political discourse for generating meaning out of suffering. We begin with classical and early Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources, and then end with consideration of martyrdom’s relationship to other phenomena defined by some self-sacrificial act.

Requirements
Regular Attendance & Active Participation 10%: Students are permitted 2 unexcused absences. Exceeding 2 unexcused absences will result in a failing participation grade. If you are having trouble attending our Zoom meetings for any reason, please let me know. Students are expected to complete assigned readings for the beginning of the class period listed on the course syllabus. In addition, students should have the assigned readings available during class discussions for reference and note-taking.
2 Secondary Source Abstracts (1 page) 20%
1 Primary Source Analysis (4-5 pages) 30%
1 Final Essay (6-8 pages) and Presentation 40%

Books
Plato, Apology, Crito, and Phaedo (available online through The Internet Classics Archive)
Bible with Apocrypha (RSV or NRSV) (available online)
+ Margaret Cormack, Sacrificing the Self: Perspectives on Martyrdom and Religion (available online through Georgetown University Library)
* Other Readings found on Canvas
Schedule

**Week 1: Ancient World**
Monday 6/7: + Introduction of *Sacrificing the Self*

Tuesday 6/8: *Sophocles, Antigone*

Wednesday 6/9: Genesis 22, Daniel 1-6 (Bible)
  +Marc Brettler, “Is There Martyrdom in the Hebrew Bible?”

Thursday 6/10: “The Sacrifice of Isaac” in Art Discussion
  **Group A (3:15pm – 4:10pm)**
  **Group B (4:20pm – 5:15pm)**

**Week 2: Graeco-Roman World**
Monday 6/14: Plato, *Apology, Crito, and Phaedo*

Tuesday 6/15: I Maccabees 1-6, 2 Maccabees 6 and 7, Daniel 7-12 (Bible & Apocrypha)
  *Jan Willem Van Henten, Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity*, 76-87

Wednesday 6/16: The Gospel of Mark 8:31-9:10; 14:32-16:20 (Bible)
  The Gospel of Matthew 5:1-12; 10:16-33
  1 Corinthians 1:26 – 2:6
  2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 12:1-10
  Galatians 3:28
  Philippians 2:5-11
  Hebrews 9:24-28
  *Vincent Wimbush, “‘…Not of This World…’ Early Christianities as Rhetorical and Social Formation,” in Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack, ed. Elizabeth Castelli and Hal Taussig (1996), 23-36*
  +Carlin Barton: “Honor and Sacredness in the Roman and Christian Worlds”
  +Carole Straw, “‘A Very Special Death’: Christian Martyrdom in Its Classical Context”

Thursday 6/17: *Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Romans*
  +The Martyrdom of Polycarp
  **Group A (3:15pm – 4:10pm)**
  **Group B (4:20pm – 5:15pm)**

**Week 3: Early Christianity and Judaism**
Monday 6/21: *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*
  *Martyrs of Lyons, Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. 5:1ff*
Tuesday 6/22: *Acts of Paul and Thekla (NTA 239-246)  

Wednesday 6/23: *Jan Willem Van Henten, Friedrich Avemarie, Martyrdom and Noble Death, 132-76  
+Lawrence Fine, “Contemplative Death in Jewish Mystical Tradition”

**Group A (3:15pm – 4:10pm)  
**Group B (4:20pm – 5:15pm)

**Week 4: Islam**  
Monday 6/28: *The Qur’an (translated by M. Fakhry) Sura 3, 9, & 22 
+Keith Lewinstein, “The Revaluation of Martyrdom in Early Islam”

+Daniel Brown, “Martyrdom in Sunni Revivalist Thought”

Wednesday 6/30: Presentations  
**Group A (3:15pm – 4:10pm)  
**Group B (4:20pm – 5:15pm)

Thursday 7/1: Presentations  
**Group A (3:15pm – 4:10pm)  
**Group B (4:20pm – 5:15pm)

**Week 5: Comparative Perspective**  
Monday 7/5: Presentations  
**Group A (3:15pm – 4:10pm)  
**Group B (4:20pm – 5:15pm)

Tuesday 7/6: +Lindsey Harlan, “Truth and Sacrifice: Sati Immolations in India”  
+S. Dennis Hudson, “Self-Sacrifice as Truth in India”


**Primary Source Dates:**

Genesis – ca. 1000 – 600 BCE
Daniel – ca. 500 – 200 BCE
Antigone – ca. 441 BCE
Plato – ca. 399 – 360 BCE
Maccabees – ca. 100 – 63 BCE
Post-biblical Rabbinic accounts – ca. 25 BCE – 200 CE
Pauline Letters – ca. 50 CE
Mark – ca. 70 CE
Matthew – ca. 100 CE
Ignatius – ca. 105 CE
Polycarp – ca. 150 CE
Acts of Paul and Thekla – ca. 200 CE
Perpetua & Felicitas – ca. 203 CE
Martyrs of Lyons – ca. 326 CE
Qur’an Suras 3, 9, 22 – compiled 651 CE
Solomon Bar Simson Crusade Chronicle – ca. 1140 CE
“Ghetto Preachers” – 1943 CE