"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 such a recognizable facet of Western discourse, 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 to generate meaning out of suffering and create bonds between violence, belonging, and truth. 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 absences. Exceeding 2 absences will result in a failing participation grade. If you are having trouble attending our 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.
3 Secondary Source Abstracts (1 page each) 25%
1 Primary Source Analysis (4-5 pages) 30%
1 Final Essay (6-8 pages) and Presentation 35%

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: Sacrifice & Noble Death
Monday 6/6: + Introduction of Sacrificing the Self

Tuesday 6/7: *Sophocles, Antigone

Wednesday 6/8: Genesis 22, Daniel 1-6 (Bible)
  +Marc Brettler, “Is There Martyrdom in the Hebrew Bible?”
  “The Sacrifice of Isaac” in Art Discussion

Thursday 6/9: Plato, *Apology, Crito*, and *Phaedo*

Week 2: The Graeco-Roman World
Monday 6/13: I Maccabees 1-6, 2 Maccabees 6 and 7, 4 Maccabees 5-7 &16, 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

Tuesday 6/14: The Gospel of Mark (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

Wednesday 6/15: *Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Romans

Thursday 6/16: *The Martyrdom of Polycarp
  +Carlin Barton: “Honor and Sacredness in the Roman and Christian Worlds”
  +Carole Straw, “‘A Very Special Death’: Christian Martyrdom in Its Classical Context”

Week 3: Early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism
Monday 6/20: No Class

Tuesday 6/21: *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas
  *Martyrs of Lyons, Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. 5:1ff

Wednesday 6/22: *Acts of Paul and Thekla (NTA 239-246)

Thursday 6/23: *Jan Willem Van Henten, Friedrich Avemarie, Martyrdom and Noble Death, 132-76
*David G. Roskies, ed., “History as Liturgy in Ashkenaz” 71-88, and “Ghetto Preachers” 503-509, The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe
+Lawrence Fine, “Contemplative Death in Jewish Mystical Tradition”

Week 4: Islam
Monday 6/27: *The Qur’an (translated by M. Fakhry) Suras 3, 9, & 22
+Keith Lewinstein, “The Revaluation of Martyrdom in Early Islam”

+Daniel Brown, “Martyrdom in Sunni Revivalist Thought”

Wednesday 6/29: Presentations

Thursday 6/30: Presentations

***Primary Source Analysis Due Friday 7/1 (11:59pm ET)

Week 5: Comparative Perspective
Monday 7/4: No Class

Tuesday 7/5: +Lindsey Harlan, “Truth and Sacrifice: Sati Immolations in India”
+S. Dennis Hudson, “Self-Sacrifice as Truth in India”


***Final Essay Due Thursday 7/7 by 11:59pm (ET)

**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
- Orations of Zaynab and Umm Kulthum – 680 CE
- Solomon Bar Simson Crusade Chronicle – ca. 1140 CE
- “Ghetto Preachers” – 1943 CE