

# “God in Pittsburgh” Final Project Instructions

## History of God (RELGST 1102/HIST 1731/JS 1102/ANTH 1703)

Dr. Gordon

### 1. Description

In this project you will pick some material aspect of God worship in Pittsburgh and consider it in light of some minimal outside research combined with what you have learned in the course. Part of your submission could be included on the future website of the “ReligYinz: Mapping Religious Pittsburgh” project, which is run out of the Pitt Department of Religious Studies and the Pitt University Libraries. The broader objectives of the project, which is worth 20% of your final course grade, are to:

- Think about God worship in the everyday lives of Pittsburgh’s diverse religious communities.
- Consider how some aspect of the material culture of those communities reflects their specific form of engagement with God.
- Improve your ability to write for the broader public.
- Contribute to the “ReligYinz: Mapping Religious Pittsburgh” project.

As mentioned below, you need to decide upon a case study by Nov 20, 4pm (see googledoc below), discuss it informally in class in a roundtable on Dec 2 (2-3 mins), and turn in the project by Dec 4, 4pm.

### 2. Research

2.1. First, select a case study from the Pittsburgh area that fits into one of the following themes:

Aesthetics	Icon (Image)	Display
Dress	Ritual	Sound
Food	Space	Thing

Your case study should relate to some element of God worship in Pittsburgh, either now or in the past. It can be an object, building (or a part thereof), memorial, piece of art, clothing, food, musical instrument, or the like. If you select “Ritual” as your theme, make sure it has an object or something material central to it. Select something interesting, suitable for a public-facing website, and able to speak to the varied experiences of God in Pittsburgh. See the Appendix for a list of places you might look for a case study.

Once you’ve made your selection, write it on the following googledoc:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/18RBL29wjZNGYmpV\\_46Qs-\\_l075qO9uCAkY2x7YGDM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/18RBL29wjZNGYmpV_46Qs-_l075qO9uCAkY2x7YGDM/edit?usp=sharing)). Avoid selecting a case study that someone else is doing.

2.2. For background on material religion, read the brief introduction to S. Brent Plate, ed., *Key Terms in Material Religion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), as well as the chapter in that volume on the theme you have selected. All these readings are on Courseweb. These two chapters will be an important starting point for you in your research. Begin thinking already about how your case study can be related to them.

2.3. Next, select two scholars who have had something important and interesting to say about the history of God. One should come from our syllabus: Römer, Aslan, Tylor, Freud, Durkheim, Eliade, Daly, Hitchens, Michaelson, or McFague. The other should come from your outside research. To help you find someone in the latter category, you can start by reading Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and Gordon D. Kaufman, “God” on Courseweb (pp. 136–159 in Mark C. Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*).

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Pay special attention to their “Suggested Readings” list on pp. 157–158.

2.4. Finally, do some formal or informal research to make sure you have a basic understanding of your case study. The nature of that understanding will vary considerably from case to case. You are strongly encouraged to make use of the Hillman Libguide on “Religion in Pittsburgh” to help you with your research: <https://pitt.libguides.com/religionpgh>

In summary, you will be doing some reading and limited outside research into three areas: materiality and religion; the modern study of God; and the case study you have selected.

### **3. Informal Roundtable Discussion**

We will hear about everyone’s projects during class on Dec 2, two days before they are due. We will simply go around the room and each of you will speak for 2–3 minutes about your case study and how you interpreted it, noting the scholarly approaches you drew upon. Before class I will ask you to submit your image(s) to dropbox and I will project them onto the screen in turn.

### **4. Academic Essay**

This presentation of the results of your research will consist of a three-part essay of around 1000 words total (about 3 double-spaced pages). Include at the top of your essay your name, the name of your theme, and the name of your case study. Then respond to the following 3 prompts, labeling each section of your essay clearly:

*Part 1.* Describe your case study (approx. 200 words).

*Part 2.* Relate your case study to the academic study of religion and God. This part of your essay should be informed by the introduction to *Key Terms in Material Religion*, as well as the chapter in that book on your theme (approx. 400 words).

*Part 3.* Shed light on your case study using the work of two important scholars, one from our course and one from your own research. Relate the scholars to one another in some way, but keep your discussion focused on the case study. This part of your essay should address questions like: How would Scholar X explain the case study I am looking into? How would Scholar Y? How are the views different from one another? (approx. 400 words).

*Citations and Bibliography.* Provide parenthetical citations with author+date+page no. (e.g., Gordon 2019:254) or merely the year and page (2019:254) if the author is stated explicitly in the sentence or is otherwise obvious from the context. Also provide a full works-cited list using a citation style of your choice. MLA 8<sup>th</sup> edition is a good option (<https://pitt.libguides.com/citationhelp/mla8thedition>). Shoot for a bibliography with at least 5 sources, including the 2 chapters from *Key Terms in Material Religion*. See the syllabus for bibliographic information on course readings. For Tylor, Freud, Durkheim, and Eliade, you can cite Pals. Refrain from using footnotes. Essays with an inconsistent citation style or an incomplete or inconsistent bibliography will be subject to deduction.

*Images and Captions.* You must provide 1 to 2 high-quality photographs that you photographed, scanned, or downloaded. Your own photographs are preferable. Provide a caption for each, including full credit. If you were the photographer, simply write “photograph by author” or the like at the end of the caption. If the photograph is from another source, credit the source, providing an author+date+fig. no. for publications (and include that source in the bibliography) or an active link for online images. Avoid using blurry, dark, overexposed, pixelated or otherwise low-quality images; the use of such images will detract from the quality of the project and result in a deduction.

Submit your essays as WORD documents on Courseweb by 11:59pm on Wed Dec 4. Make sure your photos are included in the document. Late submissions will be penalized by 1 point per hour. These essays, including the photos and captions, will count for 70% of your grade on the assignment.

## **5. Brief Public-Facing Summary**

This brief summary (approx. 300 words) should use clear and simple language to inform the reader of the basics of the case study—what it is, what is interesting about it, and how it reflects religiosity in Pittsburgh. Much of it can be very similar to the first part of your academic essay. Produce something suitable for ReligYinz: Mapping Religious Pittsburgh, which will be an informative website about the varieties of religious experiences in Pittsburgh, produced by Pitt students like yourselves and including engaging texts and eye-catching images. For an example of a student-generated website on religious life in St. Louis, check out <https://www.archcityreligion.org/>.

Citations are not required for this summary. Instead, merely provide for your general reader a few sources under “Further Reading” at the bottom. They can simply be pasted in from the bibliography for the above section.

Include your image(s) in this document as well. They should be the same as that/those provided in the essay. Make sure to reference anything in the image(s) that requires explanation. Deductions for poor images will be taken from the academic essay, not this summary.

Submit your brief public-facing summary as WORD documents on Courseweb by 11:59pm on Wed Dec 4 (the same due date as above). This component will count for 30% of your grade on the assignment. Later in the semester you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire about whether your public-facing summary paragraph and image(s) can be included on the future ReligYinz website; and if so, how you would like your name to appear there.

## **6. Checklist and Deductions**

- Post a case study by Nov 20 at 4pm. 5 pts deduction for posting late.
- Prepare 2-3 minutes on your project for the informal roundtable discussion in class on Dec 2. 5 pts deduction for failure to participate (contact me if you foresee an absence on that day)
- Write an academic essay (1000 words) with 1-2 images, preferably your own photographs, due Dec 4. 70% of project grade; 1 pt deduction per hour for late submissions.
- Write a summary paragraph of your case study (200–300 words) with your 1–2 images, due Dec 4. 30% of project grade; 1 pt deduction per hour for late submissions.
- Complete the ReligYinz questionnaire. 5 pts deduction for failure to complete.

## 7. Appendix: Some Ideas of Where to Look

Use this list to get some ideas of possible case studies, or places where you might look to find one. You'll notice that the list is geared heavily towards communities of faith in the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam. This is merely a reflection of the scope of our course, which has charted the history of the biblical God. If you would like to explore a case study from other kinds of communities of faith, you are most welcome to do so as long as you can relate the case study to the themes of the course.

The Immaculate Reception Monument  
Gary and Nancy Tuckfelt Keeping Tabs: A Holocaust Sculpture  
Jessica's Labyrinth Chatham University  
Allegheny Cemetery  
Homewood Cemetery  
Shrine of the Sacred Mother -- Our Lady of the Parkway  
Duquesne University Campus  
Carnegie Museum Hall of Architecture  
Collection of Religious Art at the Carnegie Museum of Art  
Collection of Religious Art at the Andy Warhol Museum  
Collection of Religious Art at the Frick Pittsburgh Museum  
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Special Collections (the Oliver Room)  
University of Pittsburgh (ULS) Special Collections  
Heinz History Center Special Collections  
St. Anthony's Chapel Reliquary Collection  
Rauh Jewish Archives -- Heinz History Center  
Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh Archives and Records Center  
Byzantine Catholic -- Archeparchy of Pittsburgh Archives  
Archives and Special Collections - Pittsburgh Theological Seminary  
American Jewish Museum (JCC Pittsburgh)  
The Hunt Library Special Collections (CMU)  
Maxo Vanka Murals  
St. Paul's Cathedral Organ  
Iconostasis at St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church  
Madonna and Child with Angel, St. Catherine and St. Barbara  
Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Exterior Mural  
Memorial Image of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Mosque  
Bellefield Presbyterian  
Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Beulah Christian Pre-school  
Byzantine Catholic Seminary  
Calvary Episcopal  
Church Brew Works (St. John the Baptist Church)  
Church of the Ascension

Congregation Beth Shalom  
Congregation Poale Zedeck  
East Liberty Presbyterian  
Epiphany Catholic Church  
Farm Fresh Halal Market  
First Muslim Mosque of Pittsburgh (Masjid al-Awwal)  
First Presbyterian  
Heinz Chapel  
Hocus Pocus  
Imani Christian Academy  
Immaculate Heart of Mary  
Islamic Center of Pittsburgh  
Jubilee Christian School  
Macedonia Church of Pittsburgh  
Masjid al-Mu'min  
Moonstones  
Murray Avenue Kosher  
New Light Congregation  
Nu Modern Jewish Bistro  
Pinsker's Books and Judaica  
Pittsburgh Urban Christian School  
Religious Society of Friends  
Rodef Shalom Gift Corner  
Rodef Shalom Temple  
Sacred Heart Church  
Saint Anthony's Chapel Reliquary  
Saint Stanislaus Kostka  
Shadyside Presbyterian  
St. George Orthodox Cathedral  
St. George Ukrainian Church  
St. Mary of the Mount  
St. Margaret's Religious Education  
St. Nicholas Croatian Church  
St. Paul's Cathedral  
Syria Mosque  
Temple Sinai  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
The Priory (St. Mary's Church)  
Tree of Life Or L'simcha  
Trinity Cathedral and Graveyard  
Trinity Christian School  
Universal Academy of Pittsburgh  
Yeshiva School