



EUH5934
Wednesday, period 8-10
Keene-Flint 013
Nina Caputo
Dept of History

Office Hours W 11:30-1:30
and by appointment

Conversion and Self

Through much of history, people changed religion because a ruler or head of a kinship group did so, whether as a result of military defeat or as a form of alliance. Late antiquity saw the emergence religious conversion as a means of expressing religious, political, intellectual, or social identities. When we talk about conversion today, we usually mean the self-determined conversion of an individual from one form of orthodoxy to another. As a rule, this kind of spiritual or intellectual transformation is radical and complete, a casting off the old and replacing it with a new self, often sealed with a change of name. And since late antiquity, conversion is also the stuff of stories, whether written or oral. This course will examine the conceptualization, representation, narration, and reception of converts and conversion in Europe from the middle ages through modernity, ending with Trotsky and Malcolm X.

Written assignments : Academic writing demands that you make your arguments in a clear and precise manner and that you back them up with evidence. Thus, written assignments will be graded on the basis of **style as well as content**. Completion of the written assignments is *absolutely required* . Late assignments will not be accepted without penalty. Please make every effort to apprise the instructor of adverse circumstances that affect your ability to attend class or complete assignments on time. Official documentation is required to excuse an absence and to schedule make-up assignments.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in the set discussions. If you are unable to attend a class meeting or complete an assignment, please contact me in advance.

Conduct PLAGIARISM and will not accepted in this class because it violates the University of Florida's honesty policy. Please review the policy at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/>.

Please do not hesitate to contact me during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Please turn off your cell phones. If your cell phone rings or if you spend your time texting, you will be asked to leave the class and this will count as an unexcused absence.

Online Course Evaluation Process: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Readings:

There are no required books for this course. All readings available through **Canvas**

Course Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory

Participation — 20%

One 1000-1500 word book review – 15%

A research proposal – 15%

Research/paper workshop – 20%

Final research paper – 30%

Grade scale:

	87–89 = B+	77–79 = C+	67–69 = D+	below 60 = E
93–100 = A	83–86 = B	73–76 = C	63–66 = D	
90–92 = A-	80–82 = B-	70–72 = C-	60–62 = D	

I 23 August

William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, lectures 8-10

Mark Baer, "History and Religious Conversion" in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion* ed. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (Oxford, 2014), 25-47.

II 30 August

Exodus 1-14, 19-20, 24, 31

Maccabees I 1-5

Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, selections

Sara Japhet, "The Term 'Ger' and the Concept of Conversion in the Hebrew Bible.," in *Bastards and Believers; Jewish Converts and Conversion from the Bible to the Present*, ed. Theodor Dunkelgrün and Paweł Maciejko (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 26–41.

Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*, Chapter 1, 10, and 14

III 6 September

Acts of the Apostles 9:1-19, 22-23:11, 26:12-30

1 Thessalonians

Karl Morrison, *Understanding Conversion* (University Press of Virginia, 1992), Chapters 1-2

Francis Watson, "The Conversion of Paul: A New Perspective ('Epistula Apostolorum' 31-33)," in *Receptions of Paul in Early Christianity; the Person of Paul and His Writings Through the Eyes of His Early Interpreters*, ed. Jens Schröter et al., (De Grueter, 2018), 195–211.

Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*, Chapters 1, 3, and 5

IV 13 September

Augustine, *Confessions*, selections

Morrison on Augustine

Karl Morrison, *Understanding Conversion* (University Press of Virginia, 1992), 1-27

Paula Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 1 (1986): 4–34

Sigmund Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychological Personality," in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXII, <https://www.yorku.ca/dcarveth/Freud%20NIL%20L33%20Dissection.pdf>, accessed August 15, 2023.

V 20 September

Ryan Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative* (University of Pennsylvania, 2012)

Adnan A. Husain, "Conversion to History: Negating Exile and Messianism in Al-Samaw'al Al-Maghribi's Polemic against Judaism," *Medieval Encounters* 8, no. 1 (March 2002): 34.

VI 27 September

Hermannus quondam iudaeos, *Opusculum de conversione sua*,

Jean Claude Schmitt, *The Conversion of Herman the Jew: Autobiography, History, and Fiction in the Twelfth Century*, trans. Alex J. Novikoff, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), excerpts

Avrom Saltman, "Hermann's *Opusculum de Conversione Sua*: Truth and Fiction," *Revue Des Études Juives* 147, no. 1–2 (1988): 31–56

Aviad M. Kleinberg, "Hermannus Judaesus's 'Opusculum': In Defense of Its Authenticity," *Revue Des Études Juives* 151, no. 3–4 (1992): 337–53.

Arnaldo Momigliano "A Medieval Jewish Autobiography" in *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism* trans. Maura Masella-Gayley (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 109-119

Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore and London: Johns H, 1986), chapter 2.

VII 4 October

Luther, "The Ninety-five Theses";

Erik Erikson *Young Man Luther* excerpts

Brad Gregory, "'To the point of shedding your blood': The Bible, Communities of Faith, and Martyrs' Resistance to Conversion in the Reformation Era" in *Conversion: Old and New Worlds* ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (University of Rochester Press, 2003), 66-86.

Converso stuff

VIII 11 October

Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief*

Trotsky, *My Life*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/mylife/1930-lif.pdf>

Descartes, [*Meditations*](#)

IX 18 October

Malcolm X, http://www.malcolm-x.org/docs/let_mecca.htm

G.G. Harphram, "Conversion and the Language of Autobiography," in *Studies in Autobiography*, ed. J. Olney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 42-50.

Simon Rolston, "Conversion and the Story of the American Prison," *Critical Survey* 23, no. 3 (December 1, 2011): 103-18.

X 25 October

Individual meetings

XI 1 November

Research paper workshop

XII 8 November

Research paper workshop

XIII 15 November

Research paper workshop

XIV 22 November – Thanksgiving

XV 29 November

Research paper workshop

XVI 6 December

Research paper workshop