

SYLLABUS

RELG 3315
Religion and Society: Religion and Popular Culture
Fall 2010

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Course Description and Objectives

An optional core or elective course for students with a major or minor in religious studies or philosophy, or an upper-division elective for any student, this course examines the relationships between religious thought and experience, and various forms of cultural expression dubbed "popular culture." Students will become familiar with the concept of and methods for studying popular culture from a religious or theological perspective. As part of the course, students will explore and analyze religious themes in and functions of different elements of popular culture, including television, music, advertising and movies.

Required Texts

Lynch, Gordon. *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*.

Detweiler, Craig and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*

Beaudoin, Tom. *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X*

Housel, Rebecca and J. Jeremy Wisnewski, eds. *Twilight and Philosophy: Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality*

Other readings as assigned

Course Requirements

- ATTEND CLASS! Most of this class will "happen" through in-class discussions and analyses. Your participation is crucial to both your learning and that of your peers. Be here. (15%)
- Class discussion facilitator – you and a classmate will lead the discussion on the assigned reading for a day! How fun! (10%)
- Reflective essays – you will be asked to write and submit four essays reflecting on the readings and/or a topic as assigned. These must be typed and properly formatted. (15% each)
- Analytical Paper – as part of the class, you will need to attend an "event" (sporting event, film, dance club, religious service, etc.), and analyze how and where you see the interaction of popular and religious cultures. (15%)

Academic Policies

Academic Integrity Policy

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Instances of academic misconduct in RELG 3315 may result in failure of the assignment in question or failure of the course, at the professor's discretion.

Disability Support

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3613.

Please see the Student Handbook for further information on academic policies and procedures, including the sections on harassment and academic misconduct.

CLASS SCHEDULE (Tentative)

Aug 25	Introduction
Aug 31, Sep 2	<i>Pop Culture and Religious Journeying</i> Read: Beaudoin, pp. xiii - 47
Sep 7 and 9	<i>The Study of "Religion" and "Popular Culture"</i> Read: Lynch, Ch1 Assignment due on 9/16: Essay #1
Sep 14 and 16	Read: Lynch, Ch2
Sep 21 and 23	Read: Lynch, Ch 3 & 4
Sep 28 and 30	Read: Lynch, Ch 5; Detweiler, pp 7-27 Assignment due on 9/30: Essay #2
Oct 5 and 7	<i>Case Study: A Theological Interpretation of Pop Culture</i> Read: Beaudoin, pp. 51-181
Oct 12 and 14	<i>The Study of "Religion" and "Popular Culture" cont.</i> Read: Lynch, Ch 7 & 8; "Spirituality Bites" article (e-handout)
Oct 19	<i>Advertising and Religion</i> Read: Detweiler, pp. 61-87
Oct 21	FALL BREAK
Oct 26 and 28	<i>Celebrities and Religion</i> Read: Detweiler, pp. 89-123 Assignment due on 10/28: Essay #3
Nov 2 and 4	<i>Television and Religion</i> Read: Detweiler, pp. 185-219
Nov 9 and 11	<i>Movies and Religion</i> Read: Detweiler, pp. 155-183

- Nov 16, 18 and 23 **Case Study: Twiligion**
Read: *Twilight and Philosophy*, pp. tba
Note – We will watch “*Twilight*” on Nov 16th. Please plan to stay through X-period if possible.
- Nov 25 THANKSGIVING BREAK
- Nov 30, Dec 2 **Music and Religion**
Read: Detweiler, pp. 125-153
Assignment due on Dec 2: Essay #4
- Dec 7 and 9 **Fashion, Sports, etc. and we wrap this thing up!**
Read: Detweiler ... your choice...and Lynch, Ch 9
- Final Exam Week **Analysis Paper due, Dec 16th, 2:00pm**