**Religion 296: Special Topics in Religion**  
Spr 19 Topic: Science Fiction and Religion  
3 credits, CRN 60412  
W 11:30am-2:00pm

**INSTRUCTOR:** Professor Sarah Hadmack  
**OFFICE:** Palanakila 140  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45; Wednesdays 10:15-11:15, and by appointment  
**EMAIL:** minnis@hawaii.edu  
**TELEPHONE:** 236-9140  
**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Spring 2019

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**WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT**

Windward Community College offers innovative programs in the arts and sciences and opportunities to gain knowledge and understanding of Hawai’i and its unique heritage. With a special commitment to support the access and educational needs of Native Hawaiians, we provide O’ahu’s Ko‘olau region and beyond with liberal arts, career and lifelong learning in a supportive and challenging environment — inspiring students to excellence.

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**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

Students will investigate important topics in the study of religion.

**Spring 2019 Special Topic Description: Science Fiction and Religion**

In this course we will explore and reflect on the presence of religions and religious themes in science fiction films and television shows. We will also discuss the ethics of robots and other forms of artificial intelligence (AI). Take this class to explore religious themes such as the messianic hero, immortality, free will and determinism, prophecy, evil, mysticism, and apocalypse in films and tv shows including Star Trek, Star Wars, the Matrix, I Robot, Avatar, Superman, and more. So "live long and prosper" and "may the force be with you!"

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**WRITING INTENSIVE HALLMARKS**

The hallmarks of a writing intensive course are:

**W1.** The class uses writing to promote the learning of course materials.  
**W2.** The class provides interaction between the instructor and students while students do assigned writing.  
**W3.** Written assignments contribute significantly to each student’s course grade.  
**W4.** The class requires students to do a substantial amount of writing—a minimum of 4,000 words, or about 16 pages.  
**W5.** To allow for meaningful professor-student interaction on each student’s writing, the class is restricted to 20 students.  
One conference with the professor is required during the course.
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
The student learning outcomes for the course are:

1. Identify the important concepts and facts associated with the topic under examination.
2. Explain cause and effect relationships in connection to the topic discussed.
3. Compare and contrast various religions’ ideas of the topic.
4. Relate the topic to contemporary events.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION
This course is structured around the following methods of instruction:

- Higher order thinking: class time will be devoted mainly to discussion and activities, both of which focus on problem-solving, analysis, evaluation, and critical and creative thinking (the top parts of the pyramid.) Therefore, reading, understanding, and identifying the major terms and ideas must be done at home while reading the texts and the professor’s notes.

- Collaborative learning: this course consists of many in-class group activities (see examples under ‘Course Tasks’). We learn more when exposed to diverse viewpoints, we challenge ourselves when we have to articulate and sometimes defend our knowledge, and group activities develop a sense of community and responsibility for one another. Three heads are better than one!

- Film/show viewing:
  
  o When watching the films/shows in this course, you need to understand the content while simultaneously analyzing the film for elements of religious motifs and evaluating it for what constitutes contemporary religious myth-making.
  
  o There is value in watching these films/shows collectively. As a group we may see different elements in the film/show than when we view the film/show alone. The films/shows in this course should be considered primary required texts for the course. Even if you have already watched some of the films/shows we will be viewing in this course before, you are still required to attend class for the viewing. When you watched the film/show before, I doubt you were looking for religious themes or the hero archetype so you will, very likely, see something new when viewing it in class.
  
  o Our class meets during lunchtime. I find snacking while watching a film to be a most enjoyable combination! Feel free to eat during the viewings.

COURSE TASKS
The course will be centered on the following tasks, which serve as both learning and assessment tools:

- Complete the writing assignments.
1. **Reflection Paper**: *Star Wars Episode V: Empire Strikes Back* paper- 5 full, typed pages (12pt font, double spaced, one inch margins)
   **Due 2/13** at the start of class
   - Write a reflection paper on *Empire Strikes Back*. Your paper should address all of the following, in addition to your own unique insights.
     - How is Obi-Wan able to communicate with Luke? How might this be interpreted in a religious context?
     - What spiritual/religious teachings does Yoda impart to Luke?
     - Is the Force a tool for divining the future? Explain.
     - Describe the presence of prophecy, mysticism, evil, immortality, and free will vs. determinism within the film.
     - Describe who fits the monomyth/hero archetype more closely in this film: Luke Skywalker or Han Solo.

2. **Film/Show Analysis Paper, Blog Post, OR Slam Poem** – 4 full, typed pages (12pt font, double spaced, one inch margins)
   **Due 3/6** at the start of class
   - You may not use any of the films/shows used in class. This is your chance to write about other sci-fi films/shows you love that weren’t covered in the course!
   - Obviously, select your film/show wisely (that is, it can’t be just any sci-fi show; it needs to engage with religion or moral/ethical issues).
   - Feel free to make your own personal selection. However, if you’re unsure of what to choose, here are some films/shows that could work nicely: *Wonder Woman, Avatar, Battlestar Galactica, The Avengers, Contact, Babylon 5, X-Men, Heroes, the Flash, Supergirl, Stargate, A.I, Person of Interest, etc.*
   - Some possible topics to consider if they are touched on by your film/show:
     - How does the film/show address ethical and moral dilemmas of modern society?
     - How does it reflect religious diversity?
     - How do these ‘cultural texts’ constitute and influence religious reality?
     - How do the writers view the line between rationalism, skepticism, belief, and religion?
     - The major religious motifs
     - Whether or not the main character follows the stages of the monomyth

   - **If you choose the Analysis Paper**:
     - Only the first paragraph of the paper should contain a summary of the film/show. The rest of the paper should be an analysis. Write in terms of asking questions and solving problems. Use concrete examples from the film/show to demonstrate your argument or to support the solution to the problem you present.

   - **If you choose the Blog Post**:
     - Write a blog post on a relevant fan site for the science fiction film/show you chose.

   - **If you choose the Slam Poem**:
- How does your science fiction film/show address ethical dilemmas and social justice issues?
- How is it relevant to modern society?

3. **Reflection Paper**: *Star Trek: The Next Generation: Season 5, Episode 16*  
   “Ethics” paper- 3 full, typed pages (12pt font, double spaced, one inch margins)  
   **Due 4/10 at the start of class**  
   - Write a reflection paper on this episode. Your paper should address all of the following, in addition to your own unique insights.
     - Issues surrounding medical ethics and assisted suicide
     - Demonstrations of cultural relativism
     - Issues regarding racism and classism
     - Moral responsibilities vs. the ethics of friendship

4. **Argumentative Paper**: *Artificial Intelligence* – 4 full, typed pages (12pt font, double spaced, one inch margins)  
   **Due 5/1 at the start of class**  
   - Write an argumentative paper on Artificial Intelligence (A.I). Describe the ways in which A.I. will affect one of the following topics-
     - Job replacements
     - Robotic warfare
     - Accessibility issues in programming A.I.
     - Privacy rights
     - Personal security
     - Legal perspectives- who is liable for errors?
     - Emotional bonds between humans and social robots
     - Robot caregivers- medical field
     - What defines personhood? Should robots have human rights?
     - Roboethics
   - Argue how A.I. should be developed/controlled/freed/handled in regards to the topic(s) you chose.
   - Cite a minimum of four scholarly articles on your topic.

5. A note on plagiarism: This is a WI course and plagiarism is treated seriously. You need to cite all of your sources in proper MLA format. So you don’t know how to cite a film in MLA format? Google it, ask me, or go to the Writing Center for help! Ignorance is no excuse. If I find that you quoted someone else’s work verbatim without using quotation marks or giving the author credit immediately after the sentence then you will receive an automatic F grade on the assignment.

่า **Complete readings/viewing quizzes and worksheets.** Some class periods will start with a quiz on the readings/viewings. For other class periods you will be asked to submit a worksheet on the readings/viewings via Laulima the night before the class period in which we will discuss that reading/viewing. You may use any handwritten or printed notes you’ve taken on the readings/viewings during the quizzes. Please note: the reading/viewing quizzes and worksheets are not listed in the class schedule. Please pay attention in class for due dates for the worksheets and come to class on time to complete the readings/viewings quizzes.
Journal Entries. Journal prompts will be provided throughout the semester. Please see the handout on “Academic Journals” for more information.

Complete the final exam. The final exam will be based on material covered in class, the course readings, and the course viewings.

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND GRADING

Grades will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Star Wars Empire Strikes Back Reflection Paper (5pgs)</td>
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<td>Film/Show Analysis Paper, Blog Post, OR Slam Poem (4pgs)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Star Trek: The Next Generation: Season 5, Episode 16 “Ethics” Reflection Paper (3pgs)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artificial Intelligence Argumentative Paper (4pgs)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Readings/Viewings Quizzes and Worksheets</td>
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<td>Journal Entries</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Grades available:
A = 90% - 100%
B = 80% - 89%
C = 70% - 79%
D = 60% - 69%
F = 59% and below

N= The ‘N’ grade indicates that the student has worked conscientiously, attended regularly, finished all work, fulfilled course responsibilities, and has made measurable progress. However, either the student has not achieved the minimal student learning outcomes and is not prepared to succeed at the next level, or the student has made consistent progress in class but is unable to complete the class due to extenuating circumstances, such as major health, personal, or family emergencies.

LEARNING RESOURCES

- PDFs of the readings (available in the ‘Resources’ folder on Laulima)
- Amazon Prime (approximately $49/year for students; please go to amazon.com) OR Netflix membership (membership costs approximately $11/month; please go to netflix.com). Please note: as of January 5, 2019:
  Amazon Prime has the following: Doctor Who, Star Trek
Netflix streaming has the following: Star Trek

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

*Note:
1. Assignments are due during the first 15 minutes of class to be considered on time. Any assignment submitted after the first 15 minutes of class must be turned in with one of your No Questions Asked late coupons.
2. Quizzes are given during the first 15 minutes of class.
3. Class schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings/Viewings and Assignments Due on that day</th>
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</table>
| 1/9  | Welcome to the course!  
- Introductions  
- Syllabus  
- Introducing the sci-fi genre  
  o Difference between sci-fi and fantasy  
- Describing the major religious motifs  
- Introducing the hero archetype/monomyth | |
| 1/16 | 1. Film: *Superman* | 1. Read  
1_SuperheroMythAndRestorationOfParadise.pdf  
2. Complete handout on the article above.  
3. Read 2_SupermanPopularCultureMessiah.pdf |
| 1/23 | 1. *Superman*: film completion and discussion of the readings  
2. Campbell’s monomyth  
3. Applying the monomyth to the *Superman* film | 1. Read 3_Monomyth.pdf  
2. Read 4_TheHeroAndTheGod.pdf |
| 1/30 | 1. Film: *Star Wars: A New Hope* | Read 5_Departure.pdf |
| 2/6  | 1. *Star Wars: A New Hope* discussion-Identifying stages of the monomyth  
2. Discussion of “The Mythology of Star Wars with George Lucas and Bill Moyers” | 1. Watch *Star Wars V: Empire Strikes Back*  
2. View “The Mythology of Star Wars with George Lucas and Bill Moyers” (available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwjGsTlp1oI  
3. Read the article you were assigned to. |
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task 1</th>
<th>Task 2</th>
<th>Task 3</th>
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<td>3. The Jedi Knight religion</td>
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<td>4. Initial considerations of when, how, and why sci-fi becomes religion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Discussing our papers</td>
<td>2. Read Buddhism.pdf</td>
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<td>4. Read 8_You'reThisDoctor'sCompanion.pdf</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Whovians and Doctor Who as religion</td>
<td>2. Read 8_DoctorWhoTimeTravelThroughFaith.pdf</td>
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<td>5. Show: Star Trek DS9 “Accession” Season 4 Episode 17</td>
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<td>3. Read 11_ReCoveringSacredGround.pdf</td>
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<td>4. Read 12_OutwardVoyageAndInwardSearch.pdf</td>
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<td>5. Read 13_BiblicalInterpretationStarTrekUniverse.pdf</td>
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### 3. Star Trek films and fandom
4. Star Trek Into Darkness film clips

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<tr>
<th>3/20</th>
<th>SPRING BREAK</th>
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<th>4/3</th>
<th>Conferences</th>
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<tr>
<td>4/10</td>
<td>1. Artificial Intelligence View: Humans Need Not Apply 3. Artificial Intelligence symposium</td>
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<td>4/17</td>
<td>1. Film: I, Robot 2. Discussion of I, Robot</td>
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<td>Read the articles on A.I.</td>
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<td>4/24</td>
<td>Film: The Matrix</td>
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<td>Read 15_NeoMessianicSuperhero</td>
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<td>5/1</td>
<td>1. Discussion of The Matrix 2. Review for the Final Exam</td>
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<td>Submit - Artificial Intelligence Argumentative Paper</td>
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**Final Exam**

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**Attendance Policy:**
Students are expected to arrive on time and remain for the entire class period. Students who miss class are responsible for material covered in their absence. Consult with peers or the professor to cover what you missed. For every three classes missed, the final grade is lowered by one letter grade.

**Make-up Policy:**
Students are provided with three ‘No Questions Asked’ (NQA) coupons that enable them to make up an in-class activity, paper, or exam up to one week past the due date. Coupons cannot be applied to the Workbook Notes. After submitting three late assignments, all future late assignments will result in an automatic zero. Coupons may not be shared or replicated. Unused coupons will be counted toward extra credit if the student submitted all assignments and completed all exams on time. A coupon may also be used to make up an absence. If you miss class you need to see me or a classmate before the next class period to discover what you missed.

**Academic Honesty:**
Students are expected to act with personal integrity, to respect other students’ opinions and property, and to help create an academic environment in which discussion is encouraged. Students are expected not to engage or tolerate acts of plagiarism, cheating, copying, fabrication of citations, or other acts of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is treated seriously in this course. If you are quoting someone verbatim, then you must use quotation marks and cite the source immediately after the quotation in parenthetical form, (author’s last name, page number). If you are unsure whether or not you are citing sources correctly, please ask me. Ignorance is no excuse. Students charged with academic dishonesty face serious consequences that range from an F grade for the assignment to an F grade for the course.

**Disabilities Accommodation:**
If you have a physical, sensory, health, cognitive, or mental health disability that could limit your ability to fully participate in this class, you are encouraged to contact the Disability Specialist Counselor to discuss reasonable accommodations that will help you succeed in this class. Ann Lemke can be reached at 235-7448, lemke@hawaii.edu, or you may stop by Hale Akoakoa 213 for more information.

**Title IX:**
Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. Specifically, Title IX prohibits sex discrimination; sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, including harassment based on actual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression; sexual assault; sexual exploitation; domestic violence; dating violence; and stalking. For more information regarding your rights under Title IX, please visit: [https://windward.hawaii.edu/Title_IX/](https://windward.hawaii.edu/Title_IX/). Windward Community College is committed to the pursuit of equal education. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination or gender-based violence, WCC has resources to support you. To speak with someone confidentially, contact the Mental Health & Wellness Office at 808-235-7393 or Kaahu Alo, Designated Confidential Advocate for Students, at 808-235-7354 or kaahualo@hawaii.edu. To make a formal report, contact the Title IX Coordinator, Karla K. Silva-Park, at 808-235-7468 or karlas@hawaii.edu.

**Alternate Contact Information:**
If you are unable to contact the instructor, have questions that your instructor cannot answer, or for any other issues, please contact the Academic Affairs Office:
Location: Alakai 121
Phone: 808-235-7422
Email: wccaa@hawaii.edu

**Extra Credit:**
Extra credit can be earned by writing additional analysis papers to a science fiction book, game, film, or show that deals with religious themes. Please see the guidelines for writing an analysis paper under the “Course Tasks” section of the syllabus. Students may turn in up to four extra credit papers. Earning an A letter grade on all four extra credit papers entails raising your course grade by one letter grade. Extra credit papers can be turned in throughout the semester. However, no more than two extra credit papers per student will be accepted during the last two weeks of classes. All extra credit must be received by May 3, 2019.

Cell Phones:
Kindly do not answer phone calls, text message, or play games on your cell phone during class. The instructor urges you to turn off your cell phone during class. The consequence for cell phone use is ______________________________________________________________ (students will vote on a policy during the first week of classes).

Services:
For tutoring, Writing Center services, Math Lab, Speech Lab, test proctoring, computing services, academic and financial advising, free food, and more services available on campus please see https://windward.hawaii.edu/Academic_Support/ and/or https://windward.hawaii.edu/online/eveningResources.php  Windward is one of the most supportive colleges! Please utilize all of the wonderful services that are there to help you succeed 

RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WILL HELP YOU IN THIS CLASS

1. **Keep up with the readings and viewings!** Since the course is set up to discuss the readings and viewings in class, if you do not complete the readings/viewings then you will feel completely lost in class and not have an enriching educational experience. Additionally, by doing the readings and viewings, you will be well prepared for the quizzes and exams.

2. **Stay organized.** Use a planner! Put important deadlines for assignments from all of your courses into the planner. Create a weekly schedule with your school and work hours. Schedule in blocks of time when you plan to study, read, and complete the assignments.

3. **Ask questions if you don’t understand.** Tell me to slow down if I am going too fast. Let me know if you’re having any problems. I am here to help you ☺️ Let me know how I can make this the best educational experience for you!