

Religion 296: Special Topics in Religion
Spr 16 Topic: Science Fiction and Religion

3 credits
MW 8:30-9:45

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Sarah Hadmack
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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:45-1:00pm
Fridays 10:30-11:25am
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EFFECTIVE DATE: Spring 2016

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.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Students will investigate important topics in the study of religion.

Spring 2016 Special Topic Description: Science Fiction and Religion

In this course we will explore and critically reflect on the presence of religion in science fiction films and television shows. We'll also look at how science fiction itself can become a religion, such as the case of the Jedi Knight religion. Science fiction landmarks do more than refer to religious motifs; they constitute examples of contemporary religious myth-making. We will 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, Stargate, Doctor Who, Battlestar Galactica, the Avengers, Superman, and more. So "live long and prosper" and "may the force be with you!"

WRITING INTENSIVE HALLMARKS

The hallmarks of a writing intensive course are:

1. Writing promotes learning of course content.
2. Writing is considered to be a process in which multiple drafts are encouraged.
3. Writing contributes significantly to each student's course grade.
4. Students do a substantial amount of writing, a minimum of 4,000 words. Depending on the types of writing appropriate to the discipline, students may write critical essays or reviews, journal entries, lab reports, research reports or reaction papers.

To allow for meaningful teacher-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

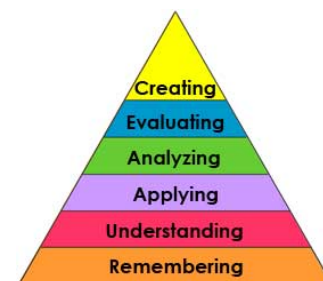
The student learning outcomes for the course are:

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 textbook and the professor's notes.
- Collaborative learning: this course is discussion based. Part of the philosophy behind this is that studies have shown that 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:
 - When watching a documentary you are usually watching the film to inform yourself about a new topic; the main object is often just to understand the content being discussed. 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.
 - 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, in addition to the course reader and supplemental text. Even if you have already watched some of the films/shows we will be viewing in this course, 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.



Collaborative learning is when students work in groups to solve a problem, create a product, and/or consider the meaning of an issue.

COURSE TASKS

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

- ✎ Complete two exams. Exams will be based on material covered in class, the course readings, and the course viewings. You are allowed to use a 4x6 note card during the exams. Exam two contains content from the group presentations.


- 📖 Complete the writing assignments.
 1. Supplemental Text Analysis Paper – 3 full, typed pages (12pt font, double spaced, one inch margins)
 - Select one of the supplemental texts listed under the “Learning Resources” section of the syllabus
 - Your paper should either engage with a major theme of the whole book or should be an analysis of a particular chapter or two.
 - Only the first paragraph of the paper should contain a summary of the book/chapter(s). The rest of the paper should be an analysis. Write in terms of asking questions and solving problems. Use concrete examples from the book to demonstrate your argument or to support the solution to the problem you present.
 - Some possible (but certainly not exhaustive!) topics to address in your paper:
 - How does the book/chapter(s) relate to in-class discussion on
 1. the monomyth?
 2. the role of imagination in the final frontiers of religious expression?
 3. contemporary religious myth-making?
 4. and/or religious themes of the messianic hero, immortality, free will and determinism, prophecy, evil, mysticism, and/or apocalypse?
 - What is the author’s main argument? Are you convinced? Why or why not?
 - Is there a bias or agenda to the book/chapter(s)? Explain.
 2. Film/Show Analysis Paper, Blog Post, **OR** Slam Poem –
 - 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 (aka, it can’t be just any sci-fi show; it needs to engage with a religion or moral/ethical issues).
 - I encourage you to make your own personal selection. However, if you’re drawing a blank, here are some films/shows you could use: *The Avengers*, *Contact*, *Babylon 5*, *X-Men*, *Heroes*, *Avatar*, etc.
 - Some possible topics to consider if they are touched on by your film/show:
 - How do science fiction films and shows reflect religious diversity?
 - How do they address ethical and moral dilemmas of modern society?
 - How do these ‘cultural texts’ constitute and influence religious reality?

- How do the writers view the line between rationalism, skepticism, belief, and religion?
 - If you choose the Analysis Paper: approximately 3 full typed pages (12pt font, double spaced, one inch margins)
 - 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: approximately 1,250 words
 - Write a blog post on a fan site about how the film/show corresponds to religious motifs discussed in class.
 - 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. 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. 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 word-for-word without using quotation marks or giving the author credit immediately after the sentence then you will receive an automatic F grade on the assignment.

👥 Complete a group presentation.

- You will be assigned to a group and, as a group, will select your topic. You may not use any of the films/shows used in class. This is your chance to inform the class about other sci-fi films/shows that relate to our course topics. The presentation should include a visual aid and a handout for other students in the class. You also need to submit a written report for the professor (details provided in class). Part of your own grade for the presentation entails responding to other groups' presentations in writing. Content from the group presentations will appear on the final exam.
- Meet with your group members **early in the semester and often**, both in person and via email/text/social networking. In my experience from grading a plethora of previous group presentations, the groups that were most successful **communicated often and rehearsed as a whole group at least twice** before their actual presentation. Additional information on the presentation will be passed out during class.

- 📄 Complete reading/viewing quizzes and worksheets. Some class periods will start with a quiz on the reading/viewing. For other class periods you will be asked to submit a worksheet on the reading/viewing via Laulima the night **before** the class period in which we will discuss that reading/viewing. Please note: the reading/viewing quizzes and worksheets are **not listed in the syllabus**. Please pay attention in class for due dates for the worksheets and come to class on time to complete the reading/viewing quizzes.

-  Complete a variety of in-class activities including webs, sentence stems, movers and shakers, pair square, popcorn reading, role cards, round table, silent Socratic dialogue, toss a 'test,' crossword puzzles, Venn diagrams, game shows, etc.
- These assignments enhance analysis, synthesis, and critical thinking skills. They also enable you to reflect on themes in class and comprehend the topics in a more sophisticated (and fun!) manner.
 - Many of these activities will be completed in groups typically consisting of 3-4 members.
 - For some of these in-class activities you will receive detailed feedback. For other assignments you may only receive a check plus mark indicating full credit, a check mark indicating partial credit, or a check minus mark indicating no credit.
 - Since group assignments require being present for class, some of these assignments cannot be made up, regardless of reason, if class is missed. It is your responsibility to see the professor to get missed material.

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND GRADING

Grades will be based on the following:

-Two Exams (10% each)	20%
-Supplemental Text Analysis Paper	15%
-Film/Show Analysis Paper/ Blog Post/ Slam Poem.....	15%
-Group Presentation.....	20%
-Reading/Viewing Quizzes & Worksheets.....	15%
-Class Participation as measured by Class Activities.....	15%
Total:	100%

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)

 Please choose one of the following supplemental texts:

- *Sacred Space* by Douglas E. Cowan
- *The Gospel According to Science Fiction* by Gabriel McKee
- *The Dharma of Star Wars* by Matthew Bortolin

 Netflix membership (membership costs approximately \$8/month; please go to netflix.com)
OR Amazon Prime (approximately \$80/year; please go to amazon.com)

Also, please make sure you have the following:

-  a version of Microsoft Word (you will receive feedback through Word comment bubbles for your writing assignments) You don't have to buy MS Word; you can use it at the library.
-  PDF viewer (for reading the professor's notes) <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>

CLASS SCHEDULE*

*Note:

1. Assignments are due during the first fifteen minutes of class.
2. Quizzes are given during the first fifteen minutes of class.
3. Class schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class.

Date	Class Topics	Required Readings/Viewings and Assignments Due
M 1/11	Welcome to the course! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Syllabus • Time to peruse secondary text options 	
W 1/13	Introduction to the course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing the sci-fi genre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Difference between sci-fi and fantasy • Describing the major religious motifs • Introducing the hero archetype • Introducing Moses, Jesus, and Buddha 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read 1_SuperheroMythAndRestorationOfParadise.pdf 2. Select your additional reading and pick up from the library/ purchase it today.
M 1/18	NO CLASSES	
W 1/20	Film: Superman	Read 2_SupermanPopularCultureMessiah.pdf
M 1/25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Superman: film completion and discussion 2. Groups assigned for the presentations 	
W 1/27	Campbell's Monomyth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read 3_Monomyth.pdf 2. Read 4_TheHeroAndTheGod.pdf
M 2/1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Monomyth continued 2. Film: Star Wars: Empire Strikes Back 	Read 5_Departure.pdf
W 2/3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Star Wars: film completion 	start reading the Buddha Karita and the Bible's Gospel of Luke (available online in several places) Type your notes on what you feel are the most important parts of Buddha's and Jesus' life story. Take notes on parts you feel follow and/or deviate from the monomyth. Be sure to reference the readings with book number and verse (for Buddha Karita) and chapter and verse (for Gospel

		reading)
M 2/8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Star Wars: discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying features of the monomyth Problematizing the monomyth 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the readings from previous class Watch one of the other seven (main) Star Wars films. Note: unavailable on Netflix. Please plan in advance to borrow from a friend, check out of the UHM library, or rent from a local video store or online.
W 2/10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of “The Mythology of Star Wars with George Lucas and Bill Moyers” Buddha, Jesus, and the Hero Archetype discussion 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the readings from the previous two class periods; bring your typed notes to turn in after discussion View “The Mythology of Star Wars with George Lucas and Bill Moyers” (available on vimeo.com)
M 2/15	NO CLASSES	
W 2/17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Buddha, Jesus, and the Hero Archetype discussion continued The Jedi Knight religion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial considerations of when, how, and why sci-fi becomes religion 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read 6_StarWarsChosenAsReligionCzechRep.pdf Read 7_CzechRepublicSeesRiseOfJediKnights.pdf
M 2/22	Show: Doctor Who: The Parting of the Ways	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> View: “Gridlock” in Doctor Who Season 3 Episode 3. Take general notes. View: “The Fires of Pompeii” in Doctor Who Season 4 Episode 2 Presentation topics due
W 2/24	Doctor Who: discussion of “Gridlock” and the episodes you selected	View two back-to-back episodes of your choice in Doctor Who season 5 (2010) or season 6 (2011). Bring in your typed notes on the episodes. Your notes should reflect whether or not the episodes touch upon the religious motifs and hero archetype discussed in class.
M 2/29	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> PBS Arts : Is Doctor Who a Religion? Whovians and Doctor Who as religion What then, constitutes religion? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read 8_DoctorWhoTimeTravelThroughFaith.pdf Read 9_WhyDoesDoctorWhoEscapeModernScepticism.pdf
W 3/2	Review for Exam 1	
M 3/7	Exam 1	
W 3/9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Varieties of Attitudes toward Religion in the Star Trek franchise Show: Star Trek DS9 “Accession” 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> View “In the Hands of the Prophets” in Star Trek Deep Space Nine Season 1 Episode 20 Read 10_DeedsOfPower.pdf
M	Discussion of Star Trek episodes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> View “Sacred Ground” in Star Trek Voyager

3/14	and religious themes	Season 3 Episode 7 2. Read 11_ReCoveringSacredGround.pdf
W 3/16	Star Trek films and fandom	1. Read 12_OutwardVoyageAndInwardSearch.pdf 2. Read 13_BiblicalInterpretationStarTrekUniverse.pdf 3. Supplemental Text Critical Analysis OR Film/Show Analysis Paper/Blog Entry/Slam Poem due
M 3/21	NO CLASSES	
W 3/23	NO CLASSES	
M 3/28	Group 1 Presentation	
W 3/30	Group 2 Presentation	
M 4/4	Conferences	Only come for the day and time of your conference. Come with questions about the rest of the course and be prepared to discuss your work.
W 4/6	Conferences	Same as above
M 4/11	Stargate: the Von Daniken paradox and the “Broca Divide”	Read 14_TheVonDanikenParadoxStargateSG1.pdf
W 4/13	Stargate: The Varieties of Religious Experience	Supplemental Text Critical Analysis OR Film/Show Analysis Paper/Blog Entry/Slam Poem revisions due
M 4/18	Group 3 Presentation	
W 4/20	Group 4 Presentation	
M 4/25	Battlestar Galactica	View “Flesh and Bone” Season 1 Episode 8 (2005)
W 4/27	Film: The Matrix	Read 15_NeoMessianicSuperhero
M 5/2	The Matrix: film completion and discussion	Submit the paper you didn’t turn in on 3/16 (either the Supplemental Text Critical Analysis OR Film/Show Analysis Paper/Blog Entry/Slam Poem)
W 5/4	Review for Exam 2	
W	Exam 2	

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Attendance Policy:

You 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 a quiz, writing assignment, exam, absence, or in-class activity **up to one week past the due date**. Without the NQA coupon, late work will not be accepted. Coupons may not be shared or replicated. Unused coupons will be counted towards extra credit.

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). Students charged with academic dishonesty face serious consequences that range from an F grade for the assignment to a F grade for the course.

Extra Credit:

Extra credit can be earned by writing additional analysis papers to a science fiction book, 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.

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).

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.

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!