

UO Clark Honors College Arts & Letters H221 | Fall 2021 | CRN 12920

Cinematic Religion

Instructor: Dr. Erica Mongé-Greer
emonge@uoregon.edu

Office: Chapman Hall 306
Drop-in Hours: Tue/Thur 1pm-2pm

Class Meets in Tykeson 340
Tue/Thur 10am-11:20am



Course Overview

This course looks at film and tv series that directly reference a deity or deities as a reflection of how “god” is conceived in modern culture. Students may expect to prepare for class by watching movies, tv-series, and reflect on selected readings from ancient texts (translated into English) as well as modern cinema critiques and evaluations. There may be occasions to read and or cite film or series scripts as well. Students will be required to view specific films in whole or part as assigned with a view to analyze, and, in some cases, provide a comparison. This course will include a philosophical evaluation of what it means to call something or someone “god”, working to contextualize presumptions about the supernatural. The course will also explore belief systems like atheism, agnosticism, pluralism, and monotheism.

Learning Outcomes

This course includes reading from a wide range of sources. This includes introductory material covering basics about the field of religious studies as well as contemporary, popular views of religion. Students will be encouraged to work out their own understanding as they create definitions for high level concepts like “faith” and “religion.” This will be accomplished by critically evaluating descriptions offered by philosophers, theologians, and anthropologists as well as by observing religious application in visual media across a range of genres, including comedy, drama, horror, sci-fi, and others.

Each week, students will read assigned material and watch assigned cinematic productions and prepare to engage in critical evaluation and analysis of content. Class sessions will involve informed discussion and critique of the material. By the end of this course, students will be practiced in the following learning outcomes:

1. Critically observe and evaluate written and visual content, forming creative and appropriate responses. *[practiced in small group discussions, and analytical essays]*
2. Integrate material from multiple sources (and mediums) to support a clear and cohesive argument. *[practiced in the final cumulative written project]*
3. Develop and articulate reasoned responses to issues, ideas, and sources. *[practiced in forming discussion prompts and contributing to class discussion]*
4. Engage with and reflect on examples of diverse human identities, experiences and thought. *[practiced with weekly reading and viewing]*
5. Express empathy, a passion for justice, and an appreciation for the value of different modes of living. *[practiced in class discussions and interdisciplinary reading material]*
6. Productively engage in academic dialogue and debate. *[practiced in class discussion, analytical essays, and in the final cumulative written project]*
7. Draw from interdisciplinary knowledge and experience to integrate a range of disciplinary inputs in critical evaluation of course material. *[practiced in the final cumulative written project]*

Course Materials

- Aslan, Reza. *God: A Human History*. New York: Random House, 2017.
- Blizek, William L. *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*. London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

- Cunningham, Lawrence S., Kelsay, John. *Sacred Quest: An Invitation to the Study of Religion*. Boston: Pearson, 2018.
- Assorted Films and Series available on Streaming Services or on DVD (may be costs associated for renting or streaming)
- Other Articles or Book Extracts will be made available on Canvas

Assignments

Assignment Details and submission requirements are posted on Canvas. Late submissions will be downgraded unless specific arrangements have been made *in advance of the due date by email (emonge@uoregon.edu)*.

Weeks 1-10	Attendance/Participation: show up & submit discussion prompts	20%
Week 3	Personal History of God (max 1500 words, MLA)	10%
Weeks 4, 6, 8	Three Analytical Mini-Essays (max 2pgs/1k words single space)	30%
Week 11	Final Cumulative Writing Project, Extended from a Mini-Essay Selection (max 2500 words, MLA)	40%

Grading Scale

A+ (4.3) = 97-100 Excellent! Work Exceeds highest expectations.	B+ (3.3) = 87-89 Good! Work is thorough and detailed.	C+ (2.3) = 77-79 Satisfactory! Work meets all expectations.	D+ (1.3) = 67-69 Inferior. Work meets criteria, but with some inefficiency.
A (4) = 93-96 Excellent! Work quality meets highest expectations.	B (3) = 83-86 Good! Work demonstrates high quality output.	C (2) = 73-76 Satisfactory! Work demonstrates acceptable understanding.	D (1) = 63-66 Inferior. Work lacks a substantial contribution.
A (3.7) = 90-92 Excellent! Work is among the best seen.	B- (2.7) = 80-82 Good! Work exceeds minimum expectations.	C- (1.7) = 70-72 Satisfactory! Work meets minimum criteria.	D- (.7) = 60-62 Inferior. Large gaps in submission.

Nota Bene: according to the academic standard, a grade of 'C' is "satisfactory," meaning that work must meet all criteria adequately. A grade of 'B' is "good," or better than average, and is awarded for work submission that exceeds the minimum criteria. This grade scale is meant to reflect not only the

amount of effort a student exhibits, but also the time, understanding, and accomplishment of the student. For more information on University specific policies about grading, please see the [Registrar](#).

An 'A' Paper will demonstrate excellence in the following areas: A TITLE that accurately reflects the topic and scope of the paper; a THESIS STATEMENT which clearly states the purpose of the paper and provides insight for the reader into the direction of the argument and key source material; ORGANIZATION that demonstrates a clear, logical flow of information with effective transitions between single topic paragraphs. Source material should be worked creatively and purposefully into content written in the author's own voice; RESEARCH should be evident in the content as well as by means of properly cited quotations, explained persuasively with coherent integration of language; LANGUAGE exemplifies eloquence and economy of expression, accurate and effective word choice, and awareness of audience; and, finally, MECHANICS should demonstrate near flawless writing cohesion, accurate spelling and grammar, varied sentence structure and appropriate transitions, MLA-style followed for in-text citations and bibliography, and quotations appropriately blocked and cited throughout.

Policies

Attendance

Attendance credit is earned by showing up in class on time and participating. One absence will go unpenalized. Each additional absence reduces the final course grade by one step (i. e. an B+ will become a B; a C- becomes a D). Two absences may be made up with a writing assignment. It is up to the student to request make-up material. Frequent tardiness interrupts the flow of the course and will be addressed with the student, penalties will follow if tardiness remains an issue. Extenuating circumstances requiring a student's absence will be accommodated by alternative means. Please see UO policy for more [information on absences](#). Please contact me immediately and remember to consult your CHC advisor.

Electronic Devices

Laptop use is discouraged unless we have a specific in-class activity. Laptops are acceptable for notetaking, but please be sensitive that flashing screens can be distracting for other students. To diminish this affect, please set notetaking software to full screen. Please avoid using cell phones.

Campus Policies

The following are campus-wide policies and links to specific University websites for more information.

Academic Disruption due to Campus Emergency

“In the event of a campus emergency that disrupts academic activities, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change. Information about changes in this course will be communicated as soon as possible by email, and on Canvas. If we are not able to meet face-to-face, students should immediately log onto Canvas and read any announcements and/or access alternative assignments. Students are also expected to continue coursework as outlined in this syllabus or other instructions on Canvas.

In the event that the instructor of this course has to quarantine, this course may be taught online during that time.”

COVID Containment Plan for Classes

*As the University of Oregon returns to in-person instruction, the key to keeping our community healthy and safe involves **prevention**, **containment**, and **support**. Here is information critical to how the UO is responding to COVID-19.*

- **Prevention:** *To prevent or reduce the spread of COVID-19 in classrooms and on campus, all students and employees:*
 1. *Must to be comply with [vaccination policy](#)*
 2. *Must [wear face coverings](#) in all indoor spaces on UO campus*
 3. *Complete weekly [testing](#) if not fully vaccinated or exempted*
 4. *[Wash hands](#) frequently and practice social distancing when possible*
 5. *Complete daily [self-checks](#)*
 6. *Stay home/do not come to campus if feeling [symptomatic](#)*
 7. *Complete the UO [COVID-19 case and contact reporting form](#) if you test positive or have been in close contact with a confirmed or presumptive case.*
- **Containment:** *If a student in class tests positive for COVID-19, all relevant classes will be notified via an email by the Corona Corps Care Team with*

instructions for students and staff based on their vaccination status.

Specifically:

1. **Vaccinated and Asymptomatic students:** Quarantine not required, but daily self-monitoring before coming on campus is advised; sign up for testing through MAP 3-5 days after exposure if advised you are a contact.”
2. **Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated students:** 14-day quarantine advised – do not come to class – and sign up for testing 3-5 days after notification through [MAP](#), if asymptomatic, or through University Health Services (541-346-2770) or your primary care provider, if symptomatic.
3. **Symptomatic students:** stay home (do not come to class/campus), complete the online [case and contact form](#), and contact University Health Services (541-346-2770) or your primary care provide to arrange for immediate COVID-19 testing.

Students identified as a **close contacts** of a positive case will be contacted by the Corona Corps Care Team (541-346-2292).

- **Support:** The following resources are available to you as a student.
 - [University Health Services](#) or call (541) 346-2770
 - [University Counseling Center](#) or call (541) 346-3277 or (541) 346-3227 (after hrs.)
 - [MAP Covid-19 Testing](#)
 - [Corona Corps](#) or call (541) 346-2292
 - [Academic Advising](#) or call (541) 346-3211
 - [Dean of Students](#) or call (541)-346-3216

Good Classroom Citizenship

- Wear your **mask** and make sure it fits you well
- **Stay home** if you're sick
- **Get to know your neighbors** in class, and let them know if you test positive
- **Get tested** regularly
- Watch for **signs and symptoms** with the daily symptom self-check
- **Wash your hands** frequently or use hand sanitizer

Complete the UO COVID-19 [case and contact reporting form](#) if you test positive or are a close contact of someone who tests positive.”

Accessible Education - (see <https://aec.uoregon.edu/best-practices-faculty> for more information)

“The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.”

Academic Misconduct

“The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at <https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>.”

Inclement Weather

“It is generally expected that class will meet unless the University is officially closed for inclement weather. If it becomes necessary to cancel class while the University remains open, this will be announced on Canvas and by email. Updates on inclement weather and closure are also communicated in other ways described here: <https://hr.uoregon.edu/about-hr/campus-notifications/inclement-weather/inclement-weather-immediate-updates>”

Reporting Obligations

“I am a designated reporter. For information about my reporting obligations as an employee, please see [Employee Reporting Obligations](#) on the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance (OICRC) website. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including sex or gender-based

violence, may seek information and resources at safe.uoregon.edu, respect.uoregon.edu, or investigations.uoregon.edu or contact the non-confidential Title IX office/Office of Civil Rights Compliance (541-346-3123), or Dean of Students offices (541-346-3216), or call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE for help. I am also a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Please find more information at [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).”

See <https://investigations.uoregon.edu/suggested-syllabus-language> for additional recommended syllabus language.

Mental Health and Wellness

"Life at college can be very complicated. Students often feel overwhelmed or stressed, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationships, or just need help navigating challenges in their life. If you're facing such challenges, you don't need to handle them on your own--there's help and support on campus.

As your instructor if I believe you may need additional support, I will express my concerns, the reasons for them, and refer you to resources that might be helpful. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I care and that help is available. Getting help is a courageous thing to do—for yourself and those you care about.

University Health Services help students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. If you need general resources on coping with stress or want to talk with another student who has been in the same place as you, visit the Duck Nest (located in the EMU on the ground floor) and get help from one of the specially trained Peer Wellness Advocates. Find out more at health.uoregon.edu/ducknest.

University Counseling Services (UCS) has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at counseling.uoregon.edu or by calling 541-346-3227 (anytime UCS is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number).”

Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect

their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (346-3216, 164 Oregon Hall) for support.

This UO webpage includes resources for food, housing, healthcare, childcare, transportation, technology, finances, and legal support: <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/basicneeds/food/>

Accommodation for Religious Observances

The university makes reasonable accommodations, upon request, for students who are unable to attend a class for religious obligations or observance reasons, in accordance with the university discrimination policy which says “Any student who, because of religious beliefs, is unable to attend classes on a particular day shall be excused from attendance requirements and from any examination or other assignment on that day. The student shall make up the examination or other assignment missed because of the absence.” To request accommodations for this course for religious observance, visit the Office of the Registrar's website (<https://registrar.uoregon.edu/calendars/religious-observances>) and complete and submit to the instructor the “Student Religious Accommodation Request” form prior to the end of the second week of the term.