

## R202 - Syllabus

**CLASS:** R202 - L01

**TERM:** Summer 2016

**TIME:** Tuesdays 6:30-9:20pm (hybrid)

**LOCATION:** Lebanon Center 200

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Timothy Watson

**OFFICE HOURS:** after class or by appointment

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### TEXTBOOKS

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (ISBN: 978-0385721677)

The Dalai Lama, *The Universe In A Single Atom* (ISBN: 978-0767920810)

(see online syllabus for online resources as well)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Explores the nature of religion as experienced historically throughout the world. Examines the nature of religious experience with the divine and the relationship between science and religion. Discusses the roles of language, myths, and symbols in religion.

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- articulate an awareness of the varieties of religious expression and the dynamic nature of religious traditions;
- describe a variety of methodological approaches to the study of religion (e.g. anthropological, philosophical, sociological, feminist, postcolonial);
- discuss and examine the diverse debates and issues related to the study of religion;
- practice reflexivity, identifying and critically examining the source and content of one's own cultural perspectives and world-views.

### REQUIREMENTS

In order to fulfill the learning outcomes above, student performance in this class is focused in the following three coordinating channels: attendance/participation; reading/journaling; and a narrative project. Student performance in each of these channels will be assessed equally as 1/3 the overall grade.

## ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION

Beyond just "attendance" or absorbing information from a lecture, the scheduled class sessions are meant to be a collaborative forum for discussion and feedback. Thus attending class and engaging in dialogue is essential to fulfilling the student learning objectives above and will be assessed accordingly. Since this is a hybrid modality, in addition to the other assignments and attending the class sessions, each student must post two substantive posts to the online reading forums per week.

## READING / JOURNALING

Key to understanding any religion is a basic knowledge of its primary texts. A selection of readings from these texts is provided below and is divided into somewhat equal portions to be completed each week, along with hand-written reading journals (RJ's) of your thoughts and reactions to the reading. See Appendix A for more details.

## NARRATIVE PROJECT – Build Your Own Religion (BYOR)

This is a project you will create in the medium of your choice (written paper, art, podcast, graphic novel, movie, etc.) to tell the story of the survivors of some global cataclysm (natural or otherwise) and the reinvention of religion for future generations of humans (and/or other species). See Appendix B for more details.

## COURSE CALENDAR

RJ = Reading Journal

BYOR = Build Your Own Religion

W#	DATE	RJ	IPD
1	June-28	-	-
2	July-5	RJ1	-
3	July-12	RJ2	BYOR1
4	July-19	RJ3	BYOR2
5	July-26	RJ4	BYOR3

## APPENDIX A: Reading Forums and Journals

### Reading Journals:

The reading journal is NOT a summary or outline of what you read, it is a record of what you think about what you read. These journals will be used to assess whether you read the assigned reading and the extent to which you engage with it. Therefore, unless you indicate otherwise, it will be assumed that you completed ALL the pages of the assigned reading and your journal should reflect this. Each journal should be at least 2 pages, HAND-WRITTEN and brought to class.

### Online Forum:

To fulfill your online discussion requirements for this class post at least two substantive posts to the forum links below. A substantive post can be in several forms: it can be a question that leads to finding real answers or better questions; it can be an answer to someone else's question or your own; or it can be an example or explanation that improves our understanding of the topic in question. Also, your posts can be either beginning a new thread or responding to another thread.

### SCHEDULE:

Week 1 – (begin RJ1 for week two)

Week 2 (RJ1) *Oryx and Crake* (whole book)

Week 3 (RJ2) – choose 3 of the following online readings:

- Tolstoy, *What Is Religion?* (1-7)
- Durkeim, *Elementary Forms* (1-8)
- Frazer, *Golden Bough* (1-6)
- Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1-10)
- Weber, *Sociology of Religion A1* (1-3)
- James, *Varieties* (3-10)
- Eliade, *Sacred and Profane* (8-18)
- Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (1-10)
- Feuerbach, *Atheism Alone* (all)

Week 4 (RJ3) – choose 1 of the following online readings:

- Tolstoy, *What Is Religion?* (8-48)
- Durkeim, *Elementary Forms* (8-44)
- Frazer, *Golden Bough* (7-80)
- Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (10-78)
- Weber, *Sociology of Religion B* (3-27)
- James, *Varieties* (10-52)
- Eliade, *Sacred and Profane* (20-65)
- Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (10-60)

Week 5 (RJ4) *The Universe In A Single Atom* (whole book)

## **APPENDIX B: *Build Your Own Religion (BYOR)***

This is a narrative project you will create, in the medium of your choice (written paper, art, podcast, graphic novel, movie, etc.) to tell the story of the survivors of some global cataclysm (natural or otherwise) and the reinvention of religion for future generations of humans (and/or other species). Your project should have 3 parts, 3+ pages typed (or equivalent) each, submitted separately through the link below.

### **Part One (BYOR1): Who are We? Where Do We Come From?**

Your story begins sometime in the near future, shortly after some global cataclysm. There are a few survivors who must repopulate and start over. But as the only survivors, they get to decide what and how to tell the story to the subsequent generations. And as the official storytellers, they get to explain the cataclysm, what caused it, how this group survived, etc. Your survivors also have the unique opportunity to introduce a completely custom-made religion or way of life in hopes for a better future than the past. Thus, as the "back-story" to your religion, this part of the story should address the following aspects of your religion:

- god(s), heroes, villains, prophets, etc. and their roles
- creation/origins of the universe and especially our species
- our nature as human beings (freewill/fate, good vs. evil, sin, morality, etc.)
- human history leading up to present circumstances/problems/challenges

### **Part Two (BYOR2): Where Are We Going? How Do We Get There?**

This chapter is about the destiny of human beings or at least the survivors. Beyond just staying alive, what—if anything—are humans meant to experience. Is it here? Is it a better place (heaven, another planet, back on this planet, surface, etc.)? What happens after we die? And finally, how must we live to realize this destiny? This part of the story should address the following aspects of your religion:

- human destiny or afterlife (heaven, hell, nirvana, some future "better world," etc.)
- the RULES (commandments, morality, rules of society, rituals, holidays, etc)
- social structure (leadership, government, economics, relationships, etc.)

### **Part Three (BYOR3): How did we do?**

This part of the story is told from the perspective of many generations (several hundred years) after this religion/way of life is established. How did the religion work? Did we improve on our previous attempts at guiding our fellow humans toward our proper destiny? Or did we end up in the same old patterns, or worse?! This part of the story should deal with some of the following possible aspects of the intervening history:

- conflicts, splits, schisms, controversies, heresies, persecutions, etc.
- wars, revolutions, natural disasters, other challenges
- were our expectations accurate?
- what does this "better world" look like?
- was it all just hopeful thinking? what have we learned?

## APPENDIX C: Course Policies and Grading

### **Class Preparedness and Student Conduct:**

All of the performance categories are meant to support and feed each other, then to converge in class through discussion and collaborative experience. But this convergence is dependent on individual student preparedness in terms of completing the reading selections, journals and narrative segments. Therefore it is important that students keep pace with the course calendar and performance items that are not submitted as scheduled are subject to a reduction in assessment value.

Finally, anything submitted is assumed to be the student's own 'original' work, unless otherwise instructed. Collaboration is encouraged but misuse of sources or copying other students' work will not be tolerated. In this class, "plagiarism" or "misuse of sources" will be defined as the following: the appropriation of any substantial ideas or grouping of words from a source other than the student and submitted in an assignment or test as an original contribution.

### **Grading Policies:**

Instead of a numerical/point grading system, your performance in this class will be represented by the following symbols for each category assessed:

complete fulfilment = X  
partial fulfilment = /  
negligible fulfillment = null

Then these symbols will represent your overall grade in each of the three performance categories in this class (attendance/participation; reading/journaling; narrative project), translating to letter grades as follows:

XX/ or XXX = A  
XX or X// = B  
X/ or /// = C  
X or // = D  
none or / = F