

REL 200: Religion in Popular Culture

Pima Community College - East Campus

Fall 2009, CRN: 11342, Three (3) credit hours

Prerequisite(s): None

Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:10am - 11:25pm in E4 403

Instructor: David Gainey

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Office Hours: By appointment

Description and objectives: Exploration of the relationship between religion and contemporary society. Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Describe and evaluate representations of religion in popular culture.
2. Investigate ways in which religion functions as popular culture and vice-versa.
3. Examine and discuss conflicts which arise between religion and popular culture.

Outline:

- I. Representations of Religion in Popular Culture
 - A. Overview of select religious traditions
 - B. Variety of representations in diverse media
 - C. Critical perspectives
 - D. Popular media
- II. Function of Religion as Popular Culture
 - A. Popular forms of religion and spirituality
 - B. Religious elements of popular phenomena
 - C. Popular media
- III. Conflicts between Religion and Popular Culture
 - A. Popular culture and values
 - B. Controversy over popular representations of religion
 - C. Issues of censorship, conflicting rights and the public good
 - D. Popular media

Textbook: Religion and Popular Culture in America (first edition, c 2000) edited by Bruce David Forbes & Jeffrey H. Mahan. This book is available online through Pima Community College, but only one student may view the eBook at a time. Therefore, students are encouraged to purchase a copy of the textbook.

<http://library.pima.edu/search/?treligion+and+popular+culture+in+america/treligion+and+popular+culture+in+america/1%2C1%2C3%2CB/frameset&FF=treligion+and+popular+culture+in+america&1%2C%2C3>

Requirements and Important Dates:

	<u>Date Due</u>	<u>Percentage of Grade</u>
1. Portfolio	10/22	20%
2. Quizzes	<i>Throughout the semester</i>	20%
3. Final Project	11/24 (topic due 11/5, presentations 12/03-17)	40%
4. Exam	12/01	20%

Portfolio: Each student must collect three (3) current examples of the interaction between religion and popular culture. Each example must include a one-paragraph commentary from the student, describing its relevance. One entry must be a song, one entry must be a television episode and one entry must be a movie. Portfolio entries must be current examples (released within the last twelve months). Song entries must include the lyrics. For extra credit, students may also turn in a .wma, .mp3, or other music file. For television episodes and movies, students may turn in a summary of the episode/movie, a brief excerpt of the script, or, for extra credit, a video file of a scene (including YouTube). Students may NOT include songs or movies covered in the class. Please pay attention to the songs we cover in class and take note of the movies we will cover during the semester, so that you do not provide entries that we have discussed or will discuss together. The portfolio must be submitted by Thursday, October 22, 2009.

Quizzes: 1) Tuesday movie quizzes – Students will be assigned ten (10) movies to watch throughout the semester. Each quiz contains ten (10) multiple-choice questions. Students will be assigned the movie on a Thursday and will be quizzed on the content of the movie on the following Tuesday. You must answer seven (7) or more questions correctly to get full credit. If you answer fewer than seven (7) questions correctly, you get a zero (0) for the quiz. If you carefully watch each movie, you will do well on the quizzes. You will have a hard time passing the quizzes without viewing the movies, even if you read reviews or analyses of the movies. Quizzes cannot be taken later without prior permission from the instructor. Students must have the ability to acquire and view popular films (including rated R films) at the theatre, on video or on DVD (the library provides DVD players, VHS players and televisions). 2) Thursday content quizzes – Students will be quizzed on Thursdays for the material covered during the previous class session(s). All quizzes will be given during the first few minutes of class, and students entering after the quiz has been passed out will not be allowed to take it.

Movies: You will be expected to view the movies below. Each movie has a quiz associated with it. It is up to you to acquire a copy of the movies, some of which include an R-rating by the MPAA. However, every movie selected for this class has redeeming qualities for class discussion, though students may be offended by the content of these movies (both religious and irreligious students). My experience is that the movies students least want to watch provide the best learning experience. Therefore, I will not provide alternate movie assignments, so do not ask.

Tentative movies (these movies are subject to change by the instructor): *Signs, Bruce Almighty, Donnie Darko, Dogma, Constantine, The Exorcism of Emily Rose, The Matrix, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (Chronicles of Narnia), The Passion of the Christ and Angels & Demons.*

Final Exam: There is one exam in this course. The final exam contains twenty-two (22) questions, a combination of multiple choice and essay questions. This exam will test your comprehension of material presented in class over the entire semester. The exam is Tuesday, December 1, 2009.

Final Project: Each student will write a five (5) to seven (7) page research paper in MLA format. Each paper must include parenthetical notes and a works cited page. The final project should be an exploration of the relationship between religion and popular culture. The instructor must approve project topics. The topic must be approved by Thursday, November 5, 2009. The written paper is due on Tuesday, November 24, 2009.

Each student will also present his/her project to the entire class during one of the last five (5) class sessions. Presentations may include PowerPoint, video or music clips, .html, or any other format that allows the entire class to benefit from your research. The presentation schedule will be distributed by the final exam. Research papers will not be turned in to students until after their presentation, so please retain a copy of your research paper.

Eighty percent (80%) of your grade will be based on your research paper and the other twenty percent (20%) will be based on the quality of your class presentation. The highest possible grade on the written paper is a ninety (90). If students fail to present to the class, they will lose ten (10) points, resulting in an eighty (80) as the highest possible score. If students present well, they can earn up to an additional ten (10) points, for a possible one hundred (100).

Attendance and participation: Since group discussion is an important part of this class, regular attendance is required and will be recorded. Students who miss a class session are responsible for getting the information from another student, including homework assignments. When a student arrives late to class, it is his or her responsibility to inform the instructor after class that he or she was present. Students are expected to participate in discussion – students who talk during class, text during class, surf the internet during class or work on homework from another class will be asked to leave. Cell phones must be turned off during class. Students must also be able to regularly access their MyPima accounts for required articles.

Withdrawal: The last day to withdraw with a refund (and no grade recorded) is Tuesday, September 8, 2009. The last day to withdraw (with a grade of “W”) is Thursday, November 12, 2009. These are student actions that do not involve the instructor. I do not withdraw students or give incompletes without a personal request from the student. If you stop attending class and do not withdraw yourself or ask me for a withdrawal or incomplete, you will receive an F.

ADA: Pima Community College strives to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Reasonable accommodations, including materials in alternative formats, are available to qualified students with appropriate disability documentation. To obtain accommodations a student must register with a campus Disabled Student Resources (DSR) Office. The student may then obtain authorization for specific accommodations and services. All disability-related information will be kept confidential. The East Campus DSR Office is located in the Library/Student Center room L-231 and their phone number is 206-7699.