

**COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**RELS 321-01: Theology and Literature
Spring 2001**

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Office: Stein 429
Office Hours: M 12:00-12:55; T 3:00-3:55; W 2:00-2:55; R 12:00-12:55; and by appointment
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Course Description:

The general title for this course is Theology and Literature. In this specific seminar, we will be examining Christian theological themes through the literary genre of science fiction/ speculative fiction

Course Requirements:

A. Students will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the material assigned for the day. This seminar involves a good deal of reading: several novels have been included in the syllabus, as well as some short stories, articles, dictionary entries, and biblical passages. Therefore, students should plan to **read ahead** as much as possible.

B. Each student will be expected to prepare and turn in ten discussion sheets (2-3 pages) on the readings assigned for the day. These will form the basis for in-class discussion. More details will be given in class.

C. Each student will be expected to write a longer analysis (5 pages) of *Catholics*, by Brian Moore. More details will be given in class.

D. Each student will be expected to write a final paper (10 pages) analyzing the theological themes in Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (or another novel, in consultation with the professor). More details will be given in class.

E. Class attendance is expected, and is indeed vital for the work of the seminar. If at all possible, please call my office and leave a message if you expect to be absent from a class. The student is responsible for making up work (class notes, hand-outs, etc.) if a class is missed. More than one unexcused absences may cause serious problems in understanding course material. All assignments are due on the day assigned; unexcused late work will receive grading penalties. All assignments are to be typed.

Grading/Evaluation:

50% = Discussion Sheets
10% = Analytical Paper
40% = Final Paper

100% = Final Grade

Class participation will also have an influence on the final grade, especially in the case of borderline grades.

Required Texts:

.Bookstore:

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*.
Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*.
Mary Doria Russell, *The Sparrow*.
Carl Sagan, *Contact*.

Library Reserve:

Andrew Greeley and Michael Cassutt, eds., *Sacred Visions*.
Brian Moore. *Catholics: A Novel*.
Alan Ryan, ed. *Perpetual Light*.

Library Reference:

The Bible (NRSV, RSV, NAB, NIV)
The New Dictionary of Theology

Additional readings may be assigned, either as handouts or on reserve in the library.

Course Outline

Class of:

- 1) Jan. 17 Introduction
Video: *Darmok* (Star Trek NG)
For next class: Discussion Sheet 1: What is a religion? Does the Star Trek phenomenon qualify as a religion?

- 2) Jan. 24 What is a Religion?
Video: *Trekkies*
For next class: Discussion Sheet 2 on *Perelandra*

- 3) Jan. 31 Scripture: Fall and Redemption
C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*.
See also Gen 2: 4- 3: 24.
For next class: Discussion Sheet 3 on "The Quest for Saint Aquin"

- 4) Feb. 7 Scripture and Dystopia: The Church, Balaam's Ass and the Saint
Anthony Boucher, "The Quest for Saint Aquin," in *Sacred Visions*, pp. 309-329.

See also Num 22: 7-35.

For next class: Discussion Sheet 4 on "Contamination"

- 5) Feb. 14 Christianity and Extraterrestrial Life
Richard Bowker, "Contamination," in *Perpetual Light*, pp. 71-86.
Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P., "Christian Theology and Extraterrestrial Life,"
Theological Studies 60 (1/1999): 3-30.
For next class: Discussion Sheet 5 on *Contact I* (= Chs. 1-11)
- 6) Feb. 21 Religion, Science, and Belief
Carl Sagan, *Contact I*
For next class: Discussion Sheet 6 on *Contact II* (= Chs. 12-24)
- 7) Feb. 28 *Contact II*
For next class: Discussion Sheet 7 on *The Handmaid's Tale*
- 8) Mar. 7 **[Spring Break Week]**
- 9) Mar. 14 Dystopia: Feminism and the Religious Right
Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*.
See also Gen 16: 1-15; Lk 10: 38-42; 1 Cor 14: 33-36.
For next class: Discussion Sheet 8 on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
- 10) Mar. 21 Dystopia: Nature, Person, and New Religion
Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
For next class: Discussion Sheet 9 on "The Magi"
- 11) Mar. 28 Jesuits in Fiction: Church, Sin and Salvation
Damien Broderick, "The Magi," in *Perpetual Light*, pp. 300-344.
See also Mt 2: 1-12.
For next class: Discussion Sheet 10 on *The Sparrow I* (= Chs. 1-19)
- 12) Apr. 4 Jesuits in Fiction: Faith and Suffering
Mary Doria Russell, *The Sparrow I*
See also Mt 10: 26-33; Lk 12: 4-7.
- 13) Apr. 11 The Future of the Church
Video: *Catholics* (Brian Moore)
For next class: Discussion Sheet 11 on *The Sparrow II* (= Chs. 20-32)

14) Apr. 18 *The Sparrow II*

15) Apr. 25 Conclusion

[May 1 **Study Week Begins**]

Final Papers Due: Monday, May 7, by 4:00 PM.

NOTE: The above schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.