





Religious Studies (RELS) 218

Introduction to Religion and Popular Culture (Revision 4)

Status:

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode:

Individualized study online  with eText 

Credits:

3

Areas of study:

Arts or Humanities

Prerequisite:

None

Precluded:

None

Challenge:

RELS 218 is not available for challenge.

Faculty:

[Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Overview

Many people believe that religion exists solely in places of worship, but is this really true? Is there a distinct separation between the sacred and the profane? What defines *religion*? —*culture*? Does popular culture influence religion or is it a one-way street? Is today's western, apparently secularized, culture entirely unaware of the religious content—both subtle and obvious—that exists within film, literature, television, music, and the media? This course explores these questions, looking at the interplay between religion and culture in North America, with the goal of evaluating the influence that each exerts on the other.

Outline

- Unit 1: Introduction
- Unit 2: Religion in Popular Culture
- Unit 3: Popular Culture in Religion
- Unit 4: Popular Culture as Religion
- Unit 5: Religion and Popular Culture in Dialogue

Evaluation

In order to pass the course, students must hand in their assignments and pass the exam with a grade of 50 percent or higher, and achieve a composite grade of 50 percent or higher between the exam and the assignments.


Activity	Weight
Assignment 1: Observational Journal	10%
Assignment 2: World Religion Summaries	15%
Assignment 3: Critical Film Review	15%
Assignment 4: Thesis Creation and Works Cited List	10%
Research Paper	20%

Activity	Weight
Final Exam	30%
Total	100%


The **final examination** for this course must be requested in advance and written under the supervision of an AU-approved exam invigilator. Invigilators include either ProctorU or an approved in-person invigilation centre that can accommodate online exams. Students are responsible for payment of any invigilation fees. Information on exam request deadlines, invigilators, and other exam-related questions, can be found at the [Exams and grades](#) section of the Calendar.


To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's [online Calendar](#).


Materials

Forbes, Bruce David, and Jeffrey H. Mahan, eds. Religion and Popular Culture in America. Revised Edition. University of California Press, 2005.  (eText)

Robson, Roy R. Think World Religions. Pearson, 2013.  (Print)

Yeffeth, Glenn, ed. Taking the Red Pill: Science, Philosophy and Religion in The Matrix. Benbella Books, 2003.  (Print)

The Matrix. Dir. Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski. Perf. Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburn, and Carrie-Anne Moss. Warner Bros, 1999.  (Audio/Video)

Star Wars V DVD is now available for loan from the Athabasca University Library.  (Audio/Video)

eText

Registration in this course includes an electronic textbook. For more information on [electronic textbooks](#), please refer to our [eText Initiative](#)

site [↗](#) .

Other Materials

All other course materials can be accessed online through the course website.

Important links

- › [Academic advising](#) [↗](#)
- › [Program planning](#) [↗](#)
- › [Request assistance](#) [↗](#)
- › [Support services](#) [↗](#)

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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Updated July 16, 2024

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