

SPCM 4333: RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION

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IMPORTANT NOTE: I ask that any email correspondence from you be from your uttyler email address, not your personal or other email. Thanks. Likewise, emails to you will be sent to your uttyler email address.

Seminar Description

This course will examine the symbolic construction of religion. It will explore the dialectic between the “sacralization” of the secular and the secularization of the sacred or religious.

Course Description and Learning Objectives

This seminar serves as an introduction to the interplay between religion, culture, and communication. Students will become familiar with:

- The symbolic construction and expression of religion
- A variety of critical approaches
- The adoption of symbolic popular culture in religion (secularization of religion)
- The “sacralization” of the secular

Student Learning Outcomes: At the completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand communication from a variety of theoretical perspectives. **(Competency: Theoretical Knowledge)**
- Appropriately apply communication theory to the communication rules, norms, listening skills, and rhetorical strategies used by the people around them. **(Competency: Theoretical Application).**
- Analyze the role of communication within organizations. **(Competency: Complex Organizations)**

Required Reading

Lyden, John C. (2003). *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*. New York: New York University Press.
Lyden, John C. and Mazur, Eric Michael. (2015). *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge (on reserve at Robert R. Muntz library).
Oswalt, Conrad. (2012). *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination*, 2nd ed. New York: Bloomsbury

Other assigned readings can be found in Canvas.

Assignments

Film Criticism	20%
Group Presentation	20%
Research Paper	30%
Final Exam	20%
Participation & Attendance	10%

Film Criticism: Critical analysis of one film of your choosing from one of the genres in *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* employing John Lyden’s categories in. Length: 4-6 pages. This essay seeks to assist students in examining a film through the three lenses (myths, morals, rituals) that it shares with religion and to compare and contrast how their selected film functions like religion under these categories. The assignment is crafted to attain familiarity and facility with this method and these categories as we move to examine specific religions as they are represented in film.

(Adapted from Joe Morris, Santa Clara University)

Group Presentation: Each group will present the “sacralization” (use of myths, morals, rituals) of secular symbolic constructions (e.g., in sport, in recreation, in music, etc.) and the secularization of religion (i.e., the adoption of secular themes and devices in religious practice. Categories from which groups will choose include:

- PRE-TEXT: Space/Place (Sports, Commerce, Leisure);
- PRE-TEXT Sound (Music, Internet & Virtual Communities);
- TEXT: Print/books;
- POST-TEXT: Video and TV
- INTER-TEXT: Intermingling of Religion and Various sorts of texts

Research Paper: This paper will involve an extended analysis of a major media artifact, such as a film, book, television show or series, web site, media campaign, etc., that is directly related to course themes and content. All topics must be approved in advance. A one-page (ungraded) description of your topic, plan for achieving research goals, and request for approval will be due in the twelfth week of the semester. **Failure to turn in the project description by the due date will result in a 10% reduction of the assignment grade.** All papers must be supported by substantial research into primary and secondary sources, including relevant discussion by literary, film, television, or applicable media critics, scholars, and historians discussing the media artifact(s) you have chosen for your analysis.

Final Exam

Grading

For each graded assignment, students will receive an A, B, C, D, or F. Each of these letter grades corresponds with a number value: an A carries a numeric value of 4, a B is worth 3, C is worth 2, D is worth 1, and F is worth 0. To calculate your grade, multiply 4, 3, 2, 1, or 0 that corresponds with your letter grade by the percentage value (above) of a given exercise. For example, if you receive a B for the “Final Exam,” you would multiply 3—which corresponds with a B—by 20% and you would get a .60 for that assignment. At the end of the semester, to calculate your final grade, you would add each of the scores and divide by 100. Final grades will be awarded as follows:

Numeric Value of Grades:

A = 4
B = 3
C = 2
D = 1
F = 0

If your grade falls between two numbers (e.g., between a 3 and a 2), you will receive the grade corresponding with the lower number (in this case, a C, corresponding with 2) since technically you will not have achieved a B (a 3.0)

*The category of “Participation” reflects the fact that active engagement in class proceedings is expected not only in graded assignments but in preparations and discussions. It refers to class presentations, such as chapter reports, discussion in class, and attendance. Failure to participate actively in class proceedings could result in failing the class, even if the student’s score were passing on all graded assignments.

Seminar Policies and Procedures

Attendance: Students are permitted to miss 3 class hours throughout the semester without any consequence to their semester grade (An evening session consists of 3 class hours). Beyond 3 hours, except under the most extenuating circumstance at the instructor's discretion, the student's seminar grade will be affected. Students must notify the instructor prior to the absence. Proof for excused absences must be documented within two weeks of the absence and must clearly state that the emergency required that the student miss the course on the date and at the time of the absence.

Course Format: This course consists of lectures, class discussions, group activities, and individual presentations. One comprehensive exam will be given.

Course Assignments: (Expectations of particular assignments will be provided at the announcement of each respective assignment).

Missing Class: If you miss class, it is YOUR responsibility—not mine—to catch up on what you have missed. The same requirements of those who attended class apply to those who missed class. More than 3 absences shall be considered excessive and will be reflected in the Miscellaneous grade.

Regarding Late Work: **I DO NOT ACCEPT UNEXCUSED LATE WORK.** Since one of the primary objectives expressed in the University's mission statement is that students "will act with honesty and integrity," I will enforce rigorous standards of honesty and personal responsibility. Work is considered late if work is not presented on the date assigned. Unexcused work receives a "O." Any exceptions to this policy—which would be very rare!—would be at my discretion; in this case, the student:

- must submit to me a written petition requesting that his/her absence be excused
- must show official documentation verifying the basis for absence
- must be prepared to present the missed work at the very first opportunity I make available after the student's return
- must provide appropriate documentation that his/her failure to complete the assignment on the assigned date was unavoidable
- may be penalized for failure to present work as assigned.

If you know in advance that you will not be able to be present on a particular date on which work has been assigned, please let me know. I will try to schedule your assignment accordingly.

Use of Cell Phone or Other Electronic Devices: Any use of cell telephones, pagers, and all other electronic devices during class time is forbidden. It is the students' responsibility to make sure that their telephones or pagers do not ring, vibrate, or otherwise create the possibility of a class disruption. **A student whose telephone rings, vibrates, or otherwise creates a distraction during class, will be counted as absent for that class period. A student using any electronic device during testing without prior approval shall be subject to the policy on academic integrity.**

Laptops: The use of laptops in class for any purpose other than taking notes (e.g., instant-messaging, emailing, surfing the Internet, playing Solitaire) is strictly forbidden. Students caught engaging in any forbidden laptop activity shall be counted as absent that day.

Audio/Video Recording of class lectures is prohibited without prior approval. However, on occasion the instructor may arrange recording for instructional purposes.

Oral and Written Work: Assignments may have an oral and/or written components. Especially since this is a communication class, grading of oral and written work will consider quality and thoroughness of analysis, style, adherence to format, and proper mechanics (grammar, spelling, organization, clarity, cohesiveness). All work submitted to me should be typed and double-spaced. All work should be stapled (Please! NO PLASTIC REPORT COVERS WITH SPINES, NO DOG EARS, NO FOLDED CORNERS, AND NO PAPER CLIPS! PLEASE STAPLE PAGES!) The quality of both your written and oral work will figure into your grade for the assignment.

Reading Assignments: When I lecture on course readings, I will ordinarily highlight portions—not the entirety—of the chapters assigned in your readings. However, you are responsible for the entire contents of all chapters and may be tested on any portions of those readings.

“Outside” Participation: Because much of what this course teaches is learned in personal reflection and application, some activities or preparation for in-class activities take place outside of class.

University Policies:

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. (For Spring 2019, the Census Date is January 28.) Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester’s Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar. Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract. The Census Date (Sept. 12th) is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date). Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Student Accessibility and Resources

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, PTSD or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office and schedule an interview with the Accessibility Case Manager/ADA Coordinator, Cynthia Lowery Staples. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079. You may also send an email to cstaples@uttyler.edu

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester. Revised 09/16

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

- i. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student’s test paper;
 - using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
 - failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
 - possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed “crib notes”. The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
 - using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
 - collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
 - discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
 - divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructor has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
 - substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
 - paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
 - falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
 - taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
 - misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.
- ii. “Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit.
- iii. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty. iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by SafeAssign™, available on Blackboard.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

Religious Communication Course Calendar

Date	Activity	Instructional Material
Jan. 16	Overview and Introductions	
Jan. 23	Theoretical Frameworks for Religion, Popular Culture, and Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion • Popular Culture • Ritual • Myth • Communitas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forbes & Mahan, RPCA, Introduction, Finding Religion in Unexpected Places • Mazur & McCarthy, Finding Religion in American Popular Culture, in GID, Introduction • Lyden, Film as Religion, the Definition of Religion (Ch. 2), ...Ritual (Ch. 4) • “The Power of Myth: The Hero’s Adventure (Joseph Campbell on Myth) • Stout, Media & Religion • Geertz, Religion as a Cultural System (PDF) • Chidester, Planet Hollywood, chapter in e-book • Schudson, How Culture Works article
Jan. 30	CON-TEXT (“Communitas”)	
	Overview: (Con-text, Pre-Text, Text, Post-Text);	Context: The Amish_ The Internet and Christian & Muslim Communities, in RPCA, p. 103 Assignment: Communitas
Feb. 6	Group Workshop	
Feb. 13	PRE-TEXT/SPACE	
	Pre-Text: Space/Place	St. Peter’s Basilica Love Valley Joel Osteen Willow Creek
Feb. 20	Pre-Text: Religion & Sport, Pre-Text: Religion & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Faith of 50 Million: Baseball, Religion, and American Culture, book, Introduction, p. 1-12 • From Season to Season: Sport as American Religion, Price, book, pp. 15 ff. • Rituals of the African American Domus: church, Community, Sports, and LeBron James, GID, Wade Clark Roof, p. 108 • Lambeau Field • Wrigley Field • Is Sport a Religion? <i>Psychology Today</i> ##### • The New Religious Image of Urban America, book • Pahl, Does God Wear Clothes (1), Seeking Sacred Spaces (2), and (3) The Shopping Mall as Stairway to Heaven, in Shopping Mall and Other Sacred Spaces, library book • Grand Ole Opry • “Malls R Us” Happiest Place on Earth: Disney’s America & the Commodification of Religion, GID, Mazur and Koda, p. 307
Feb. 27	Communitas: L’Arche Community	
Mar. 6	Panel Presentations on Communitas and Space/Place	
Mar. 13	SPRING BREAK	
Mar. 20	Field Assignment on “Text”: Secular Sacralized in Media Ecology (Marshall McLuhan assignment)	
Mar. 27	TEXT	
	Books on media theory Sacred Secularized Secular Sacralized: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Ecology • Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McLuhan and McLuhan, <i>The Medium & the Light</i> • The Medium is the Massage Animated Book • Marshall McLuhan 2011 – “Man of Faith” (audio), Margaret Coffey & Nina Sutton • “The Sacramental View of McLuhan, Ong, and Carey” (Cali) • Quentin Schultze, “Communication as Religion: In Memory of James W. Carey” • James Carey, The Ritual Model

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Lessl, Religion in Science Texts
April 3	POST-TEXT/Image	
	Religion & Video and Television	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film as Religion, Book, A Method for Viewing Film as Religion, Lyden • Neo Christ Jesus, the Matrix & Secondary Allegory • Like a Sermon: Popular Religion in Madonna Videos, Hulsether, in RPCA • Madonna, "Like a Prayer" <p>#####</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oprah, Phil, Geraldo, Barbara, and Things that Go Bump in the Night..., GID, Primiano, p. 47 • Baring Our Souls: TV Talk Shows & the Religion of Recovery, book, unsure which chapter • Portrayal of Religion & Spirituality in Fictional Network TV, Skill (downloaded) • <i>The Gospel According to the Simpson's: The Spiritual Life of the World's Most Animated Family</i>, book
Apr. 10	Film Criticisms	
Apr. 17	Preparations: Research Project	
Apr. 24	Presentations: Research Project	
May 1	Final Exam	
	Sample Topics for Group Projects:	
	American Civic Religion Cowboy Churches Tattoo Communities	Environmentalism as Religion Motorcycle Communities