

First Year Seminar
Surprising Spirituality:
Popular Culture and Contemporary Religious Life

“At work and at play, human authenticity is at stake in American religion and popular culture. Religion is the real thing, but, as we already know from the world of advertising, Coca-Cola is also the real thing.”

~David Chidester

The Details:

Dr. Lynn S. Neal

Office Hours: Wingate 205, MWF 12-1 or by appointment

Office Phone: 758-3307

Home Phone (between 9am and 9 pm): 659-3538

Email: nealls@wfu.edu

Class Schedule: Wingate 206 MWF 1-1:50

The Texts: (Available at University Textbook Store)

Nicholas Sammond, ed., *Steel Chair to the Head*

Gordon Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*

Lynn S. Neal, *Romancing God: Evangelical Women and Inspirational Fiction*

Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel According to the Simpsons (2nd ed.)*

Tamera Alexander, *Beyond This Moment*

Some readings, as well as other course materials, are available through Blackboard (BB).

The Course:

This course explores the relationship between religion and popular culture in contemporary American life. Our challenge is to take a “fun” topic seriously and to work toward answering the course questions. To achieve this goal, we are examining surprising manifestations of religious life in popular culture. From Christian romance novels to Simpson spirituality to the myth-making of professional wrestling, we are investigating the relationship between popular culture products and contemporary American religion. Through these case studies, we will examine three dominant patterns—religion IN popular culture, popular culture IN religion, and popular culture AS religion. Throughout the semester, we will be questioning the implications of these manifestations for individual spirituality, religious vitality, and American culture.

The Questions We Will Answer:

1. What is religion? What is popular culture? How do religion and popular culture interact in contemporary American life?

2. What methods and approaches can we use to study religion & popular culture? What obstacles are there to the study of religion and popular culture?
3. How has popular culture influenced the practice of religion in contemporary America?

The Expectations:

Failure to abide by the honor code or to meet any one of the course expectations will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Your success in the course depends upon meeting the course expectations in accordance

with the Wake Forest University Honor Code:

<http://www.wfu.edu/judicial/honor.html>.

**If you have a disability that may require an accommodation for taking this course, please

contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) within the first two weeks of the semester.

**Plagiarism is a violation of the honor code: "To put your name on a piece of work any part of which is not yours is plagiarism, unless that piece is clearly marked and the work from which you have borrowed is fully identified"

(<http://www.wfu.edu/english/major/academicwriting.html>).

**Participation—20%

- **Purpose:** Your participation is vital to the success of this course. **To help with your participation, you should bring assigned readings to class.** Discussing issues and hearing classmates' perspectives helps sharpen your own thinking and analysis. It also helps you remember and critically assess course concepts.
- **Approach:** Your participation grade reflects consideration of the following:
 - **Attendance**
 - is on time (note: three tardies=one absence)
 - is prepared
 - completes class assignments, follows directions
 - is respectful
 - is awake, alert, and pays attention
 - turns off cell phone
 - comes to office hours
 - brings assigned readings and takes notes
 - **Contribution to Class Discussions**
 - is focused on class topics, discussions...stays on task during large and small group discussion and assignments
 - is relevant to the course and the discussion
 - offers insights into the material
 - asks questions of others that facilitate, rather than stop, discussion
 - goes beyond what is easy and superficial
 - demonstrates honest engagement with the material

- Given the seminar style of this class, no laptops will be allowed.
- Disagreement is expected in a course about religion. Disagreement helps us learn and grow. Don't be afraid. When this occurs, be respectful of others' viewpoints, but also feel like you can voice your own ideas. Different points of view will enhance our overall discussions. Ways of dealing with different opinions include: "You made a good point, but I disagree because..." or "I respect your view, but it seems to overlook..."
- Shy students: Break it down! Work on having one question or insight ready for each class. Remember that this is a learning community that needs and benefits from your voice!
- You cannot participate and learn if you are not in class. Your enrollment in this course signals your commitment to be a present and contributing member. Therefore, a significant number of absences will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Debates—10%

- **Assignment: Debate Class Issues**
 - Each student will work in groups of six to participate in our three class debates. Each group will debate twice and judge once. Everyone in your group is expected to participate in the debate. The groups' positions for each debate are listed in the syllabus (see the course outline 9/23, 10/21, 11/18).
- **Logistics:** For this assignment each debate group will need to create:
 - An opening statement that provides an overview of and compelling evidence for your position. Write it down!
 - Questions that will reveal the flaws in your opposition's argument. Be able to anticipate and critique their position.
 - Answers to the opposing side's questions that show the strength of your argument. Use examples and evidence to demonstrate the strength of your position.
 - Additional research may be necessary to create the most persuasive position.
 - A Closing Statement that summarizes your argument and persuades the judges. End strong! Write it down!
 - Also, in preparation, the judges will need to establish their criteria for evaluating the debate.
- **Approach:**
 - Meet with your debate group in person and communicate via email, facebook, or some other means. Use the Communication tool in BB to email fellow classmates.
 - Plan who will do what in preparation for the debate. Divide the work. Everyone in the group is expected to participate in the debate and in preparation for the debate.
 - Plan who will do what during the debate.
 - Use Class materials effectively.
 - Do any necessary additional research to help your case.

- Purpose:
 - To construct and defend an argument.
 - To enhance public speaking and leadership abilities.
 - To assess and critique arguments.
 - To increase collaborative learning skills.
- Debate Groups will be determined after the first week of class.
- Help:
 - Debate “helps” are available on BB.
 - Come to office hours or schedule an appointment.

****Papers—50% (1st paper=15%, 2nd =15%, and 3rd paper=20% each)**

- **Assignment:** Write **Three** Persuasive Papers. This assignment gives you the opportunity to go deeper into each of our case studies. For each paper, your task is to construct an argument (thesis) based on your analysis of primary sources. Your argument should be clearly stated in a thesis sentence in the introduction of your paper. Make yourself fill-in the following sentence: “In this essay, I argue that...” Your thesis should be based on your analysis of primary and secondary sources about (Paper 1) Religion & the Simpson’s, then (Paper 2) Religion & Christian romance novels, and lastly (Paper 3) Religion & professional wrestling. Paper idea sheets are provided for each paper on BB. Sample paper ideas include: Through your viewing of numerous Simpsons episodes (inside and outside of class), you could construct an argument about the character of Reverend Lovejoy or the theme of heaven. Or through the readings and viewing assignments on professional wrestling, you could write a paper about good and evil or issues of life and death.
- **Approach:** I recommend the following: (1) Critically review course materials, viewing assignments, and notes. (2) Choose a religious theme, issue, or character to examine. (3) Choose and analyze your primary sources—Poor source selection will make it impossible to write a great paper. (4) Conduct additional secondary research to support your argument. (5) Construct an argument about your chosen topic. Organize your paper in a manner that supports your argument. (6) Conclude with the significance of your argument for the study of religion and popular culture. (7) Write and Revise.
- **Purpose:**
 - To go deeper into each of the course case studies.
 - To prioritize, organize, & synthesize what you have learned in each unit.
 - To construct an argument.
 - To develop your persuasive writing skills.
- **Logistics:**
 - Due Date: Papers are due to my email inbox by the **start of class on the assigned dates: 9/25, 10/23, and 11/20.** Note: There will be no class on the days that papers are due.
 - Late Policy: Late papers will **not** be accepted, plan accordingly.

- Length: Papers should be 5-6 pages long. Length is part of the assignment.
 - Format: Times 12, double-spaced, one-inch margins, no cover page.
 - Citations: MLA in-text citation style; include a properly formatted Works Cited. The MLA guide is available on the Internet and linked through BB.
 - **Failure to properly cite a source is plagiarism and a violation of the Honor Code.**
 - **Sources: Paper 1: At least 3 Simpsons episodes NOT viewed in class; Paper 2: At least 1 primary or secondary source NOT read in class; Paper 3: At least 2 wrestling episodes should be among your primary sources.**
- **Help:**
- Attend and participate in the two Writing Workshops.
 - See BB for additional sources on writing and on each case study.
 - See BB for Paper Grading Criteria and Sample "A" Papers.
 - See BB for link to MLA.
 - Come see me! Visit during office hours or schedule an appointment.
 - Use the University Writing Center
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****Group Project—20%**

- **Assignment: A Case Study in Religion & Popular Culture. Over the semester**, as a group, your assignment is to **create a product** that informs others about a specific example of religion and popular culture. Your project should focus on a specific topic that relates to one of our three patterns (religion IN popular culture, popular culture IN religion, or popular culture AS religion). For example, you could focus your project around the portrayal of religion in Southpark, which would relate to our theme of religion IN popular culture and you could then create an internet or print "Guide to Religion on Southpark" for others to use. Or you could examine sports AS religion and focus on Demon Deacon football. This project would relate to our study of popular culture as religion and you could create a video/dvd to document this phenomenon. Other possible project products include, but are not limited to: web-sites, videos/dvds, board games, newspapers, exhibits (bulletin boards or campus displays). The library has cameras and video equipment that can be checked out. They also conduct classes on Windows MovieMaker and DreamWeaver. At the conclusion of your project, your group will also **write a five-page paper** that contains two parts. Part 1 will provide a detailed and documented summary of your research and Part 2 will explore the significance of your findings and their relationship to the course.
- **Approach:** Once groups are determined after the first week of class, you will set up your own meeting times to determine the project topic and to discuss project details. I recommend keeping the following steps/process in mind: (1) Each group member collects at least five sources that contribute to the project; (2) Each group member helps analyze the collected research; (3) As a group, interpret the patterns that have emerged in your research; (4) As a group, decide what type of product best fits your research and create it; (5) As a

group, write the paper which contains a summary of your findings and state the significance of your project; (6) As a group, present your findings to the class. Remember, your project should be a unified whole, rather than five or six individual parts seemingly stuck together.

➤ **Purpose:**

- To give you an opportunity to delve deeper into one area of research.
- To improve your ability to gather, analyze, and present research.
- To create something from your research.
- To communicate your findings to others.
- To develop your collaborative research skills.

➤ **Logistics and Grading:** The grading of your project will reflect consideration of the following three areas.

○ **Project Process**

- The project process will be recorded in a Meeting Log that contains the dates on which the group met, who attended each meeting, and the work accomplished at each meeting. This typed Meeting Log will serve as a record of your group project process and will be turned in the day you present your research.
- Other considerations in evaluating the project process include:
 - Each group member should contribute at least five sources to the project. Please include who contributed what in the Meeting Log.
 - Completion of project update assignments listed in the syllabus.
 - Participation in Group meetings and Contribution to the Project.
 - Peer Evaluation Forms (you will each fill one of these out at the end of the project).
- **NOTE:** Participation of all group members is expected throughout the process. If a group member fails to participate, please let me know and I will address this issue.

○ **Project Product**

- The day you present your research, you will turn in a copy of your Meeting Log and Group Product (if possible).
- Your product should reflect the group's research and findings. Make sure your research and your product fit together and showcase the significance of your work!
- **Keep in Mind:**
 - **Clarity**→Focus your project in a clear and concise manner.
 - **Equality**→While some may take on a leadership role, all group members should contribute equally to the final product.
 - **Analysis/Significance**→Answer the "so what" question. What does your project/product tell us about the relationship between religion and popular culture? Why is

your project important? Convey to others the importance of your research.

- Your 5-page paper is due the day you present your research to the class.

- **Project Presentation**

- Your group will present your research and product the last week of class, specific group presentation dates to be determined. Each group will have 15 minutes to present, we will then have 5 minutes for discussion and to transition to the next group, two groups will present each day.
- NOTE: For the presentations to run as smoothly as possible, please have any images or powerpoint presentations placed on a thumb drive.
- Keep In Mind:
 - This is a formal presentation. Act, dress, and prepare accordingly. I reserve the right to invite other students and faculty to the presentations.
 - All group members should participate in the presentation.
 - Present your findings and product in a clear and concise manner.
 - Emphasize the significance of your research.
 - Propose questions for class discussion.
 - Answer questions from the class.

- **Help:**

- Sample Projects and Products are available to look at in my office.
NOTE: For this assignment, Powerpoint is NOT a product, but it may be used for the presentation.
- I am happy to meet with your group, please email me to set up a time.

Course Grade Scale: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (88-89), B (83-87), B- (80-82), C+ (78-79), C (73-77), C- (70-72), D (65-69), F (0-64).

The Course Outline

Approaches to Religion and Popular Culture

Wednesday 8/26 What is this Course About?

Introductions

Expectations

Overview of Syllabus

Friday 8/28 Creating our Learning Community and Commitments

Assignment: Fill out and bring your learning questionnaire to class

Reading: Read Syllabus thoroughly

BB Reading: "Everyone is Talented, Original, and Has Something Important to Say" and "Claiming an Education"

Questions: How would you define learning? Why? How do these authors describe the learning process? Do their descriptions match yours? How are they similar to or different from your sense of what it means to learn?

Monday 8/31 What is Religion?

Assignment: FIRST!! Write one typed page on your definition of religion and bring two copies to class (one will be turned in). The first paragraph should give your definition and the second paragraph should reflect on where your definition comes from (put another way, What or who has influenced your definition? How? Why?)

BB Reading: "Definitions of Religion"

Questions: How would you define religion? Why? How do these various scholars define religion? What different types of definitions are there? How are these scholarly definitions similar to/different from yours? Which scholarly definition do you find most persuasive and why?

Wednesday 9/2 What is Popular Culture?

Reading: Lynch, Ch. 1 "What is Popular Culture?"

Questions: How would you define popular culture? Why? How do you see popular culture consumers? Why? What definitions of popular culture does Lynch provide? What connotation is associated with each definition? Why?

Friday 9/4 Religion Meets Popular Culture...Why should we study it?

Assignment: Find and bring in an example of religion found in an “unexpected” place. **BB Reading:** Forbes, “Finding Religion in Unexpected Places”

Reading: Lynch, Ch. 2 “Why Should Theologians and Scholars of Religion Study Popular Culture?”

Questions: What categories does Forbes use to examine the relationships between religion and popular culture? Can you think of others? What does he add to definitions of popular culture? What reasons does Lynch give for studying religion and popular culture? Which do you find most persuasive and why? What would you add to his list of reasons? What does he miss?

Religion IN Popular culture: The Simpson's

Unit Viewing Assignment:

The library owns *The Simpsons* seasons 1-8, and they are on reserve for this class. During this Unit, watch one entire season to enhance class discussions and to prepare for your paper.



Monday 9/7 Issues in Method: Textual Analysis

In-Class Video: “Homer the Heretic”

Reading: Lynch, Ch. 7 “Text-Based Approaches to Studying Popular Culture”

BB Reading: “TV’s most religious family?” and “Recognizing ourselves in the Simpson’s”

Questions: What is textual analysis? What three methods of textual analysis does Lynch describe? How would you define each one? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each method? How does Lynch use these methods to interpret *The Simpsons*? Are the Simpson’s TV’s most religious family?

Wednesday 9/9 What would Homer do...for a donut?: The Soul

In-Class Video: “Treehouse of Horror IV”

BB Reading: “Homer the Heretic and Charlie Church;” Review Lynch, Ch. 7

Questions: What do the authors argue? What themes do the authors analyze? What is their assessment? How do they describe the relationship between *The Simpsons*, religion, and American culture? Are you persuaded? Why or why not?

Friday 9/11 What about Bart?: Like Father, Like Son

In-Class Video: “Bart Sells His Soul”

Reading: Pinsky, Ch. 5 “Heaven, Hell, and the Devil”

Questions: What points does Pinsky make regarding Heaven, Hell, the devil, and other Christian concepts? How are those concepts portrayed in The Simpsons? Do you agree with Pinsky’s interpretation—why or why not? How is Bart similar to/different from Homer?

****Project Update Due (turn in one page status report)**

Monday 9/14 Dear God: Bart and the Power of Prayer

In-Class Video: “Bart Gets an F”

Reading: Pinsky, Ch. 1 “Divine Imagery” and Ch. 2 “Personal Prayer”

Questions: What is prayer? What distinguishes a sincere prayer from an insincere one? What points does Pinsky make regarding prayer, God, Jesus, and other divine figures? How are these figures portrayed in The Simpsons? Do you agree with his interpretation—why/why not?

Wednesday 9/16 Right and Wrong...Lisa and Homer

In-Class Video: “Homer v. Lisa and the 8th Commandment”

Reading: Pinsky, Ch. 6 “Moral Dilemmas” and Ch. 7 “The Bible”

Questions: What points does Pinsky make regarding the Bible and the ethical component of The Simpsons? What role does Lisa play on the show? What does the show tell us about moral dilemmas in the US? Does Lisa speak for Jesus?

Friday 9/18 Saint Ned?: Questions of Faith

In-Class Video: “Hurricane Neddy”

Reading: Pinsky, Ch. 3 “The Evangelical Next Door,” Ch. 4 “The Church and the Preacher,” and Ch. 13 “The Creators”

Questions: What points does Pinsky make regarding the character of Ned? How does the show portray Ned’s faith? How would you describe the relationship between Ned and others in the show? Is Ned really “Saint Flanders”—why or why not?

Monday 9/21 Writing Workshop

Assignment: Bring two copies of your first draft and a one paragraph description of your paper. Underline your thesis statement. The one paragraph description and thesis statement will be turned in. You will meet in groups of three to read and comment on your classmates’ work. Your active involvement—including the drafts, the brief description, and your comments—will constitute part of your participation grade. Your draft should be at least four pages, have a thesis, be written

in full sentences and paragraphs. This requires more than outlining, brainstorming, or a vague sense of where your paper is going.

BB Reading: “Shitty First Drafts.”

Wednesday 9/23 Debate Day: *The Simpsons*

Resolved: *The Simpsons* television series portrays religion in a positive light.

Debate Group 1: Argues for Resolution

Debate Group 2: Argues Against Resolution

Debate Group 3: Judges Debate

Friday 9/25 Paper’s Due to my Inbox by 1pm, No Class

Popular Culture IN Religion: Christian Romance Novels



Unit Advice:

This unit contains a lot of reading—some of it “light” and some of it scholarly. Schedule your time wisely. Make time to read and process what you are reading. You will also need to think ahead about your research for the paper. You will need to stay on top of the reading to adequately contribute to in-class discussions, be prepared for the debate, and to do well on the paper.

Monday 9/28 Issues in Method: Authorial Intent

Reading: Lynch, Ch. 6 “An Author-Focused Approach to Studying Popular Culture”

Questions: What are the dominant methodological approaches to the study of popular culture? What is the “author-focused” approach? How does Lynch use this approach to interpret Eminem? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this method?

****Project Update Due (turn in one page status report)**

Wednesday 9/30 The World of Romance: Love in the Stacks

Assignment: Visit a local bookstore, buy a romance novel (which you will have to read!) [NO NICHOLAS SPARKS!!], and write a one-page typed analysis of your purchasing experience (how you felt, how you felt others perceived you, and why you felt that way). **You will turn this in!**

BB Reading: Cawelti, “Notes Toward a Typology of Literary Formulas” and Handout from Janice Radway’s *Reading the Romance*

Questions: How would you describe romance novel readers and why? What is the formula of a romance novel? Why is formula fiction so popular yet so disdained? Why are women the main readers of romance novels? What stigmas are attached to romance novels? Why? How does literature influence people's daily lives?

Friday 10/2 Romance, Sex, and Religion

Reading: Read first half of non-Christian romance novel

BB Reading: Shitow, "Mass Market Romance"

Questions: What is the role of sex in romance novels? In religion? In literature? What morals or teachings does your novel convey about sex and sexuality? Why would women want to read about sex?

Monday 10/5 Happily Ever After: Delusion or Empowerment?

Reading: Finish non-Christian romance novel

Questions: How did your romance novel end? What was your overall assessment of your romance novel? Why? Did your novel follow Radway's formula outline or not? What do romance novels promise readers? Why would this promise be attractive? Are readers deluded or empowered by romance novels? Why?

Wednesday 10/7 Why Create "Jesus Junk" and Christian Romance Novels?

BB Reading: Hendershot, "For Profit-Prophets"

Handout: CBD Catalog—flip through

Additional Reading: Neal, "Prologue"

Questions: Why are there so many Christian things? What do they do? What do they mean? How do we assess this array of merchandise? What products surprised you the most and why? Why do you think Christian romance novels emerged? How would you describe the Christian romance "formula"?

Friday 10/9 No Class—Dive into your Reading: *Beyond This Moment*, chs. 1-15

Monday 10/12 Why Read the Christian Romance?

Reading: *Beyond This Moment* (chs. 16-29), Neal, Ch. 2

Questions: Why would women choose to read Christian romance novels? What factors influence their reading choices? How do their reading choices relate to their religious beliefs? How would you describe the "romance" in *Beyond This Moment*? What religious elements are in the novel? How are the two combined?

Wednesday 10/14 Assessing the Christian romance

Reading: *Beyond This Moment* (Chs. 30-43) and Neal Chs. 4 and 5

Questions: What is your assessment of *Beyond This Moment*? Is it a romance novel? Why or why not? How would you summarize the plot? What is the appeal of a book like this? How might this book influence its readers? What does Christianity look like in this novel? What is the purpose of this book? Its message?

****Project Update Due (turn in one page status report)**

Friday 10/16 Fall Break: No Class

Monday 10/19 Christian and Mainstream Romances: Similar or Different?

Reading: Neal, Ch. 3 and "Epilogue"

Questions: How are Christian and Mainstream romances similar? How are they different? What do these similarities and differences mean? What might be the effects of Christian romance novel reading? Of mainstream romance novel reading? What do Christian romances tell us about religion, popular culture, and everyday life?

Wednesday 10/21 Debate Day: Romance Novels

Resolved: Christian romance novels are effective religious tools and fully uphold the message of evangelical Christianity.

Debate Group 2: Argues for Resolution

Debate Group 3: Argues Against Resolution

Debate Group 1: Judges Debate

Friday 10/23 Papers Due to my Inbox by 1pm, No Class

Popular culture AS Religion: Professional Wrestling

Unit Viewing Assignment:

My recommendation is that you watch some wrestling over the course of the semester to have a strong sense of the wrestling "universe."

If you choose not to, know that during this unit, you **MUST** watch episodes of professional wrestling as a source for your paper. It can be either the WWE or TNA. The

WWE airs on Mondays 9-11pm on USA, Tuesdays 10pm on SciFi, and Fridays 8-10 on MYTV. TNA airs Thursdays 9-11 on Spike.



Sunday 10/25 Optional: Dinner and the WWE at My House

Come eat some food and watch the CyberSunday PPV and get a glimpse into the world of professional wrestling.

Monday 10/26 Issues in Method: Ethnography

Reading: Lynch, Ch. 8 “An Ethnographic Approach to Studying Popular Culture”

Questions: What does the ethnographic approach entail? What are its advantages and disadvantages? How does Lynch use this approach to understand clubbing? How would you assess Lynch’s interpretation of clubbing—do you agree? Why? Disagree? Why?

Wednesday 10/28 Popular Culture as Religion

BB Reading: Chidester, “Popular Religion”

Questions: What is Chidester’s argument? How does he define religion? What does each example (the Church of Baseball, Coca-Cola, and Rock ‘n Roll) add to his analysis? Is popular culture a form of religion—why or why not?

**Project Update Due (turn in one page status report)

Friday 10/30 Professional Wrestling: The Power of Perception

Assignment: Tell someone you are a professional wrestling fan. What do they say? How do they respond? Do they perceive you differently than they did before? Why or why not? Briefly write up an analysis of your interaction to turn in.

Reading: Sammond, “Introduction”

Questions: What are the stereotypes of professional wrestling and why? How does Sammond describe professional wrestling? What does professional wrestling tell us about American culture? Why is it so popular? Why do men dominate wrestling fandom?

Monday 11/2 Entering the World of Professional Wrestling

In-Class Video Clip

BB Web Reading: Go to WWE.com and familiarize yourself with what is going on in the “WWE Universe”—What are the current storylines? Who are the superstars? What is highlighted on the web-site? What is the overall impression given by the web-site?

Questions: What is wrestling all about? How would you describe it? Why? What attracts so many people to professional wrestling? Why? How do you view these fans?

Wednesday 11/4 Saints and Sinners, Myth and Ritual

In-Class Video Clip

Reading: Sammond, "The World of Wrestling"

Questions: How does Roland Barthes understand wrestling? What would he say that wrestling is all about? How does he understand the characters—saints, sinners, etc.? How does he understand the relationship between wrestling and our culture? How might themes of morality and justice influence fans (or not)?

Friday 11/6 But its Fake...: Can Religion be an Authentic Fake?

In-Class Video Clip

Reading: Sammond, "'Real' Wrestling/'Real' Life"

Questions: Is wrestling real or fake? What is Sharon Mazer's argument about the relationship between real and fake in professional wrestling? What role does the blurring of real and fake play in wrestling's popularity? What does this have to do with religion? Can religion be both authentic and fake?

Monday 11/9 A Soap Opera for Men: Remasculinizing Religion?

In-Class Video Clip

Reading: Sammond, "Never Trust a Snake: WWF Wrestling as Masculine Melodrama"

Questions: What is Henry Jenkins argument? What is masculine about the melodrama of wrestling? What is melodramatic about wrestling? What does wrestling reveal about cultural understandings of gender? If wrestling is a religion, is it a religion of men? What is this masculine ministry about?

Wednesday 11/11 The Power of Wrestling Fandom: Creating Religion

Assignment: Examine a wrestling fan web-site or you tube video. Bring a brief description to class.

Reading: Sammond, "Female Wrestling Fans On-Line"

Questions: Why do women watch wrestling? What do some fans do with the text of wrestling? How are women depicted in and treated on wrestling shows? How are men depicted in and treated on wrestling shows? Given the power of fans to create multiple interpretations of wrestling, can fans make wrestling into a religion? If so, how? If not, why not?

****Project Update Due (turn-in one page status report)**

Friday 11/13 "Bret Hart Changed My Life..."

In-Class Video: "Wrestling with Shadows"

BB Web Reading: Read about Bret Hart from his web-site
<http://www.brethart.com/>

and see what fans have to say at <http://www.brethart.info/>

Questions: Who is Bret Hart? Why is/was he so popular? How does Hart present himself on his web-site? How do fans view him? Are the two perspectives similar or different? Why?

Monday 11/16 Writing Workshop 2

Assignment: As with our first WW, bring **two copies of your first draft and a one paragraph description** of your paper. Underline your thesis statement. The one paragraph description and thesis statement will be turned in. You will meet in groups of three to read and comment on your classmates' work. Your active involvement--including the drafts, the brief description, and your comments--will constitute part of your participation grade. Your draft should be at least four pages, have a thesis, be written in full sentences and paragraphs.

Wednesday 11/18 Debate Day: Professional Wrestling

Resolved: Professional Wrestling is a Religion.

Debate Group 3: Argues for Resolution

Debate Group 1: Argues Against Resolution

Debate Group 2: Judges Debate

Friday 11/20 Papers Due to my Inbox by 1pm, No Class

Monday 11/23 No Class, Work on Projects

Wednesday 11/25 Thanksgiving Holiday, No Class

Making Sense of Religion and Popular Culture

Monday 11/30 Project Presentations

Groups will present their research and product in class.
Each group will have fifteen minutes to present.
Turn in all necessary materials and final product.

Wednesday 12/2 Project Presentations

Groups will present their research and product in class.

Each group will have fifteen minutes to present.

Turn in all necessary materials and final product

Friday 12/4 Assessing Our Learning Community and Commitments

Revisiting our Learning Questionnaire

Required Assignment: Turn in 1-2 page typed Reflection on Course
Course Evaluation

ΦΨΣ 100: Χαπιταλισμ, Ρελιγιον, ανδ Χυλτυρε

Προφ. Υλρικε Ωιετηαυσ (ωιετηαυσ@ωφυ.εδυ)

Οφφιχε Ηουρσ: Μ, Τ, 3 4 πμ, ανδ βψ απποιντμεντ

Ωινγατε Ηαλλ 203Α

Δεσχυριπτιον

This First Year Seminar focuses on some of the ways that capitalism, religion, and culture intersect across time and geographical areas. Special emphasis will be placed on the evolution of capitalism in Protestant Europe, its transmission to the Americas through the interplay of various historical and discursive forces, particularly colonialism and Christian teachings, and historical and contemporary issues in light of select case studies.

The purpose of the course is twofold: (1) to introduce students to some of the ways that history has linked capitalism with religious teachings in theory and practice, running the full gamut from rejection and criticism to accommodation and celebration; (2) to encourage and foster critically informed thinking on the topic and to develop a nuanced vocabulary to articulate thoughtful analyses and positions on the relationship between capitalism, religion, and culture; (3) to learn to think of the present and future as determined by a complex and sometimes contradictory past, to become comfortable with cultural pluralism and dialogue, and to appreciate the global human struggle in creating life-affirming economic, religious and cultural systems.

Οβφεχυτιωεσ

- To stimulate and encourage critical and independent thinking with careful attention to scholarly standards that move beyond stereotyping
- To foster an appreciation of the complex dynamics of cultural and religious productivity and creativity in relation to capitalism
- To familiarize students with current scholarship on the interface between capitalism, culture, and religion
- To train students in basic research methods and critical writing within the context of interdisciplinary humanities

Ρεθυιρεδ Τεξτσ

Donald Fixico, *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century* (1998)

Jerry Muller, *The Mind and the Market* (2002)

David Murray, *Indian Giving: Economies of Power* (2000)

Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and US Colonialism* (2004)

Rob van Drimmelen, *Faith in Global Economy* (1998)

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2008)

Ρεθυριμεντο ανδ Εξπεχτοπινοσ

- Seminar attendance and participation in discussions (50%).

This segment of your grade includes regular discussion leadership, short reflection and summary papers on course readings, and weekly team presentations. Class discussion leadership and summaries of readings will be prepared by team. Both individually and as a team, you will engage with the assignments reflectively and creatively. The instructor expects from you and your team that you will value group learning by applying your listening and speaking skills to the best of your ability: *speaking more when your tendency is to be silent, speaking less when your tendency is to dominate class discussions*. Take note that, as we meet only once a week, more than one unexplained absence will negatively affect your grade. No computers may be used in class, except for presentations.

- Master class and research portfolio project (50%).

Your research portfolio will be built on your team's chosen topic of economic development and cross-cultural encounters for specific tribal nations today. Your team will identify the tribal nation, outline and design the research process, and build the portfolio. The portfolio will include the following elements:

- annotated bibliography of at least 15 scholarly titles, w/ no more than 33% web sources (the team will prepare a presentation to the class)
- draft of research paper (15 pages, with bibliography)
- written outline of master class on your topic (offered during semester, may include audio and visual elements)
- one article or primary text to be read by the class read in preparation for your presentation (hard copy for portfolio, will be made available for students on-line)
- research paper (25 pages, co-authored by the group)
- appendix with non-scholarly sources

You will work on your portfolio throughout the semester. The format of the student-led class will be designed by each team; please consult with your instructor for feed-back and support when needed. Your project may involve different media and technology; it must engage the class interactively; the creative aspects of your master class will be underpinned by your scholarship. Each master class includes time for group discussion and Q&A. Teams will provide a hand-out for the audience with a general outline of the presentation and format. Each team member is expected to contribute to all aspects of the project, although the portfolio will be edited as a seamless whole. To strengthen your overall team building skills, you will define yourself primarily as a member of your group in your presentations and written work. You will be accountable to each other in your team, receiving one overall grade for the portfolio according to the criteria detailed above. Students are expected to abide by the Honor Code at all times. Plagiarism will result in failing the course.

Συλλαβυσ

August 31: Introduction, team assignment, student presentations

Σεχτιον Ονε: Προτεσταντ Επηγ ανδ Ινδιαν Γιωινγ

**September 7: Weber, Part I and II, chapter IV.
14: Weber, Part II, chapter V; 127-165.
Research Hypothesis Due (typed, double-spaced with four bibliographical references)
21: Murray, Introduction, chapters 1 - 4
28: Murray, chapters 5 through end. *Annotated Research Bibliography Due***

Σεχτιον Τωο: Χολονιαλισμ ιν Χοντεξτ

**October 5: Muller, 1 to 6
10 – 15: Gordon Bronitsky Visit
12: Bronitsky Workshop. *First Draft of Research Paper Due (15 pp)*
16: Fall Break/18: Mid-term Grades Due
19: Muller, 7 - 13
26: Ostler, Part 1, 2**

November 2: Ostler, Part 3

Σεχτιον Τηρεε: Χοντεμποραψ Ισσυεσ

**9: Fixico, Part 1
16: Fixico, Part 2
23: Master Class. *Research Portfolio Due*
25 – 29: Thanksgiving Break
30: van Drimmelen**

December 2: Conclusion.