

**University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Communication and Media Studies COMS 401, L01
Religion and Media**

Summer 2018

Tues., July 3 – Wed., August 15

T/Th 9:00-11:45 am

Instructor: Dr. Denis J. Bekkering
Office: SS 254
E-Mail: denis.bekkering1@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Thursdays 7:45 – 8:45 am (or by appointment)

Course Description

This course explores historical and contemporary relationships between religion and media. Topics include the impact of new media on religious authority, religious brands, fandom and religion, and live television and religious experience.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- a) Discuss different theoretical approaches to the study of religion and media.
- b) Understand various mediations of religion.
- c) Critically analyze contemporary intersections of religion and media.

Textbooks and Readings

Jeffrey H. Mahan, *Media, Religion, and Culture: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2014)

Readings posted to D2L (as indicated)

Internet and electronic communication device information

Please turn off and stow away phones during class. Laptops and tablets are permitted if used for taking notes.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
10%	Participation: Significant portions of class time will involve directed discussions. Your attendance and participation are crucial.	Ongoing
10% (x 2) – 20% total	Quizzes (30 minutes – closed book): These quizzes will feature a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. The second quiz is not cumulative.	Jul. 12; Aug. 9
30%	Test (60 minutes – closed book): This test will feature a combination of multiple choice and short essay questions.	Jul. 24
35%	Media Analysis Paper (approx. 3000 words): This is a critical analysis of a media text or object of your choice (e.g., a film, television program, website, or material object) using the information and analytical tools acquired during the class, as well as three secondary sources. The first step of this project is to submit a Research Paper Proposal (see below).	Aug. 23
5%	Research Paper Proposal (approx. 300 words): This is a required first step for your Media Analysis Paper (papers submitted without a proposal will not be accepted). You are to submit your selected media text or object, your research question and tentative thesis, three points that you may pursue in the paper, and the information for three secondary sources.	Jul. 31

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments: Please submit your written assignments to the appropriate Dropbox in D2L.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 10% for each day late.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their

Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

In this course, percentage grades will be used.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* **
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY • Calgary Police Service	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Tuesday July 3 – Introduction to Course / What is Religion?

Readings: n/a

Thursday July 5 – “Relating Media, Religion, and Culture”

Readings: Mahan, Ch. 1; James W. Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication” (D2L)

Tuesday July 10 – “Making and Articulating Religious Identity”

Readings: Mahan, Ch. 2; Pete Ward, “Para-religion” (D2L)

Thursday July 12 – “Believing and Practicing in a Digital World”

Readings: Mahan, Ch. 3; Jonathan L. Bowen and Rachel Wagner, "Hokey Religions and Ancient Weapons: The Force of Spirituality" (D2L)

Tuesday July 17 – "Old and New Media"

Readings: Mahan, Ch. 4; Douglas E. Cowan, "Religion on the Internet" (D2L); John Fiske, "Commodities and Culture" (D2L)

Thursday July 19 – "Organized Religion in the Age of Digital Media"

Readings: Mahan, Ch. 6; Mara Einstein, "Branding Faith" (D2L)

Tuesday July 24 – "Stability and Change"/ Research Paper Overview

Readings: Mahan, Ch. 5

Thursday July 26 – Film Screening: *The Passion of the Christ* (2004, dir. Mel Gibson)

Readings: Gospel of Mark (D2L)

Tuesday July 31 – "To Censor, Shape, or Engage with Media and the Arts?"

Readings: Mahan, Ch. 7; Melanie J. Wright, "Religion, Film, and Cultural Studies" (D2L); James Y. Trammel, "Who Does God Want Me to Invite to See *The Passion of the Christ*?" (D2L)

Thursday August 2 – "Reading, Listening, Watching"

Readings: Mahan, Ch. 7; Gary Laderman, "Music" (D2L); Michael J. Gilmour, "Outrageous Religion" (D2L)

Tuesday August 7 – Religion and Material Media

Readings: Colleen McDannell, "Christian Retailing" (D2L); Denis J. Bekkering, "Of 'Lucky Loonies' and 'Golden Pucks'" (D2L)

Thursday August 9 – Religion and Animation

Readings: "Lisle Dalton, Eric Michael Mazur, and Monica Siems," Homer the Heretic and Charlie Church: Parody, Piety, and Pluralism in *The Simpsons* (D2L); Douglas E. Cowan, "Episode 712: *South Park*, Ridicule, and the Cultural Construction of Religious Rivalry" (D2L)

Tuesday August 14 – Course Conclusion/Review

Readings: n/a