Course Description:

Science fiction is not only a source of escapism but also a space of moral reasoning and reflection. Science fiction embeds religious themes into images and then utilizes them as sources for knowing and understanding the world. It is here in the spaces of the imagination where world critique and world reimagining unfold. The relationship between religion, media, and culture underscores the challenges and promises of thinking through the use and abuse of religious images, and the power and promise of aestheticized religion.

Key Terms and Concepts:

Using the critical theoretical vocabulary and techniques of literary, media, and film theories we will examine the practices and techniques that went into the creation of these materials and what the implications are for the study of religion, media, and culture. In this course we will briefly explore what do people mean when they say “religion”? Is religion what people do? How do we depict and understand religion? How does religion help us to explore what does it mean to be human? We will explore these questions using various theoretical frames and religious traditions. In science fiction religious concepts get redeployed and often transformed into real or imagined images. Focusing on the key concepts of the technologies of the self, embodiment, transcendence, and immanence we will examine how “the real” interfaces with “the imagined.”

Course Objectives:

- Participating in class discussions, seminars, and small groups.
- Critically engaging the intersections between religion, media, and culture.
- Examine the challenges and potential of depicting religion.
- Development of a critical toolbox for analyzing literature, graphic novels, and films.
- Further develop the skills to critically synthesize material.
- Reflect on the technologies of the self, embodiment, transcendence and immanence.

Course Requirements:

I. Class Participation
   A. This class will be conducted seminar style and students are expected to come to the class ready to participate in the discussion.
B. Students are expected to come to class prepared with their copy of text(s), screen-shots, or film time signatures, for that session with questions and comments for discussion.

II. Attendance
A. Missing more than two courses will result in five points off your final grade per absence.
B. Students are allowed no more than two absences. If you are ill or have a family emergency please contact me.
C. Athletes needing to miss more than two class sessions please have your coaches contact me with your schedule.
D. Sleeping, cell phone usage, Internet abuse, or disruption will be counted as an absence.

III. Four Critical Snapshots
A. Each student is responsible for four critical snapshots of 100-250 words in length. Students may choose on which dates they wish to submit a snapshot (I assume that these will be peppered throughout the course). Additional information will be provided.
B. Snapshots are a brief snippets of writing designed as a space for critical reflection on the readings, developing your own ideas, cultivating community, and practicing your writing.

IV. Three Essays
A. Each student is responsible for three essays of 500-750 words in length. Additional information will be provided.
B. Students are expected to write three essays in response to the assigned materials. These are intended to be a medium length form for thinking through the theories and texts (films and literature) and engaging with the themes you have found to be most relevant for your own work.

V. Final Paper
A. Turn in a final research paper of 3,000 to 5,000 words on December 15th. The final paper is a space for you to engage whatever particular elements of science fiction/speculative fiction that you find to be intriguing. Students will be expected to utilize some of the themes and theories from the course.
B. Turn in a final paper proposal of 250 words with five sources on or before the beginning of Week 8.

VI. Final Presentations
A. Present in class for 10-12 minutes on your final paper. Final presentations are meant to provide students with a space to discuss and get feedback on their project.
Grading Rubric: Students are expected to complete the work in a reflective and timely fashion, and there is a no late work policy. Participation and satisfactory completion of each class session’s activities as well as the blog, final project presentation and the final project itself are assessed according to the point system as follows:

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<tr>
<th>POINTS PER COMPLETION</th>
<th>SEMESTER TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class &amp; Activity Participation</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snapshots</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Essays</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Paper Proposal</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
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*There will be no extra credit.*

The Final Letter Grade: Students are welcome to calculate their final grade at anytime using the following grade scale. It is important for students to note the scale carefully.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
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<td>87-89</td>
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<td>83-86</td>
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<td>64 and below</td>
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Academic Integrity:
“Syracuse University sets high standards for academic integrity. Those standards are supported and enforced by students, including those who serve as academic integrity hearing panel members and hearing officers. The presumptive sanction for a first offense is course failure, accompanied by the transcript notation “Violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.” The standard sanction for a first offense by graduate students is suspension or expulsion. Students should review the Office of Academic Integrity online resource “Twenty Questions and Answers About the Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy” and confer with instructors about course-specific citation methods, permitted collaboration (if any), and rules for examinations. The Policy also governs the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. Additional guidance for students can be found in the Office of Academic Integrity resource: ‘What does academic integrity mean?’”

Related Links:
The Academic Integrity Policy: http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/academic-integrity-policy/
Twenty Questions and Answers about the Academic Integrity Policy: http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/faculty-resources/
What does academic integrity mean?: http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/what-does-academic-integrity-mean/

Disability Statement:
“If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.” Syracuse University and I are committed to your success and to supporting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This means that in general no individual who is otherwise qualified shall be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity, solely by reason of having a disability. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs although I cannot arrange for disability-related accommodations.”

Related Links:
Office of Disability Services (ODS): http://disabilityservices.syr.edu
Disability Cultural Center: http://sudcc.syr.edu
Beyond Compliance Coordinating Committee: http://bcccsyracuse.wordpress.com/

Religious Observance Policy:
“Please note that you may miss classes and tests for religious observance provided you give notification by the end of the second week of class. You may do so online until the end of the second week through MySlice/ Student Services/ Enrollment/ My Religious Obser-
vances. Syracuse University's policy can be found at
http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.html.”

Related Links:
Religious Observance Policy:
http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.html
Hendricks Chapel list of Holy Days and Holidays:
http://hendricks.syr.edu/spiritual-life/holy-days-holidays.html
Interfaith Calendar: http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/

Inclusive Language Statement:

It is expected in this course that all participants use inclusive language in all verbal
and written assignments especially with respect to humanity, cultures, nationalities, ethnici-
ties, races, and religions, with regard to characteristics such as sex, gender/sex, sexual
identities, social class, age, and dis/abilities. We are all a part of creating a space for dia-
logue and engagement where the importance of differences in relationships are engaged in
a substantive manner. The goal of this class is to think carefully about the words we use
and the images, metaphors, similes, and linguistic ideas that we are invoking. In keeping
the vision of thinking thoughtfully about language, here are some resources for further re-
flexion on the importance of inclusive language (Language derived from Brite Divinity

Related Links:
Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language, from the website of National Council of
Tips for Using Inclusive, Gender Neutral Language:
http://www.mu.edu/wac/neutral/NeutralInclusiveLanguage.shtml

Required Books:

ISBN-10: 0380789035. $7.19
When Fox is a Thousand by Larissa Lai. Arsenal Pulp Press; Second Edition. ISBN-10:
1551521687. $16.00
$59.97

Films:

You do not have to purchase them but you do have to watch them.
I will host weekly screenings of the films and they will be on reserve in the library.

Blade Runner
Children of Men
Man of Steel
The Avengers
Pitch Black
Schedule of Topics and Assignments:

M. **Week 1, August 25:** Contextualizing The Study of Religion: An Introduction
   **Issues:** Cover the syllabus, in class writing exercise on the questions
   1) what is religion? 2) how do you see religion in popular culture?

W. **Week 1, August 27:** Contextualizing The Study of Religion: An Introduction
   269-284.
   **Task:** Discuss SU Prof. Ann Gold’s list of definitions of religion.

   **SOCIETY AND CULTURE: TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE**

M. **Week 2, Labor Day, September 1:** NO CLASS

W. **Week 2, September 3:** Culture and Society

M. **Week 3, September 8:** Culture and Society
   **Reading(s):** Douglas E. Cowan, “The Brightness Against the Black,” *Sacred Space*,
   3-34.

W. **Week 3, September 10:** Culture and Society

M. **Week 4, September 15:** Habitus and Place

   **EMBODIMENT AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF: MONSTERS AND MESSIAHS**

W. **Week 4, September 17:** Death of God
   **Reading(s):** Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, aphorisms 108-112,

M. **Week 5, September 22:** Death of God
Reading(s): Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, aphorisms 115, 123-125

**Assignment Due:** Turn in first essay on *American Gods*.

W. **Week 5, September 24: Theoretical Frames for Religion and Film**
Reading(s): Gregory J. Watkins, ed. *Teaching Religion and Film*, Intro-Chapter 2, Ways to view religion in film (pp. 3-54).

**Blade Runner Screening TBA**

M. **Week 6, September 29: Theoretical Frames of Religion and Film**
Reading(s): Laura Marks, *The Skin of Film*, Introduction and chapter 4, Cinema as Eye — look and gaze, 1-13; 82-107.

W. **Week 6, October 1: Blade Runner and the Cinematic Form**
Reading(s): Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, chapters 1, Photography and 4, editing, 1-46; 135-193.
**second reading** Laura Marks, *The Skin of Film*, Introduction & chapter 4.
**Watch in class:** Ridley Scott talk about the making of the film.

**Gender, Sexuality and Embodied Technologies of the Self**

M. **Week 7, October 6: Religion, Gender, and Sexuality in Blade Runner**
Reading(s): Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,”
Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, chapter 3, Movement. 95-134.

W. **Week 7, October 8: Religion, Gender, and Sexuality in Blade Runner**
Reading(s): Jasbir Puar, “Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots” *Social Text* 72 20:3, Fall 2002.
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/social_text/v020/20.3puar.html
Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, chapter 8, Story, 327-368

**Assignment Due:** Turn in second essay on *Blade Runner*.

**Children of Men Screening TBA**

M. **Week 8, October 13: Monsters in Children of Men**
Week 8, October 15: Messianism in *Children of Men*


**Watch in class:** Children of Men Comments by Slavoj Zizek: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbgrwNP_gYE

**Assignment Due:** Turn in proposal for final project

**Man of Steel Screening TBA**

**Transcendence and Immanence**

Week 9, October 20: *Man of Steel*


Week 9, October 22: *Man of Steel*


**Assignment Due:** Turn in third essay on *Children of Men*.

**The Avengers Screening TBA**

Week 10, October 27: *The Avengers*


Week 10, October 29: *The Avengers*


**Pitch Black Screening TBA**

Week 11, November 3: *Pitch Black*

**Reading(s):** Maurice Wallace, "On Dangers Seen and Unseen: Identity Politics and The Burden of Black Male Specularity" and Afterword: What Ails You Polyphemus;"
towards a New Ontology of Vision in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*, in *Constructing the Black Masculine*, 19-52; 170-180.

**W. Week 11, November 5: Pitch Black**

**Assignment Due:** Final project check-in

**TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE IN MAGICAL REALISM**

**M. Week 12, November 10: The Aleph and Magical Realism**

**W. Week 12, November 12: When Fox is a Thousand**

**M. Week 13, November 17: When Fox is a Thousand**

**W. Week 13, November 19: When Fox is a Thousand**
*Reading(s):* Lai, *When Fox is a Thousand*, Part 4 Donna Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto."

Fall/Thanksgiving Break (November 23 - November 30)

**M. Week 15, December 1: Final Presentations**

**W. Week 15, December 3: Final Presentations**

**F. Week 15, December 5: Last Day of Classes**

**M. December 15, 5:15PM - 7:15PM:** Scheduled Final Exam Period HBC 213B.

***Final Papers are Due December 15 before 11:00PM Eastern Time***