REL 3115: Religion, Spirituality, and Popular Music

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Course Description:

Welcome to Religion, Spirituality, and Popular Music! This course is a philosophical exploration of the relationship between religion and popular music. It is an invitation to critical thinking about the religious implications of popular music. Operating with an awareness of the different modes of religion in our increasingly secular and postmodern culture, we will examine the possibility of religion in nontraditional religio-musical "texts."

Course Objectives:

- To introduce students to the academic study of religion and popular culture studies
- To engage students in critical thinking about the relationship between religion and popular music
- To present various philosophical and theoretical perspectives on the religiosity of popular music

Texts:


Getting Started:

This module contains all of the information you will need to get started in the course. Read through all the content pages in this module.

Click "next" at the bottom right of the screen to go to the next page.

If you encounter any problems or have any questions about this online format, click on Help icon at the top right of the screen after you have gone through the manual and video presentations in this module.

Point Distribution:

I. Introductory Posts: (total possible points = 10): There will be 2 introductory assignments during the first module in which the student introduces herself/himself to the rest of the class and provides information relevant to the course to the instructor.

II. Discussion/Essay/Video Posts (total possible points = 200): Participation in the course will be determined by writing assignments (i.e., posts) in each of the modules. Directions for the posts will be provided under the "Assignments" heading in each module. Discussions will close at the end of each module; do not wait until the last day to respond. Writing assignments will not be reopened once closed.
III. Quizzes (total possible points = 200): There will be a quiz in modules 1-5 to assess your comprehension of the material. Quizzes will consist of responding to multiple-choice questions based on the readings and notes. Given the open book nature of the course, quizzes will be timed.

IV. Final Exam (total possible points = 90): The final exam will be taken during module 6 (the last module; note: this module is during final exams week and is shorter than the previous modules). It will follow the same format as the quizzes and it, too, will be timed.

Note: Missed quizzes (not written assignments/posts) may be taken upon request by the student with a point reduction. If you miss a quiz (or know you will miss a quiz and request an extension), you must send me a message with your request to take the missed quiz. Requests made during the module in which a quiz is due or in the subsequent module will be allowed with a 5 point deduction. requests made to reopen a quiz after the subsequent module in which a quiz was due (e.g., a request to reopen M2 quiz during M4 week) will be allowed with a 10 point deduction.

Final grades will be based on the number of points earned by the student out of a total of 500 possible points. Canvas has a habit of breaking down different types of assignments in terms of percentages. This feature cannot be turned off; do not let those percentages confuse you. Final grades will be based on the total number of points earned as reflected in the grading grid below.

Grade Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>465-500 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>450-464 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>435-449 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>415-434 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>400-414 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>385-399 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>365-384 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>350-364 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>335-349 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>315-334 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>300-314 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 300 pts.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be subject to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule for further information. I will assume for this course that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. In other words, don't cheat by giving answers to others or taking them from anyone else. I will also adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so please do not ask me to change (or expect me to change) your grade illegitimately or to bend or break rules for one person that will not apply to everyone.
Personal Conduct

You are expected to conduct yourself in a manner that is conducive to the academic ends that we are attempting to achieve (see University standards for personal conduct as outlined in The Golden Rule). It is expected that each student will respect the views of those in the course and will refrain from offensive posts. Furthermore, it is expected that each student will be sensitive to the beliefs/values of others in the course. **Critical thinking should not be understood as “belief bashing.”** In the case that this advice is not followed you should expect a lowering of your final grade or, in the event of continuous serious violations, removal from the course.

Disability Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Copyright

This course may contain copyright protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine in order to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

Third-Party Software and FERPA

During this course you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these could be required assignments, you need **not** make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personally identity-sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

Protocols

Classroom Expectations
The following ground rules will help your work in this course to go more smoothly. Please carefully review these expectations and follow them.

1. Academic integrity will be appraised according to the student academic behavior standards outlined in *The Golden Rule of the University of Central Florida’s Student Handbook*. See [http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu](http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu) for further details.
2. Keep up with the reading. You have quite a few chapters, modules, discussion postings, and e-mail messages to read for the class. Please keep up with the reading. Students who keep up with the reading tend to do much better in this kind of class than those who do not.

**Messaging**

Make sure you:

1. Check your inbox/conversations at least twice per week (more often is better).
2. Be patient. Don’t expect an immediate response when you send a message. Generally, two days is considered a reasonable amount of time to receive a reply.
3. Be courteous and considerate. Being honest and expressing yourself freely is very important but being considerate of others online is just as important as in the classroom.
4. Make every effort to be clear. Online communication lacks the nonverbal cues that fill in much of the meaning in face-to-face communication.
5. Do not use all caps. This makes the message very hard to read and is considered "shouting." Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation (you may want to compose in a word processor, then cut and paste the message into the discussion).
6. Break up large blocks of text into paragraphs and use a space between paragraphs.
7. Never assume that your conversations can be read by no one except yourself; others may be able to read or access your mail. Never send or keep anything that you would not mind seeing on the evening news.

**Written/Discussion Assignments**

General "rules of the road" or protocols that apply to messaging also apply to the written assignments. Use the following conventions when composing a written assignments or discussion posting:

1. During a written/discussion assignment, deadlines for posting to and replying will be specified with each assignment. It is a good practice to always check the assignments multiple times during the week.
2. Be patient. Don’t expect an immediate response when you send a message.
3. A helpful hint for use with written assignments —— Compose your message in your word-processing application in order to check spelling, punctuation, and grammar —— then copy and paste your composition into the assignment or the discussion. This also saves online time.
4. Everyone should feel free to participate in class and online discussions. Regular and meaningful discussion postings constitute a substantial portion of your grade.
5. Respect each other’s ideas, feelings and experience.
6. Be courteous and considerate. It is important to be honest and to express yourself freely, but being considerate of others is just as important and expected online, as it is in the classroom.
7. Explore disagreements and support assertions with data and evidence.
8. Use the "reply" button rather than the "compose" button if you are replying to someone else's posting.
9. Do not use postings such as "I agree," "I don't know either," "Who cares," or "ditto." They do not add to the discussion, take up space on the Discussions, and will not be counted for assignment credit.
10. Avoid posting large blocks of text. If you must, break them into paragraphs and use a space between paragraphs.

Word of Caution:

Since this course is predominantly self-paced and a highly condensed summer session, my very strong recommendation is that you keep up with the readings, written assignments, and quizzes in order to stay on track. It has been my experience that self-paced courses are a double-edged sword. The flexibility that makes online courses popular also brings with it the temptation to procrastinate in the absence of weekly F2F meetings. As a result, withdrawals and "F's" (and generally poor grades) due to the inability to complete work are very high in online courses. This is especially the case during summer sessions. Given this flexibility as well as the open-book nature of this course, unless specified, assignments will not be reopened once closed; no "Incomplete" will be granted without a documented medical emergency. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of all deadlines. If you find that you have forgotten, misread, misunderstood, misconstrued the deadlines, and/or have “misplaced” your cyber-calendar, are the victim of a computer crash, have fallen prey to cyber-gremlins, and/or your cyber-dog ate your cyber-paper, and/or just plain procrastinated, do not contact the instructor requesting any of the aforementioned.

The moral of the story is this: if you want to avoid undue stress, anxiety, and do well in the course, make sure you take the time to read on a consistent basis and check in on the conversation messages regularly; do not wait until the last possible day/minute to take assessments and post assignments. Keep in mind those students that are actively engaged in the course will fare better at the end of the semester. If you have any questions concerning the course, feel free to message me. If you encounter material in the readings that you do not understand, contact me and I will gladly assist you.