

Religious Studies 2811 (F'2010):
Introduction to Contemporary Religious Movements

Fall 2010
Slot 17 (Tues/Thurs 9-10:15)
Room: A1046
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 10:30-11:45; Wed 6-7pm

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Porter
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http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~jporter/new_religions.html

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to some of the increasingly popular contemporary spiritual religious movements in North America. The course will survey a variety of spiritual paths, including Paganism, The New Age Movement, and UFO Spirituality. The course will examine elements of the history, worldview, and practices of these groups, and explore how many of these movements are being integrated into mainstream popular culture and consciousness through representations in television and film.

Texts:

There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, weekly readings have been placed on reserve in the library. Supplementary web-linked readings are also available on our course page.

Requirements: Exams will follow multiple-choice format.

Mid-Term Exam	50%
Final Exam	50%

Thurs. Sept. 9 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE - Handing out course outlines, explaining course requirements, introduction to topics and themes to be covered.

PART ONE: PAGANISM

September 14-16 WITCHCRAFT - Introduction to the history and worldview of contemporary paganism and witchcraft.

READINGS: Carpenter, Dennis D. "Emergent Nature Spirituality: An Examination of the Major Spiritual contours of the Contemporary Pagan Worldview" in Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft. James R. Lewis, ed. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996, pp. 35-72.

September 21 – 23 WITCHCRAFT - Contemporary beliefs, rituals, and varieties of Witchcraft.

READINGS: Voigt, Valerie. "Being a Pagan in a 9-5 World," in The Modern Craft Movement. Ed. Chas Clifton. Llewellyn Publications, 1997, 173-187.

September 28 – 30 OTHER VARIETIES OF PAGANISM: DRUIDRY, ASATRU

READINGS: Shallcrass, Philip. "Druidry," Paganism Today. Charlotte Hardman and Graham Harvey, Eds. Thorsons: 1995, pp. 65-80.

Harvey, Graham. "Heathens," Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth. New York: New York University Press, 1997, pp. 53-68.

October 5-7 WITCHCRAFT AND PAGANISM IN POPULAR CULTURE – The mainstreaming of contemporary pagan beliefs

READINGS: Moseley, Rachel. "Glamorous witchcraft: gender and magic in teen film and television." Screen 43 (4) Winter 2002: 403- 422.

FILM: THE CRAFT (1996)

PART TWO: THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

October 14-15 (Thursday & Friday) THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT - Introduction to the history and worldview of the New Age Movement.

READINGS: Lewis, James R. "Approaches to the Study of the New Age Movement," in Perspectives on the New Age. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, Eds. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, 1-12.

NOTE: MID-TERM BREAK OCT. 11-12 (MON-TUES). FRIDAY OCT. 15TH FOLLOWS TUESDAY SCHEDULE.

October 19 – MIDTERM EXAM – exam covers all material up to Friday Oct. 15th.

October 21-26 MOTHER EARTH SPIRITUALITY - Introduction to Mother Earth Spirituality.

READINGS: Porterfield, Amanda. "American Indian Spirituality as a Countercultural Movement," in Religion in Native North America. Christopher Vecsey, ed. Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1990, 152-164.

October 28 - November 2 CHANNELING - Introduction to Channeling.

READINGS: Trimble, Shawn Michael. "Spiritualism and Channeling," in America's Alternative Religions. Timothy Miller, Ed. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, 331-337.

Nov. 4-9 NEW AGE BELIEFS IN POPULAR CULTURE – The mainstreaming of New Age beliefs in mainstream media

READINGS: Rosenfeld, Kimberly N. "Terminator to Avatar: a postmodern shift." Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media 52(summer) 2010. Accessed 24/8/2010
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/currentissue/RosenfeldAvatar/text.html>.

FILM: AVATAR

NOTE: Thursday November 11th class cancelled – Remembrance Day

PART THREE: UFO SPIRITUALITY

Nov. 16 -18 UFO SPIRITUALITY - Introduction to the history and worldview of UFO spirituality, including Roswell, contactee phenomenon, alien abductions, and the ancient astronaut society.

READINGS: Partridge, Christopher "Understanding UFO Religions and Abduction Spiritualities" in UFO Religions. Ed. Christopher Partridge. London and New York: Routledge, 2003, 3-42.

Nov. 23 - 25 CLOSE ENCOUNTERS - Spirituality of Close Encounter & Abduction Experiences.

READINGS: Whitmore, John. "Religious Dimensions of the UFO Abductee Experience," in The Gods Have Landed: New Religions From Other Worlds. James R. Lewis, ed. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, 65-84.

Nov. 30 UFO SPIRITUAL GROUPS - An example of a UFO Spiritual Contactee Group

READINGS: Chryssides, George D. "Scientific Creationism: A Study of the Raelian Church," in UFO Religions. Ed. Christopher Partridge. Routledge, 2003, pp. 45-61.

Dec. 2nd – UFO SPIRITUALITY IN POPULAR CULTURE

READINGS: TBA

FILM: Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

Note: Not sure if we will have time to cover this film, if not then more general discussion of UFOs/religion in pop culture will be covered as time allows.
