CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE
COURSE SYLLABUS: RST 356
Contemporary Religious Thought: Sacred Spaces
Utopias, Dystopias, Heterotopias
Fall 2014
PRELIMINARY EDITION: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

COURSE SECTION: 356-02 010393 Sierra Hall 384, 4pm-6:45pm
PROFESSOR: R. C. Rodman, PhD
FACULTY OFFICE: Santa Susanna, 419; Phone (818) 677-6878 (only during office hours)
FACULTY EMAIL: rrodman@csun.edu
OFFICE HRS: Tues & Thurs 12:15-1:45pm

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION and SLOs
Course Description: The course explores how and why human beings imagine, create and set aside certain spaces as especially powerful, significant, special and meaningful. Students will investigate a range of complex negotiations and aims when humans imagine or define some spaces and sacred (or taboo). Those spaces vary widely--heaven, hell, the city, the nation, buildings and the body.

A. General Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Students will explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures.
2. Students will analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;
3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;
4. Students will demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;
5. Students will be able to use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged;
6. Students will learn to describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.

B. Religious Studies Student Learning Objectives:
Study of selected major writings in religious thought, with the aim of analyzing representative modern approaches to questions such as God and the world, faith and self-understanding, and belief and social consciousness.
1. Students will be able to analyze, interpret and reflect on the cultural forces and factors that shape religious expression in the contemporary era (approximately the previous 20 years).
2. Students will be able to explain and give examples of a diversity of contemporary religious outlooks, using critical reasoning as well as empathy.
3. Students will recognize and reflect upon religious or spiritual values found in contemporary literature, music, art, and popular culture.
4. Students will demonstrate (orally and in writing) a recognition of the difference between an academic approach to religion and a personal, devotional approach; and will be able to demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in locating academic resources and primary material for the study of contemporary religion.

II. TEXTBOOKS AND REQUIRED MATERIALS
Texts for Purchase
- Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid’s Tale, Anchor (ISBN: 978-0385490818

NB: There will be LOTS more readings supplied on Moodle. YOU MUST BRING YOUR READINGS TO CLASS WITH YOU ON THE DAYS WE DISCUSS THEM.

**III. COURSE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS**

*Familiarity with Moodle:* Technological Information: This class will employ Moodle for both student assignments and presentations and to provide students with access to media examples that will be presented in the course. It is your responsibility to learn how to use Moodle. For information and instructions about Moodle, go to: [http://www.csun.edu/it/studentmoodle-help/](http://www.csun.edu/it/studentmoodle-help/)

*Attendance and Participation:* Attendance is mandatory. I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Because we only meet once a week, even one absence is serious. The more absences you have, the lower your grade.

- Showing up isn’t enough. You must be fully prepared for each class. All assignments must be read prior to the class they are assigned, and all readings must be brought to class.
- You must fully participate in the class by asking/answering questions, fully participating in discussions, and fully engaging in any other activity of the class.
- Please make sure you attend to your personal needs before or after the class. You may not leave during class. No cell phones, texting, or Internet use for anything other than class work.

*Written Work:* All papers must meet basic scholarly standards appropriate for university level work. Not only does this include proper grammar, punctuation, and syntax, but also serious reflection on your topic. There are many sources to help you with your writing assignments. The most important is the Writing Program at CSUN’s Learning Resource Center, Room 408, Bayramian Hall, 818-677-2033 or go to: [http://www.csun.edu/lrc/writing.html](http://www.csun.edu/lrc/writing.html).

*Deadlines:* Because due dates are stated at the outset, all papers/assignments must be turned in or posted on Moodle on the date listed. No late work will be accepted. Failure to show up on the day of presentations will result in forfeiting your ability to present and all the points that go with it.

*Plagiarism/Cheating:* Any evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade, certainly for the item plagiarized, but also for the course. Plagiarism is one form of cheating, but not the only one. Other examples include “borrowing” stealing, buying or otherwise procuring papers and exams, turning in a paper that you have already produced for another class, or having someone else take an exam or write an essay for which you take credit. All instances of cheating will result no credit for the assignment and follow up with the Dean’s office.

*Special Accommodations:* If you have a documented learning disability and/or a physical disability and need special accommodations in order to complete course requirements, please make sure the instructor is informed.

*Contact with the Professor:* My office hours are posted above. I look forward to working with each of you in class and on an individual basis. Therefore, I urge you to take advantage of my office hours. I am happy to discuss any aspect of this course with you, and help you with the assignments. I especially urge you to see me if you are confused about the course or an assignment. Really successful students ask questions! Please contact me by email, in class, or during office hours with your questions, comments, or requests.

**OUR CLASS CONTRACT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Expect From You</th>
<th>What You Can Expect From Me</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You will treat everyone in class, including the professor,</td>
<td>I will treat you with the respect and courtesy due all human</td>
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<td>with respect and courtesy due all human beings.</td>
<td>beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will attend every class, give your full attention to</td>
<td>I will attend every class, give my full attention to the</td>
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<tr>
<td>the material, and conduct yourself in an appropriate</td>
<td>material and conduct myself in an appropriate manner.</td>
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<td>manner.</td>
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You will agree to do the work outlined in the syllabus on time.

I will return your work in a timely fashion.

You can ask for help.

I will assist you in any way I can, and make myself available to you via office hours. You can expect a response to email within 24 hours except in rare cases.

You will acknowledge that your perception of effort, by itself, is not enough to justify a distinguished grade.

I will not discriminate against you on the basis of your identity or your well-informed viewpoints.

You will prepare carefully for every class.

I will prepare carefully for every class.

You will not plagiarize, cheat, “double-dip,” copy, or steal the work of others.

I will pursue the maximum punishment for plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity.

You will not make excuses for your failure to do what you ought; you will accept the consequences – good and bad – of your actions.

I will keep careful records of your attendance, performance, and progress.

IV. ASSESSMENT

Grading: Plus-Minus System will be used

• Class participation and attendance: 20%/100 points
• Three review essays: 40%/100 points
• Class Presentation: 15%/100 points
• Final Paper: 25% 100 points

Letter Grade Allocation

• 95-100 A
• 90-94 A-
• 87-89 B+
• 83-86 B
• 80-82 B-
• 77-79 C+
• 73-76 C
• 70-72 C-
• 60-69 D

VI. SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/26</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Unpacking “religion” and “sacred”</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/2</td>
<td>Theorizing sacred space – the why of creating separate and set-apart places</td>
<td>Eliade The Sacred and the Profane, chap. 1, Durkheim, Elementary Forms, selections; Jonathan Smith, Map is Not Territory, chap. 4; All readings are on Moodle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Resource(s)</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/23</td>
<td>The Body</td>
<td>Margaret Atwood, <em>The Handmaid’s Tale</em>, chapters 1-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/30</td>
<td>“ ”</td>
<td>Margaret Atwood, <em>The Handmaid’s Tale</em>, chapters 9-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/7</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td><em>Heaven: A History</em>, chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-68)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Hell</td>
<td><em>A History of Hell</em>, 1-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>Hell</td>
<td><em>A History of Hell</em>, 89-125, and 158-243</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/11</td>
<td>No class</td>
<td>VETERANS DAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/2</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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<td>12/9</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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<td>12/16</td>
<td>Final Paper due before midnight</td>
<td>TurnItIn dropbox on Moodle</td>
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