

THEOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

THEOREL 101/101G The Bible in Popular Culture Semester 2, 2017



Lecture Location & Time: Check Student Services Online
Lecturer: Caroline Blyth
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Office Hours: 3-5pm, Thursday (or by appointment) – Arts 1, level 4, room 402

Brief Description of Course

An exploration of biblical themes, images, and metaphors within contemporary popular culture. You will learn how to use some of the tools and methods for analyzing religion within various modes of popular culture, including music, film, TV, art, advertising, and the media.

1. Learning outcomes of course

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- Have learned basic theories of analysing popular culture and be able to apply these to cultural texts, including those encountered in class;
- Be able to explain how the Bible influences popular culture and how popular culture influences interpretations of the biblical texts;
- Be familiar with the ways in which the Bible functions as a cultural resource in a wide variety of contemporary contexts and cultures;
- Be able to identify some significant Biblical themes and characters as they appear in popular culture texts, including film, music, art, advertising, television and the media;
- Have learned the skills of planning a research essay, including writing an essay proposal and searching for appropriate resources using library searches and online databases.

2. Assignments

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| a. Online quiz [On Canvas] | 15% total grade | Available: 13-24 September |
| b. Essay proposal | 10% total grade | Due: 11.59pm, 29 September |
| c. 1500-word essay | 25% total grade | Due: 4pm, 18 October |
| d. 2-hour examination | 50% total grade | Date: TBA |

3. Lecture Schedule

Week	Lecture Topic	Weekly biblical texts
Week 1 24-28 July	Introduction to the Course What is popular culture?	
Week 2 31 July-4 Aug	The Bible Industry Introduction to the Bible as a cultural text.	
Week 3 7-11 Aug	Methods in studying the Bible in popular culture Noah as a case study	Genesis 6-9
Week 4 14-18 Aug	Biblical characters and their cultural afterlives Delilah as a case study.	Judges 16
Week 5 21-25 Aug	Prophecy in the Bible and popular culture Contemporary prophets in politics and culture.	Exodus 1-3 See handout on Canvas module for week 5
Week 6 28 Aug-1 Sept	The Jesus industry Jesus in art, film, TV, music, and advertising	Mark 14-16
	<i>Mid-Semester break</i> Mid-Semester test: 13-22 September	
Week 7 18-22 Sept	Biblical messiahs, popular messiahs and the American monomyth Political messiahs, sporting messiahs, celebrity messiahs	Psalms 2; Matthew 1, 16:13-20 (and see week 7, Mark 14-16)
Week 8 25-29 Sept	The Bible in politics Donald Trump's Bible Radical Bibles, Liberal Bibles, Cultural Bibles Essay proposal due 29 September	Matthew 6: 9-13; Mark 12; Exodus 20.1-17.
Week 9 2-6 Oct	The Bible and Violence Religious intolerance Biblical themes in crime fiction and drama	Genesis 4; Luke 10.25-37. Various verses from Leviticus (see handout on Canvas)
Week 10 9-13 Oct	The Bible, Gender, and Sexuality Adam and Eve in advertising Beyoncé's Bible The Queer Bible	Genesis 1-3 Matthew 1 Luke 1
Week 11 16-20 Oct	It's the end of the world/semester: themes of the apocalypse in the Bible and popular culture. Essay due 16 October	Mark 13
Week 12 23-27 Oct	Exam revision	No readings this week.
	<i>Study Break and Examination Period</i>	

4. Course Assignments

a. Online Quiz [available on Canvas] 15% total grade To be taken between 13-22 September

This will be a 20-question multiple-choice quiz and will check your knowledge and understanding of the material presented *in lectures, lecture slides* and *required readings* for Weeks 1-6, as well as the information *in this course outline*.

This test is not compulsory – failure to sit it within the allocated time period will mean you get 0% for it, rather than a DNC. This will affect your final grade for the course though.

The test will be available on Canvas during the period:

- From **9am 13 September** until **11pm 24 September**.

You can complete it any time within these dates. You will have 30 minutes to complete the test and you must complete it at one sitting. Once you exit, you cannot return to the test, so make sure you have that length of time when you begin the test.

To access the test you will need to go to the Canvas site for THEOREL 101/G and Click on Quizzes for your instructions.

Remember, once you have begun, you need to continue for the 30 minutes, as you will not be able to re-enter the test. So leave yourself the time you need to complete it. If you are accessing the test from off-campus, please also make sure you have reliable Internet access to Canvas.

If anyone encounters technical difficulties when attempting to take the test, or is unable to sit it during this period for another reason, please contact Caroline Blyth, the course co-ordinator, as soon as possible (c.blyth@auckland.ac.nz).

There is a sample quiz available in the week 6 Module.

b. Essay proposal 10% total grade c.500 words Due: 29 September

The aim of this assignment is to get you thinking about your essay and to start planning its structure and gathering sources for it. It is also a good opportunity to get valuable feedback on your planned essay and some additional help with resources etc.

The proposal worksheet asks you to tell me your essay topic, create a title for the essay, outline your essay plan, and list some of the sources you will be using. A model worksheet answer can be found on the assignment page. You are welcome to use ideas from this worksheet, but please do not simply cut and paste bits from it (this will be flagged on Turnitin).

Complete the essay proposal worksheet on Canvas and submit it to Turnitin via the Canvas assignment page (**no hard copy is required**). Proposals will be graded online and returned, with feedback, within one week.

This proposal is compulsory – failure to submit it will result in you receiving a DNC (Did Not Complete) grade for this course.

c. Essay 1500 words 25% total grade Due: 4pm on 18 October

The essay is a compulsory part of the coursework for THEOREL 101/G. Failure to submit an essay will result in you receiving a DNC (Did Not Complete) grade for this course.

Using the material from the course (required reading, additional readings, lecture notes) as well as other material you may find on your own, write a 1500 word essay answering one of the essay questions given below.

More details about the essay, including the essay questions, an essay writing guide, essay topic suggestions, and FAQs can be found on Canvas – check the Module dedicated to the essay.

The grading criteria for the essay are found in the grid below – these will be a helpful guide to what we are looking for in your essay.

Your assignment should contain at least **four scholarly items** in its bibliography (these could include scholarly books, eBooks, online journal articles and dictionary entries found in the library catalogue. I'll also accept quality newspaper or magazine articles). Avoid using entries in websites (such as Wikipedia.com) as sources for your essay – apart from the ones we have specifically recommended. If you are unsure whether your sources count as scholarly please just ask me.

Submit a copy of your essay **to Turnitin** via the Canvas assignment page before it is marked. Your Turnitin originality report will be available to you once you submit. No paper copy is required. You'll be able to view your essay feedback and grade via Canvas.

The essay questions are:

1. Choose a character from the Bible and compare their biblical portrayal with one or more of their afterlives in popular culture. You should use one or more of the methods you learned about in week 3: world in the text, behind the text, and in front of the text.
2. With reference to the American Monomyth and/or biblical understandings of the messiah, choose a contemporary figure (real or fictional) and discuss why you think they can be described as a popular messiah.
3. Using Borg's definitions of the 'biblical prophet', identify and discuss a contemporary individual or group (real or fictional) who you think has a similarly prophetic role within their own culture or context.
4. With reference to the Cultural Bible, the Liberal Bible, and the Radical Bible, discuss how the Bible is used in contemporary politics.
5. Using examples from popular culture, discuss **one or more of** the four ways that Jesus can be presented in popular culture: i.e. transcribed, contextualized, satirized, and allegorized.
6. Write an essay on any aspect of the Bible and popular culture that you are interested in (speak to me first if you wish to do this 'freeform' essay option, and I can let you know how viable it is, plus give you some advice).

Criteria for assessment: these criteria are what we look for in student essays for this course. Before submitting your essay, check the grid below – which boxes does it tick?

Criteria for Assessment	A 80-100%	B 65-79%	C 50-64%	D 0-49%
Answer to essay question	Offers an excellent and creative answer to essay question.	Good solid answer to essay question – less impressive than A.	Answer is poorly structured and/or argued, and does not adequately address the essay question.	Answer makes little attempt to engage in essay question in an appropriate way. Serious flaws in essay structure and argument.
Use of class lectures, readings and discussion to engage with study of the Bible and Pop Culture	Demonstrates excellent engagement with class material, using it resourcefully and creatively. Shows clear ability to write academically about the Bible and pop culture.	Some good engagement with class material, using it appropriately to construct essay. Has ability to write academically about the Bible and pop culture, although some minor flaws or gaps in method may be apparent.	Partial engagement with class material within essay. Some ability to write academically about the Bible and pop culture, although more major flaws or gaps in method may be apparent.	Little or no engagement with class material. NO evidence of ability to write academically about the Bible and popular culture.
Writing is clear, stylish, and has been carefully proofread	Writing is clear, stylish, and has been carefully proof-read. A pleasure to read.	Writing is generally good, but a number of typos and grammatical errors present. Less of a joy to read.	Essay is not carefully proof-read, significant number of typos and grammatical errors that make some parts of essay difficult to follow. A chore to read.	Essay does not measure up to academic expectations. It is poorly written, not proofread, and subsequently difficult to understand. Not at all pleasant to read.
Citations and bibliography	Citations and bibliography conform to a referencing style	Most citations and bibliography conform to a referencing style but a few errors noted.	More significant errors in citation and bibliography – referencing style not followed with adequate attention to detail.	No referencing style used; lack of citations and/or bibliography.
Appropriate bibliography of at least three scholarly items.	More than four scholarly sources used.	At least four scholarly sources used.	Fewer than four scholarly sources used.	No scholarly sources used.
Have you submitted to Turnitin?	Submitted to Turnitin – Turnitin report acceptable.			Not submitted to Turnitin. Turnitin report unacceptable. Plagiarism detected.

c. Exam Two hours duration Date TBA

The exam is a compulsory part of the coursework for THEO 101/G. Failure to sit the exam will result in you receiving a Did Not Sit grade for this course.

More details about the exam will be given later in the semester. To get an idea of what it might look like, see last year's exam paper (available on the library website – search for THEOREL 101 under the 'Exams' tab).

5. References and resources

You will need to have access to a copy of a Bible in your preferred language. [Bible Gateway](#) is great, as it offers lots of different translations of the Bible in a range of languages. For English Bible translations, I recommend the New Revised Standard Version (I'll explain why in week 2).

Weekly Modules (your main resource for this course)

I've created a **module for each week on Canvas** – in each module, I've created a **Page**, which tells you what the weekly topic is about, some **questions** to think about, and a reminder of the **weekly required readings**. I'll also post the week's **slides** here (which I'll put up before the lectures) and any other **resources** (handouts, links to video clips, websites, etc).

There is also a **special module dedicated to the course essay** – there is loads of help available, including model essays from previous years, guides to answering each essay question, formatting and referencing guidance, FAQs, and recommended readings.

Weekly Readings

Reading material for each week is listed under the "Readings" section available online in Canvas. Essential readings will be the focus of the week's lectures – I've reminded you what these are on each week's page. Further readings are to help with your essay and exam revision. There is a biblical text allocated for each week (all essential). Most weeks also include some videos for you to watch.

6. Extensions and lateness policy

Extensions for assignments will be given in special circumstances, and only if requested **prior** to the due date of the assignment (i.e. extensions will not be granted retrospectively except in exceptional circumstances). Essays submitted late will lose 5% for the first day late, then an additional 1% for each subsequent day late. After 3 weeks, your essay will receive 0%. The essay is a compulsory part of the course work, so even if it is over three weeks late, it needs to be submitted **prior to the final exam** if you want to avoid a DNC grade.

As a rule, I'm fairly sympathetic with student requests for extensions, and would rather grant you an extension than have you lose marks for your essay or fail to submit it at all. The main thing is that you ask me **BEFORE** the essay is due, and be honest with me about the reason you need the extension. My generosity does have limits though, and longer extension requests (of over a week) will need to be accompanied by a medical certificate or other supporting documentation.

7. Important reminders

- The essay proposal, essay and exam are compulsory; failure to complete the essay will result in a Did Not Complete grade, while failure to sit the exam will lead to a Did Not Sit grade.
- The mid-semester quiz, however, is not compulsory. If you don't take the quiz, you simply get 0% for this assignment (and this will affect your final grade).
- Assignments must comply with the University of Auckland's *Academic Conduct* guidelines (accessible [here](#)).
- Extensions: extension requests should be made to the course co-ordinator (c.blyth@auckland.ac.nz) before the essay due date (see below for extension policy).

- All assessment grades are provisional until after the end of semester THEOREL Examiners Meeting.
- Enjoy the course!