**Religion and Popular Culture**

**Assignments, Due Dates and Grades: Fall 2020**

**1) Supplemental Activity:**Some weeks there will be a suggested "supplemental activity," an invitation to engage a particular form of popular culture or to reflect on your own of or others participation in popular culture. These are not required or graded, though they will often enrich your reading or engagement with the class discussion.

**2) Online Participation:**This course requires consistent interaction with your peers and the instructor.Thus, your full, prepared, and timely participation is required so that the course functions as a discussion among us. At the end of each week I will review your posts for the week and award points at the "closing the week's discussion" tab as follows:

3 points indicates your substantive participation in each discussion with evidence that you have done the pre-work and made timely comments that advance the discussion.

2 points indicates that you have participated in all the discussions with general evidence of preparation but have not as often advanced the conversation and/or have not always posted on time.

1 point indicates that you have participated in some or all of the conversation, but without much evidence of preparation, and/or not in time to be part of the group discussion, or without advancing the conversation.

0 points indicates that you were not active in most of the discussions

(3 pts per week for a total of 30)

**3) Research Proposal**: A 1 - 3 page proposal identifying the topic for the research paper and thematically connected but separate application (see descriptions below).  This should: A) indicate the relationship between religion and popular culture you will be exploring, B) indicate the form of popular culture you intend to study, C) suggest key research questions you expect to raise and/or the thesis you intend to defend, D) indicate resources from course reading and how and where you will find other sources, and E) describe briefly the application project  within which you will share the learnings from your research paper. DUE: Sept 30 (5 pts)

**4) Group Presentation/Additional Reading**: Each class member will be part of a small group that will make a class presentation focused on the additional reading you selected. Remember that the class will not have read the authors you are presenting. See the guidelines for the presentation below. Sign up for your preferred book by Sept 23;  Be sure to have read the book before your group meets to plan the presentation. A group member must email the presentation to [jmahan@iliff.edu](mailto:jmahan@iliff.edu) at least four days before the discussion date, which falls Oct 8 – 14, depending on the title you selected. (25 pts)

**5) Research Paper**: (10- 12 pgs) Prepare an academic paper that demonstrates and reflects on one of the four relationships between religion and popular culture suggested by Forbes and Mahan. Possibilities include analysis of a particular text, genre, object, or activity, an analysis of a religious critic or critical approach, or another topic agreed upon in advance with the instructor. The paper should demonstrate both your own creative reflection and the way that your reflection is informed by your reading and research. Careful attribution and footnoting distinguish between the two. DUE: Nov 12, turn in on Canvas. (20 pts)

**6) Application**: (8-10 pgs) Develop a plan for using the understandings you have developed in researching and writing your paper in some public forum. This might take the form of a religious education curriculum for youth or adults, a community group discussion series, sermon series, a series of blog posts, a college or seminary course proposal, a mass media production plan, or other expression appropriate to the vocation in church, community or academy for which you are preparing. Typically, it would include a description of the event that could be used in publicizing it that addresses what is covered, the teaching style, and why the intended audience should be interested in the topic, as well as a teaching plan that outlines the program, and a more developed example of one session, sermon, etc. Due: Nov 19, turn in on Canvas. (20 pts)

**Final Grades: There are 100 pts available.**

A         94 - 100

A-        91 - 93

B+       89 - 90

B         84 – 88

B-        81 - 83

C+       78 - 80

C         73 - 77

D         63 – 72

**Guidelines for Additional Reading Presentation**

Each group will prepare a teaching report on the additional book they selected that will then be discussed by the class. You might create a Power Point presentation for the class to flip through, record a talk in Zoom or another technology to be streamed, prepare an essay, or in some other engaging way lead us into the book you have read and discussed as a group. You goal should be to serve as the author’s representative, to embody core elements of the book’s approach and claims in such a way that those who have not read the book can understand and be able to engage with the author’s basic ideas and engage your colleagues in the class in a lively conversation with these ideas. This should *not* be a summary of the entire content of the book, but rather a creative pedagogical encounter with the most central of the author’s ideas. While some evaluative response to the text is inevitable, this should primarily be a sympathetic reading looking for the strongest and most important of the author’s ideas with some critical reflection on their limitations.

You need to have finished the reading and begin discussing the book with your group in time to plan and prepare your presentation and send it to [jmahan@iliff.edu](mailto:jmahan@iliff.edu) four days in advance of the class Canvas discussion. It is your responsibility to gather your group for brainstorming and preliminary planning. You might do this in any of several ways. It might be helpful to organize a Google Hangout where you can talk with each other in real time. Or you might begin an email conversation and/or organized a mutually authored Google Doc to build your plan for the session. Or of course, you can use any other technology you are comfortable with. Please feel free to consult the instructor about any questions about your interpretations of the text or about the methods you will used to teach them to the class.

Group presentations serve several purposes. They contribute to overall learning by providing the entire class access to a wider range of readings. They also provide a context to build skills for collaborative learning and teaching that will be useful in future teaching whether in churches, community or academic settings. While not every member of the group must speak during the teaching session, each members must participate equitably in its construction. I expect that you all will engage faithfully and professionally with your colleagues throughout the process of preparation.

**Suggested Preparation Outline:**

1. Week One, identify your preferred alternative text, and indicate an alternative choice. By end-of-day Saturday I will confirm your reading and identify your group. Order your book as soon as possible.
2. Week Two, everyone in the group reads the book. Also, reach out to your peers to identify a group organizer, decide how you will connect to discuss the book and plan you presentation, and schedule your first group meeting for the coming weekend or early in Week Three.
3. Week Three, meet to discuss the book, identify key themes and ideas you want to communicate in the teaching session, and begin to brainstorm ideas for how best to present them. Think about brief examples from within the book or other sources you might want to use to illustrate your conversation. brainstorm and begin planning your presentation, and make assignments for who will do what. Confirm how you will continue to connect for planning and to assemble your presentation. Remember, you are presentation needs to include discussion prompts that invite a lively class conversation.
4. Week Four, Everyone works individually and collectively to gather resources, prepare elements of the teaching session, and a designated person or persons assembles the presentation and sends it to [jmahan@iliff.edu](mailto:jmahan@iliff.edu) at least four days before the scheduled class discussion..

Suggested questions to answer as a group before designing the teaching session:

**1**. To whom is the author writing and what are her/his central concerns?

**2.** To what extent is the author analyzing popular texts, and to what extent is s/he evaluating what audiences do in response to popular texts?

**3.** What understanding of religion informs this book?

**4.** How does the book help us understand the connections between religion and popular culture?

**5.** What does the author want us to do (if anything), and what do you see that keeps us from doing it?

**6.** What should your classmates definitely learn from this text?

**7.** What are the limitations of the text, and how might you address them?

**Note:** Groups have successfully utilized all manners of pedagogical approaches in these teaching sessions: lecture, Powerpoint presentations, handouts and outlines, etc. Think through the learning goals for the discussion. Most of all, **be creative and be responsible to the learning of your students!**