



Core Curriculum Supplement

Academic Unit / Office CLASS/MCL/JWST

Catalog Year of Implementation 2019-2020

Course (Prefix / Number) RELS / 2372

Course Title The Bible and Modern Pop Culture

Core Proposal Request

Add to Core Curriculum

Revise course already in Core Curriculum

	Current Core Categorization (New additions: select N/A for this column)	Proposed Categorization for Upcoming Core
Foundational Component Area (required)	N/A (Not currently a Core course)	Language, Philosophy Culture (40)
Component Area Option (optional)	N/A (No Component Area Option)	N/A (No Component Area Option)
Category Listing: Single or Double?	N/A (Not currently a Core course)	List under the Foundational Component Area ONLY.

Core Proposal Rationale - Please provide a rationale for including, or continuing to include, this course in the UH Core Curriculum:

This course as it exists satisfies the requirements of the Language, Philosophy, and Culture core requirement. Including it in the core curriculum will allow students to use this course toward satisfying the LPC requirement. It may also increase course enrollment.

Core Objectives (see [THECB Core objectives](#))

Critical Thinking

Teamwork

Communication

Social Responsibility

Empirical & Quantitative Skills

Personal Responsibility

Please explain how the Core Objectives selected above will be met:

Critical Thinking: Students gain experience reading and evaluating primary sources (biblical material) as well as secondary sources (songs, movies, comic books, video games, websites, memes, books). Students learn to make connections between sources. They complete a final project asking them to evaluate and compare multiple representations of a single biblical character or event.

Communication: Students speak to one another and the professor about what they have read and seen. Students write regular response papers to class readings, which aids in the development of written communication skills. They work together on group projects aimed at communicating how biblical stories and characters are portrayed in modern pop culture, which aids in the development of oral communication skills.

Teamwork: Students work together on group projects and other group activities, such as focused discussions on readings. Assignments such as mock debates help students learn to work together.

Social Responsibility: Students gain competence in reading biblical materials and assessing their interpretation in culture. A key question throughout the semester will be, “What if all you knew about this biblical story was its pop culture (mis)representation?” i.e. “Why do pop culture portrayals of biblical texts matter?”

Personal Responsibility: Students learn about the racial, ethnic, and gender implications of how biblical characters and stories are represented in pop culture, which encourages them to think about the ethical issues involved in biblical interpretation.

When submitting this proposal form, please remember to attach a syllabus, learning objectives, and/or sample lesson(s).

The Bible and Modern Pop Culture

Dr. Caryn Tamber-Rosenau

Course description: Does Kanye West have a Jesus complex? What is Leviathan and why is the TV show Supernatural so obsessed with it? Why did Donald Trump's reference to "Two Corinthians" go over so poorly? What are all those beautiful women holding apples trying to sell us, anyway—and why do we keep buying? In this course, students will explore the making of modern representations and interpretations of the Bible. We will discuss biblical citations, interpretations, and reimaginings in a variety of forms, including art, literature, movies, music, comics, Internet culture, and advertising. Students will also learn from one another; students will be tasked with finding and presenting to the class a pop culture representation of a biblical text or character.

Course goals:

- Compare and contrast biblical texts with pop culture representations of them.
- Find out how Bible characters and stories can take on a life of their own.
- Explore what biblical pop culture representations say about the Bible, religion, and society.
- Discuss how race, class, gender, and other factors affect how biblical figures are portrayed in pop culture.

Course requirements:

1. In pairs, students will sign up to be an "expert" on a pop culture representations of a particular character or story from the Bible. Each pair will give a 15-minute presentation on their topic, making sure to show examples to the rest of the class. Options include Cain and Abel, Abraham, Sarah, the binding of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (from Genesis), Potiphar's wife, Joshua, Samson, Deborah, Jael, King David, King Solomon, Psalm 23, the Song of Songs, Job, John the Baptist, Salome, Joseph the father of Jesus, the Good Samaritan, Lazarus, and Judas Iscariot.
2. Over the course of the semester, students will write four brief (about 2 pages) response papers to the readings.
3. Students will write a final analysis (6-8 pages) of a set of three pop culture treatments of a single character or story.

Grading:

Attendance and participation: 15%

Group projects: 15%

Response papers: 40%

Final analysis: 30%

Week 1:

What is pop culture?

What is the Bible? Whose Bible is it? For whom does it matter and how?

Week 2:

Methods in studying the Bible and pop culture, with a modern film (perhaps *Noah*) as example.

Week 3:

Heroes and Villains of the Book of Genesis

Case studies: Adam and Eve in advertising; Noah's Ark in children's culture

Week 4:

The Exodus

Case study: *Prince of Egypt* vs. *Exodus: Gods and Monsters*, Exodus in reggae

Week 5:

The Fabulous Ladies of the Bible: Ruth, Esther, Jezebel, Bathsheba, Delilah...and more!

Case study: Girls in Trouble, perhaps the world's only band whose songs focus on the women of the Bible

Week 6:

Biblical monsters and giants

Case study: *Supernatural* and Leviathan

Week 7:

Bible in American politics

Case study: Donald Trump, Barack Obama, and Bible "insiders" and "outsiders"

Week 8:

Prophets and prophecy, ancient and modern

Case study: Martin Luther King Jr. as modern prophet

Week 9:

Jesus in pop culture

Case study: Kanye West

Week 10:

Jesus in pop culture

Case study: Jesus films

Week 11:

Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary

Case study: *The Da Vinci Code*

Messiahs

Case study: Harry Potter as messiah figure

Week 12:

Heaven

Case study: *Heaven Is for Real*

Hell

Case study: Hell in the comics

Week 13:

Apocalypse in pop culture

Case studies: *Left Behind*; *This Is the End*

Week 14:

Representations of the Bible Itself in Pop Culture

Case studies: The LOLCat Bible, the Brick Testament, and the Bible in *The Simpsons*