Course Summary:
This course explores a variety of theoretical, philosophical, and religious reflections on the meanings of modern religiosity. We will encounter a range of European and American attempts to think about religion as a part of life in the modern west. We will explore the evolving and trenchant critiques of religion, the shifting categories of “good” and “bad” religion, and the creative innovations, transformations, and adaptations inside religious traditions. Our authors include Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, Muslims, atheists, and self-described “spiritual” seekers. We will explore their diagnoses of the human predicament and compare the ways they answer fundamental questions of meaning and authority. Along the way we will learn to assess religion from multiple vantage points, as both citizens and as scholars.

This course will make use of the entire second season of the HBO television drama The Leftovers as a framing device for our discussions. During every class session we will watch one episode of the television series together. The themes of the show will be reflected in the readings we do together, though not every reading on every day will correspond neatly to the theme of that day’s episode. In addition to using the show as a means to reflect on fundamental questions about religious meaning, belief, practice, ritual, authority, and coherence, we will also discuss as a class how popular culture itself becomes an important site for making and exploring religious meaning-making in the late modern world.

Students will also be asked to reflect—using course readings and their own life experiences as an essential dual springboard—on their own understandings of the meanings of religious thought and practice.

Course Goals:
- Develop an understanding of various religious, philosophical, and theoretical approaches to the meanings and limits of modern religiosity.
- Build knowledge of religions as they have shaped and been shaped by social, cultural, and intellectual developments in the modern West.
- Gain tools for critical and empathetic understanding of different religious lifeworlds.
- Reflect critically and openly on inherited conceptions of religion and its practice.
- Critically engage visual and popular culture through the lens of religious studies;
➢ Improve skills in reading and analytical writing;
➢ Experiment with creative modes of expression as a means of personal and critical engagement with religious history.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation (15%)
Attendance will be taken daily. Good participation includes: taking part in class discussion, active listening of lecture/discussion, commenting on assigned texts, offering constructive advice to peers, asking questions, not violating class order. Your attendance and your active participation in class discussion are essential. You are expected to have done all the assigned reading for each class session and to come to class (with the readings in hand) having formulated specific questions and/or observations about the reading that you are ready to discuss. At the start of most class sessions we may also engage in brief writing exercises, mini quizzes, or small group conversation, all of which also constitutes part of your participation. Simply attending every class session with your printed readings will earn a grade of C+ – reflecting the average expectations for this category. Because this is a summer class with a condensed schedule, missing one class is the equivalent to missing an entire week during the regular semester.

Journal (15%)
➢ Each student in the course will keep a journal. The purpose of the journal assignment is 1) to enhance your engagement with and understanding the course material and 2) improve your writing. Six times during the semester each student will set aside one hour to write a journal entry. Each entry should have the date and time of entry indicated at the top. No more than two journal entries per week. These entries can take the form of 1) personal reflection 2) interpretive/analytical engagement with course materials.
➢ A total of six journal entries is required. At least three must be a sustained interpretive/analytical engagement with a course reading assignment. Examples of interpretive/analytical engagement include analysis of a key term from a text, a comparison of two texts to one another around some specific issue, or a close reading of a particular passage. Mark these entries “I/A.” Examples of personal reflection (max 3) entries include assessment of a conversation you had with someone, a short story, a fictional news item, a poem, creative response to a news item, or an introspective intellectual or personal observation clearly related to the course and the broader issues of religion in modern history. Be creative. Mark these entries “PR.”
➢ Exactly three journal entries should be stapled together and delivered in class on the day of the midterm review (July 19) and on the day of the final exam review (August 3) (all six entries stapled together). No late journals will be accepted.

NOTE: No journal entries may take episodes of The Leftovers as their main object of analysis

Grading Criteria for Journal Assignment:
1) Form: Did student complete all assignments? Are assignments well-written? Do they adhere to proper style? Do they employ effective transitions between paragraphs? Do they witness to careful and deliberate preparation? Are dates and time spent on the entries clearly indicated? Are there proper citations to works discussed, summarized, or quoted? [Parenthetical citation is fine for course materials. For example, if this sentence quoted or referenced page five of Peter Manseau’s *One Nation, Under Gods*, you would end the sentence like this (Manseau 5). For other texts, use the Chicago Manual of Style (available online).]

2) Content: Do at least two entries treat our course reading assignments as required? Does the student thoughtfully engage course materials and treat specific issues thoroughly, given the one-hour time constraint? Does the student show increasingly sophisticated integration of course material and an ability to think across our texts and themes? Has the student identified and tackled complex or subtle issues?

3) Creativity: How creative has the student been in the journal assignments? Does the student experiment with a variety of genres and approaches? Has the student shown a willingness to challenge himself or herself and to experiment? Do the journals witness to a purposeful struggle with the texts? Is the student making compelling connections to non-course material?

*The Leftovers Review (20%)*
All students will write a 1000-word review of the television show *The Leftovers*. The review must situate the show in relation to broader themes about religious belief and practice as explored in our readings and class discussions. More instructions and further discussion of the assignment will be given in class.

*Midterm Exam (25%)*
There will be an in class, closed book essay exam on Thursday, July 20.

*Final Exam (25%)*
There will be an in class, closed book essay exam on Thursday, July 20.

**CLASS POLICIES**

*Classroom Technology:* It is well documented through controlled studies that people believe they are capable of multitasking more than they actually are. In order to reduce distractions and the need to toggle between the many demands in your life, laptops, tablets, smartphones, or any other means of accessing the wired, digital universe are not allowed in class. Students are expected to print out all readings and to take notes by hand. If this presents a serious financial or learning challenge, please speak to me privately.

*Late Policy:* An assignment’s grade will drop one full letter grade for every day that an assignment is overdue, such that a B paper will become a C. Extensions for written work will be granted only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. medial/family emergency, military service, religious observance). If you know you will need an extension, please contact me as soon as possible – do not wait until the day an assignment is due. No extensions are allowed for exams...
unless a formal extension is petitioned and granted by your Class Dean and in these rare cases a make-up exam will be arranged.

**Academic Honesty**: All papers and examinations must adhere to Fordham University’s policies regarding academic integrity (please see the Student Handbook). Any infractions of those policies will be subject to the sanctions listed there (a failing grade for any plagiarized assignments, a formal report of the incident submitted to the Dean, possible suspension from the course based on the Dean’s evaluation, and expulsion from Fordham if this is your second such offense at the university). Please talk with me if you have any questions or doubts about the academic integrity of any of your work.

**ADA Notice**: Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, course work, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services (Rose Hill – O’Hare Hall, Lower Level, x0655 or at Lincoln Center – Room 207, x6282).

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


*Please note: there are many other assigned readings that will be provided on Blackboard. All of these readings are marked with double asterisk (**) in the Schedule of Readings below.*

**Schedule of Readings/Assignments**

- **Wednesday, July 5**: course introductions, themes, methods, texts
- **Thursday, July 6**: Meaning and Order
  - WATCH (in class): *The Leftovers, S2 E1: “Axis Mundi”*
  - READ (before class):
    - Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, chapters 1 and 2
- **Tuesday, July 11**: Evil, Self, and Society
READ (before class):
- Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, chapters 3 and 4

**Wednesday, July 12: Violence, Tolerance, and Religion of Reason**
- WATCH (in class): *The Leftovers* S2 E3: “Off Ramp”
- READ (before class):
  - **John Locke**, “Faith and Reason,” and “On Enthusiasm” from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)

**Thursday, July 13: Miracles and Illusions**
- WATCH (in class): *The Leftovers* S2 E4: “Orange Sticker”
- READ (before class):
  - **David Hume**, “Of Miracles and the Origin of Religion” (1757, 1768)
  - **Sigmund Freud**, *The Future of an Illusion* (selections)

**Tuesday, July 18: Martyrs and Saints**
- WATCH (in class): *The Leftovers* S2 E5: “No Room at the Inn”
- READ (before class):
  - **Michel de Certeau**, *The Possession at Loudun* (selections)

**Wednesday, July 19: Conversion and Authority**
- WATCH (in class): *The Leftovers* S2 E6: “Lens”
- READ (before class):
  - **Jarena Lee**, from “The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee” (1836) in *African-American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*
- DUE: Journal Entries 1-3 Due (stapled together).

**Thursday, July 20: MIDTERM EXAM (essay exam in class)**

**Tuesday, July 24: Magic and Purity**
- WATCH (in class): *The Leftovers* S2 E7: “A Most Powerful Adversary”

**Wednesday, July 25: Selfhood and Agency**
- WATCH (in class): *The Leftovers* S2 58: “International Assassin”
- READ (before class):
Thursday, July 26: Prophets and Doom
  o WATCH (in class): *The Leftovers* S2 E9: “Ten Thirteen”
  o READ (before class):
    ▪ **Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* (selections)

Tuesday, August 1: Borders and Belonging
  o WATCH (in class): *The Leftovers* S2 E10: “I Live Here Now”
  o READ (before class):
    ▪ Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America – A Woman’s Journey*

Wednesday, August 2: American Evangelicalism: A Case Study
  o READ (before class):

Thursday, August 3: Synthesis and Review: What is Religion?
  o READ (before class):
  o DUE: *Journal Entries 1-6 (stapled together)* Due

Tuesday, August 8: FINAL EXAM (essay exam in class)