

Christianity and Popular Culture

Mercyhurst Prep School

2014 - 2015

Teacher: Mr. Miller

Room: 207

Phone: 814-824-2210

Email: mmiller@mpslakers.com

Curriculum: In this course we will explore the deep religious influence and symbolism in a wide variety of formats ranging from film to literature, from contemporary music to television. We will explore the various mediums in a critical fashion and deconstruct the religious themes that are central to their shape and message. The course will also serve as an exercise in learning to see the very real presence of the sacred in the everyday world all around us. Too often we separate the secular from the spiritual. When we can learn to find God in something as simple as going to the movies we begin to realize what a deeply religious world we live in. We also learn that God is always a lot closer to us than we sometimes remember.

Content Breakdown: Using the mediums mentioned above, we will be exploring how we image God and the effect that has on us, prayer and its role in our lives, the possibility of forging the Kingdom of God in our world, environmental stewardship, the nature of love, vocations and making our lives' work the work of God, interreligious dialogue, the similarities and differences in the world religions, morality, ethics, the nature of God, and nonviolence.

Textbook: *X-Men: God Loves, Man Kills* by Chris Claremont and Brent Anderson from Marvel

Supplies: A notebook or binder is required for taking notes. Either works fine and it is the student's discretion as to which they prefer. A pen or pencil is required for taking notes. Ink color for note taking is the student's personal preference but any work to be handed in must be done in blue or black ink. A folder for class handouts is also required. The iPad will be used as a tool in conjunction with the lessons but doesn't serve as a replacement for an actual notebook.

Class Information (Of course, all school rules apply):

- Parent, as well as student, communication is *very important*. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.
- Students are expected to be prepared and on time for class daily.
- Please be at your seat and ready to begin when class starts.
- *Note taking supplies, class handouts, and your book must be brought to class each day.*
- The dress code will be enforced.
- The school discipline policy will be followed in this class.
- Please keep a copy of all your computer generated work in your school folder on the MPS server and please keep a hard copy of all your other work. In case of a question regarding a grade or missing assignment, the burden of proof rests with you.
- No gum, no food, no cell phones – period! Thank you.

- You can find my website on the school's website (www.mpslakers.com). Here you will find a copy of this syllabus along with homework assignments and other useful links.
- Please let me know if you are struggling with the material or have any questions about what we cover in class. Never be embarrassed to ask for help.

Integrity Policy: It is expected that the student will exhibit respect for everyone in the classroom in both word and action. Disrespect for another student or for the teacher will not be tolerated nor will cheating on tests or assignments. Plagiarism in any form is equal to cheating. No credit will be given for the assignment and detention will be issued.

Grade Breakdown:

All assignments will be graded on a total points system. We will follow the grading scale as published in the Mercyhurst Prep School handbook. The student's overall grade will be based on the following:

1) Class Participation

This course will be discussion driven. The type of cultural and theological critiques and deconstruction we will be performing on the works we exam can only be done in that manner. As such, contributing to the class is very, very important and it is expected on a daily basis. The material in this class can't be fully absorbed by simply reading and listening. It must be engaged. Dialogue is a necessary tool to understand and internalize this information. Ask your questions. Raise your observations. The class will be so much the better for them. Points will be available every day for participation in class and group discussions.

2) Homework

Homework will come in a variety of forms in this class. The student will have reading assignments as well as songs they need listen to and film clips they need to watch based on what medium we will be examining. There will also be a variety of written work. This will be seen most commonly in smaller reflection papers scattered throughout the term as well as one more substantial paper. This paper will be their final project and will represent the student's own in-depth cultural analysis on the topic of their choosing. They will then present their work to the class. More information on this paper will be forthcoming as it is assigned.

It is expected that the students come to class every day having read, listened to, or watched the assigned material and be ready to participate in a class discussion about the material. They also need to have any written work that may be due that day. Assignments will be considered late if they are not completed by the *beginning* of class the day they are due. (See more on late work below.) If an assignment is late, the assignment will still need to be completed and turned in.

3) Late Work

Late work will be accepted. However assignments late one day will receive half credit. Assignments turned in after one day late will receive a "0." Please note that if you have this class on an A Day then the assignment would need to be turned in on the following B Day for half credit and vice versa. Any day after that would result in the "0."

4) Quizzes and Tests

As this course is an elective on theological explorations and cultural deconstruction there will be no objective exams or quizzes. The student's grade will be based primarily on their in class participation as well as their written reflections. However, should a lack of regular reading or previewing the assigned material before class become apparent than quizzes will become a regular part of the class. *Quizzes may be given without notice.*

5) Extra Credit

There may be an opportunity for extra credit in the term given at the instructor's discretion. Only students who have completed ***all*** of their assignments, even those they did not receive credit for, may participate in the extra credit.

6) Notebooks

The notes from the class discussion and occasional mini-lectures are vitally important to the student's understanding of the material. Student's notebooks will be checked once a term for content and neatness. All notes written on the board should be written in the notebook each day, along with the date and topic covered. But, most importantly, *the student must record their own thoughts and observations on the material we are examining.* Notebook checks will be random and will be given a homework grade.

Make-up Tests, Extra Help Sessions, and Personal Conferences: I will be available in my room, 204-A, most mornings by 7:45 and will be in my classroom most afternoons as well. If you need to meet with me on a specific day, I can be available from 3:00-4:00 on any weekday by appointment.

Responsibilities when Absent: When students are absent it is their responsibility to see me upon their return and to turn in any work that was due while they were absent. If they are absent they must report to me their first day back in school to see what they missed, regardless if it is the day they have me in class or not. They will receive the same amount of time for homework given while they were out as the students in class had. The timeframe for that assignment will begin on their first day back. When turning in work from when they were absent, it should be clearly marked as ABSENT at the top to receive full credit. Otherwise it will be marked as LATE and will be graded accordingly. If they were absent for an exam they will have *exactly one week* from their first day back to make-up the exam. If they fail to meet with me to schedule a time for the make-up exam or if they fail to take the exam within the allotted week they will receive a "0." It is the students' responsibility to get any and all notes they missed as well as any handouts that were given out that day.

iPad usage: Students are to follow all school policies in regard to their iPad use in this class. If a student has their iPad out when they are not supposed to or are using it for something other than the work assigned in class it will be taken away and they will receive a detention. To honor our daily discussions and the opinions and views shared, no portion of this class may be

recorded in either an audio or video format. To do so will result in the loss of the iPad as well as detention. Obviously the use of the iPad in class, while exciting, is a privilege and not a right.