

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION

RELS 417.01 *Recent Religious Thought:*
Humans, Gods, and Machines

FALL 2016

Place and Time: SS115, Monday 2:00 - 4:45

Instructor: David A. Bergen, SS540, 403-220-7063, dabergen@ucalgary.ca

Office hours: Wednesday 11:00-12:00, or by appointment

Required Textbooks:

Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution (Fukuyama)

Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis (Herbrechter)

Naturalizing Western Religion (Bergen—electronic)

Content and Objectives:

This course explores the three-way dialect between humans, their technological inventions, and their cognitive projections (i.e., deities). Having explored this triadic relationship within past constructions (in particular, those developed within western societies), we will inquire directly into the fate and function of western monotheistic projections within our 21st-century posthuman reality:

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him---you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. (Nietzsche)

Assessments:*Three Take-Home Tests – 10% each*

Take-home tests will involve a long-answer response to a relevant course question, to be submitted on Sept 26th, Oct 11th, and Oct 31st.

Research Project - 70%

Project Proposal – 10%, to be submitted on Oct 17th.

Written Project – 25%, 10-12 pages, to be submitted on Nov 14th.

Revised Written Project – 25%, to be submitted on Dec 9th.

Presented Project – 10%, to be presented on Dec 5th.

N.B. There is no Registrar-scheduled final exam in this course.

Grading Scale:

A+ 100-96	B+ 84.9-80	C+ 69.9-65	D+ 54.9-53
A 95.9-90	B 79.9-75	C 64.9-60	D 52.9-50
A- 89.9-85	B- 74.9-70	C- 59.9-55	F under 50

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

Additional Important Details:

- class attendance, reading of assigned materials, and readiness to discuss and engage are expected in this course. Furthermore, students can expect the content of this course to be challenging, at times even uncomfortable;
- all students enrolled in this course will be expected to do an equivalent amount of work in order to complete the course requirements;
- no remedial assignments are available in this course;
- lecture notes will not be available from the instructor;
- there is no registrar-scheduled final exam for this course;
- exams must be written on the dates scheduled. No exceptions will be made, except for death, significant illness, or domestic affliction (corroborated by a valid, original note from a physician or counselor). When exceptions are granted, students will write a make-up test in the last week of class. Students must contact the instructor within twenty-four hours of a missed exam. In addition, the University Calendar states:
“It is the responsibility of students who have prolonged absences from class because of physical and/or emotional health problems to present to the faculty of-fice offering the course a statement from a physician/counselor attesting to the physical or emotional health of the student.”
- tests are non-cumulative and will entail typical academic testing formats. The assessments employed will be geared to rewarding students who are conscientious in their attendance, participation, and preparation of classes;
- a passing grade on any of the course components is not essential for passing the course.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar (section K, which can be found here: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>). If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor, or librarian staff.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Desire 2 Learn (D2L) Help

Go to <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students> for Student Help and FAQ's about D2L. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are also available on this website.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources

- For program planning and advice, students in the Faculty of Arts will contact The Arts Students' Centre (ASC). Drop in at SS102, call at 403-220-3580 or email at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library.

Freedom of Information and Privacy

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP): <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act indicates that assignments given by you to your course instructor will remain confidential unless otherwise stated before submission. The assignment cannot be returned to anyone else without your express permission. Similarly, any information about yourself that you share with your course instructor will not be given to anyone else without your permission. As one consequence, students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number on each subsequent page.

Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at arts1@ucalgary.ca.

Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints. Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

Safewalk

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors 24 hrs/day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.