

SCIENCE FICTION AND SPIRITUAL IMAGINATION

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and McCormick Theological Seminary

Masters level: LSTC ML/RHTH 400 MTS T / M 407

Fall Semester 2018, Wednesdays 8:30 a.m. – 11:20 a.m.

Classroom: Conference Room TBA, 5460 S. University Ave.

Hyde Park, Chicago 60615

(www.lstc.edu; www.mccormick.edu)

Instructors: Christine **Wenderoth**, Professor of Religious Education & Director, JKM Library (LSTC & McCormick); Robert **Cathey**, Professor of Theology (McCormick); Jennifer **Ould**, MDiv (McCormick), Educational Assistant.

Course Description: Science fiction literature, film, and other media are laden with religious and theological significance. This course aims at more critical and constructive levels of engaging and using this media. *Sy Fy* proposes new ways to read our cultures' deep spiritual longings and fears. For public ministry, how might we address those longings and fears with spiritual imagination?

Required Textbooks:

Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Grand Central Publ., 1993.
ISBN 978-0-446-67550-5.

Russell, Mary Doria. *The Sparrow*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.
ISBN 0-449-91255-8.

Available for purchase at Seminary Co-op Bookstore (www.semcoop.com), 5751 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago 60637; 773.752.4381; info@semcoop.com; M-F 8:30-8, Sa & Su 10-6. You may purchase textbooks from any provider. Seminary Co-op is the finest collectively owned independent academic bookstore. *Love thy neighbor*, buy local.

Course Requirements:

1. Creative ministry-related assignments for preaching, teaching, youth and young adult ministry, etc., for example, a sermon outline or sermon, teaching outline, video of an event in your ministry, etc. that will be related to common readings of texts and viewings of a film or two TV episodes.
2. Semester research paper focusing on some of the critical literature about one key text / film / TV series in the genre of science fiction. (For purposes of focus, we are not including fantasy literature and media, for example, *Harry Potter* or *Narnia*. However, C.S. Lewis' space trilogy <*Out of the Silent Planet, et al.*> and Madeline L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* series are relevant texts and media for this course.)

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Course Overview: You will be expected to complete assigned readings / viewings from the following sources (texts, films, websites, etc.):

- Everyone will read *The Sparrow* and *Parable of the Sower* for class discussion;
- All will read some required articles, chapters, and / or book reviews about science fiction and spiritual imagination / theology / religion (these will be posted in our Moodle course website at: www.mccormick.moodle.edu).
- We will provide a list of science fiction texts and media with topics, e.g., *Dune* and ecology; *Chasm City* and transhumanism; etc.
- We will view one required film from a list that includes: *2001: A Space Odyssey*; *Blade Runner* (1982 Director's cut); *Arrival*; *Solaris*; *The Matrix* (the first film); *A.I.*
- Required TV episodes to be selected from a list that includes: *Star Trek*; *Twilight Zone*; *Dr. Who*; *The Prisoner*.

Please contact Prof. Cathey (rcathey@mccormick.edu; 773-947-6323) or Prof. Wenderoth (cwenderoth@jkmlibrary.org; 773-256-0735) with any questions.