



***Magicians, Athletes and God:
Fantasy, Sports Literature and Christian Theology
in an Ignatian Key***

TESP 2/RTC1: Paradigm Shift Pathway Course

310 Kenna Hall 8:30-10:10

Office: 313 Kenna Hall Office Hours: 10:30-11:30 TTHR

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Course Description

A hallmark of Jesuit reflection is attention to the imagination. This course uses the imagination as expressed in Sports and Fantasy Literature to explore Christian theological reflection. Our starting point is the human experience of transcendental activities, that is, the human capacities that reach beyond the empirical toward the conceptual, artistic, and moral features of reality. In fantasy literature magicians are the primary agents of transcendental activity. We will give particular attention to the “magicians” of our own popular culture. In the contemporary popular culture, there are several corollaries to magicians: athletes, engineers, scientists, filmmakers identify just a few. We will use these narratives about these “practitioners of transcendental activity” as lenses through which to examine central Christian theologies: the human person, sin, grace, God’s character, authority, ritual practice, and community life. We will include particular attention to the “magicians” of our own popular culture. Our “working definition” of a magician is person who exercises a high level of skill while striving towards excellence. A person crafting an essay, an engineer solving a structural problem, and a musician “covering” an old song all display transcendental activity.

Required Texts

Choose ONE narrative text from these three options:

Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell by Susanna Clarke

The Art of Fielding by Chad Harbach

The Rise of Superman: Decoding the Science of Ultimate Human Performance by Steven Kotler

Additional Texts: Journal Readings Posted on Canvas are required of all students.

Required Work

Attendance and Engaged Presence in Class: 10% of the Final Grade.

2 Unit Exams 50% of the Final Grade

Presentation and Discussion Leadership 20% of the Final Grade

Final Exam 20% of the Final Grade

Department Goals

1. Students will explore, inspect, question and probe the truth claims of Christianity to discern what they say about society, tradition, ethical convictions and aspirations.
2. Students use diverse materials and demonstrate formal postures of inquiry into religion and in order to go beyond simple description of religion to a reflective engagement with it.
3. Students propose and investigate the “big questions” – that is, the meta-reflective questions that ask how and why we ask the questions that we do about religion.

Course Goals

1. Students will be able to express a critical understanding of the theological foundations of the Christian tradition.
2. Students will be able to compare and contrast centrist theological expressions of the Christian tradition with peripheral and/or sectarian expressions.
3. Students will be able to use critical approaches to reflect on their own reflections about existence, belief in God and the transcendental dimensions of human existence.
4. Students will use diverse critical tools, in particular, cross-cultural engagement, the historical-critical method for Biblical interpretation, Thomas Aquinas' understanding of Creation, and Theological Anthropology as described by Jesuit Theologians Bernard Lonergan and Karl Rahner.
5. Students will apply these tools to narratives in order to move from a clear description of the truth claims to reflective engagement with them.

6. Students will be invited to explore theological reflection as a discipline in the modern academy that seeks coherent approaches to and understandings of the meta-questions regarding human existence and meaning.

Academic Integrity

Please review the University's policy regarding academic integrity <http://www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm>. Violations of academic integrity through cheating or plagiarism may result in failure of the course.

Syllabus Statements on Disabilities Resources, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination (Title IX Resources), and Reporting Requirements

September 2015

Disabilities Syllabus Statement

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, www.scu.edu/disabilities as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at [408-554-4109](tel:408-554-4109).

Title IX Syllabus Statement

Santa Clara University upholds a zero tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence or stalking, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to www.scu.edu/studentlife and click on the link for the University's [Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) or contact the University's EEO and Title

IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie at [408-554-3043](tel:408-554-3043) or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethicspoint: www.ethicspoint.comhttp://stage-www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethics-point/

Statement for Syllabi on Reporting Practices

While I want you to feel comfortable coming to me with issues you may be struggling with or concerns you may be having, please be aware that there are some reporting requirements that are part of my job at Santa Clara University.

For example, if you inform me of an issue of harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution's EEO and Title IX Coordinator. If you inform me that you are struggling with an issue that may be resulting in, or caused by, traumatic or unusual stress, I will likely inform the campus Student Care Team (SCU CARE).

If you would like to reach out directly to the Student Care Team for assistance, you can contact them at www.scu.edu/osl/report. If you would like to talk to the Office of EEO and Title IX directly, they can be reached at 408-554-3043 or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethicspoint: www.ethicspoint.com. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Life (OSL), Campus Safety Services, and local law enforcement. For confidential support, contact the Counseling and Psychological Services office (CAPS), the YWCA, or a member of the clergy (for example, a priest or minister).

Finally, please be aware that if, for some reason, our interaction involves a disruptive behavior, a concern about your safety or the safety of others, or potential violation of University policy, I will inform the Office of Student Life. The purpose of this is to keep OSL apprised of incidents of concern, and to ensure that students can receive or stay connected to the academic support and student wellness services they need.