



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

TESP 2/RTC1: Paradigm Shift Pathway Course

104 Kenna Hall 12:10- 1:50

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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.

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.

Learning Disabilities

The Office of Disabilities Resources has been designated by the University to ensure access for all students with disabilities to all academic programs and University resources. Types of disabilities include medical, physical, psychological, attention-deficit, and learning disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are provided to minimize the effects of a student's disability and to maximize the potential for success. Santa Clara University follows the law that states: "Professors cannot change essential course requirements." Any accommodation must be arranged through the Office of Disabilities Resources. Please visit the Office's Website for more information. <http://www.scu.edu/advising/learning/disabilities/>

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.