

ST JOHN'S SEMINARY - COURSE SYLLABI

ThS 599S Space in the Catholic Imagination W 7-8

Semester: Spring 2020

Course ID: ThS 599S

Course Time: W 7-8 pm

Instructor: Dr. Alan Vincelette

Course Title: Space in the Catholic Imagination Units: 1

Location:

Email: avincelette@stjohnsem.edu

Phone: Ext. 2045

Course Description:

This course will bring in various astronomers, theologians, and science fiction authors to discuss what modern astronomy can tell us about the cosmos and other possible worlds, how theologians treat these issues regarding Christology and soteriology, and how science fiction authors envision such worlds.

Required Texts:

Blish, James, *A Case of Conscience* (New York: Del Rey, 2000).

Lewis, C.S. *Perelandra* (New York: Scribner, 2013).

McGrath, James F. *Theology and Science Fiction* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016).

Rothery, David A. *Planets: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). =

Other Texts:

Catholicism and Science Fiction:

Chase, Robert R. "Science Friction." *First Things* 202 (April 2010): 29-33.

Clary, Grayson, "Why Sci-Fi Has So Many Catholics." *The Atlantic* (November 10, 2015).

Consolmagno, Guy. "Science Fiction and Catholic Sensibility." *L'Osservatore Romano* 2507 (July 28, 2017): 4.

Miesel, Sandra. "The Cross and the Stars: Catholics in the Field of Science Fiction and Fantasy." *The Catholic World Report* (May 15, 2011). .

Debate on Multiple Incarnations and Other Theological Topics:

Hess, Peter M.J., "Multiple Incarnation of the One Christ." In Peters, Ted, ed. *Astrotheology: Science and Theology Meet Extraterrestrial Life* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018): 317-327.

Karlson, Henry. "On Multiple Worlds and Multiple Incarnations: Some Speculation Following St Thomas Aquinas and C.S. Lewis." *Vox Nova* (October 10, 2009).

Keane, James T. "What Would a Chapel on the Moon Like Like?: Catholics in the '60s Had Some Ideas" *America* (July 10, 2019).

Nesteruk, Alexei V., and Alexander V. Soldatov, "Christian Theology, Extraterrestrial Intelligence and a Hypothesis of Multiple Incarnations." *Humanities & Social Sciences* 6 (2019): 1048-1071.

Peters, Ted. "The Implications of the Discovery of Extra-Terrestrial Life for Religion." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* (February 13, 2011).

Non-Catholic Science Fiction:

- Ray Bradbury (1920-2012), “The Fire Balloons [In This Sign]” [1952
International Fantasy Award Nominee]
Harry Harrison (1925-2012), “The Streets of Ashkelon” (1962)
James Bliss (1921-1975), *A Case of Conscience* (1958)

Class Schedule

- January 15: Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance Thought on Human Significance [Alan Vincelette]
January 22: Astronomy and the Vatican [Kevin Brennan]
January 29: Christian Science Fiction: C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra* [Paul Ford]
February 5: Medievals on Other Worlds [Alan Vincelette]
February 12: Issues of Missiology and Soteriology in Science Fiction: Bradbury, “The Fire Balloons”; Harrison, “The Streets of Ashkelon”
February 19: Theology of Other Worlds I: Issues of Liturgy on Other Worlds
February 26: Day of Reflection (No Classes)
March 4: Modern Astronomy [Carol Day]
March 11: Theology of Other Worlds II: Incarnation I [Timothy Pawl]
March 18: Catholic Science Fiction [Cyril Jones-Kellett]
March 25: Theology of Other Worlds III: Incarnation II
April 1: Christian Science Fiction [Tim Powers]
April 8: Holy Week (No Classes)
April 15: Spring Break (No Classes)
April 22: Modern Cosmology [Mary Oksala]
April 29: Modern Cosmology [Karin Oberg]
May 6: Conference: Space in the Catholic Imagination
6:00-6:45 p.m.: Astronomy: “Is There Life out There?,” Jeffrey Zweerink
7:00-7:45 p.m.: Theology: “Christianity and Extraterrestrials,” Marie George
8:00-8:30 p.m. Catholic Sci Fi II: “Planets in Heaven,” John Wright
8:30-8:45 p.m.: Cath Sci Fi III: “Sciopods, Blemyae, and the Green Children of Woolpit,”
Michael Flynn
8:45-9:00 p.m.: Q & A with Catholic Science Fiction Authors Wright, Flynn, and Powers
May 13: Final Exam

Evaluation:

- Class Participation (50%)
Paper (50%)

Course Learning Objectives:

At the end of the course the student will be able to:

1. Grasp the findings of modern astronomy on the nature of extrasolar planetary systems
2. Understand the philosophical and theological debates involved about issues of extraterrestrial life