

COLT 415: Capstone Research Seminar
Fall 2008 topic: "Religion and Literature" (M 2-4:50)
Prof. Lisa Myôbun Freinkel

Required for new Majors. Strongly urged for current majors.

Beginning in Fall 2008, COLT 415 (Capstone Research Seminar) will be required for all students declaring a COLT Major. For current COLT Majors, the Seminar is **highly recommended** -- an especially crucial experience for students considering graduate school or interested in writing a senior thesis. The course should be taken in Fall of one's final year of college; however, with the approval of the Instructor, it may be taken earlier.

Advanced research. Exceptional mentorship. COLT 415 is designed to give students advanced, one-on-one mentorship in literary analysis and research. In addition to the course professor, two advanced GTFs will be assigned to the course and will meet individually with each student on a weekly basis. Students considering graduate school will be given additional mentorship in the graduate application process; students writing senior theses will be tutored through the initial stages of thesis development, including the drafting of a thesis prospectus. Non-honors track students will receive mentorship as they draft a substantial (12-15 pp.) research paper. All students will have a chance to see their writing, research and analytical skills take quantum leaps forward. **We have designed this course to offer educational opportunities available nowhere else on the UO campus.**

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The Fall 2008 theme is "Religion and Literature."

In addition to ongoing mentorship, class time will explore a provocative research topic chosen by the Professor. This Fall, we'll be exploring the intersection of religious fundamentalism and secular literature. Assigned weekly readings will be kept to a minimum, in order to enable time for individual mentorship and research; students will be assigned about half the quantity usually required for a 400-level class. Nonetheless, the theme and assigned readings will serve as models for advanced literary analysis -- and will no doubt spur some of the research projects students develop in the course.

Secular vs. sacred? We literary critics usually consider our textual work to be quite distinct from -- and often at odds with -- traditional religious views of language. We often imagine our modes of reading to be secular and thus open to multiple interpretations and manifold perspectives. But is secularism as "free" as we imagine? This class will investigate our assumptions about literary criticism by focusing on three different literary texts and three associated religious/literary encounters.

Shakespeare - Kerouac - Rushdie.... Our first unit, "Theology vs. Race," will look at Shakespeare's 1596 play, *The Merchant of Venice* and address post-Holocaust struggles with the play's apparent anti-Semitism. The second unit, "Beat Zen, Square Zen," will examine Jack Kerouac's influential 1958 novel, *The Dharma Bums*, and will consider the adaptation of Buddhism to American counter-culture. The third unit, "Blasphemy," will focus on the question of Islamic fundamentalism, and will center around Salman Rushdie's 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*.