

COURSE INTRO

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Is life enhanced or entranced by media and popular culture? In today's world, faith experiences are increasingly sought after and discovered outside of institutions, and in surprising media contexts. This puzzling development is balanced against another surprise of modern life – one can no longer remain focused on one's own beliefs! We must acknowledge the existence and validity of differing traditions! This sense of balance involves popular culture, which influences belief systems through the technology we use, the visuals we watch, the music we listen to, the comic books we read, the social media we create, and even the video games that we play. This course examines the interplay of media, pop culture, and religion, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of this interplay in society.

2. COURSE PROCESS

Should we study the influence of technology to resist and reject it, or embrace and adapt it for ethical and spiritual purposes? This is the question that we will think, read, watch, and talk through! Each class session involves a brief lecture and group discussions of the daily topic. There are four Units: Media Consciousness, Media Resistance, Media Mindfulness, and Media Spirituality.

3. COURSE GOALS

This course does not presume a religious background. Those with and without personal religious faith will become informed, equipped, inspired, and engaged regarding the interplay of media, pop culture, and religion in society!

- 🎓 **Informed:** Learn how one's own view of God, humanity, and the universe is shaped by pop-culture and media.
- 🎓 **Equipped:** Adapt theological insights for recognizing the roles that popular culture and religion play in media.
- 🎓 **Inspired:** Discern how media and pop culture convey powerful faith narratives, rituals, and symbols.
- 🎓 **Engaged:** Examine racism, religious bigotry, violence, materialism, idolatry, etc. in popular culture and religion.

In addition to these learning goals, this course provides a foundation for students to gradually develop four skills:

- ⚡ **Media Consciousness:** awareness of the structure and effects of information and demystification of media
- ⚡ **Media Resistance:** using big and small step practices for recognizing and countering the subtle ways in which technology shapes our thoughts and actions
- ⚡ **Media Mindfulness:** balancing media environments so that they serve us, rather than the other way around
- ⚡ **Media Spirituality:** making pop-culture expressions which convey our desire, design, and destiny