

***The Twilight Saga and Religion (Relg. 491T)***  
**University of South Carolina, Fall 2010**

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"Stephenie Meyer's life changed dramatically on June 2, 2003. The stay-at-home mother of three young sons woke up from a dream featuring seemingly real characters that she could not get out of her head."<sup>1</sup> *The Twilight Saga* was born.

**Course Description**

*The Twilight Saga* is a cultural phenomenon, rivaling that of *Harry Potter* and *The DaVinci Code*. Appealing to both males and females of all ages, Meyer has produced a saga that breaks down the barrier between generations and gives grandparents, parents, and children something to enjoy, share, and discuss. The novels have sold over 70,000,000 and have been published in 38 languages. Time magazine lists praise for the first novel in the series, *Twilight* :

*New York Times* Editor's Choice

*Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year

An Amazon Best Book of the Decade...So Far

An *American Library Association* Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults

As the most anticipated movie of 2009, *New Moon*, based upon the second novel in the series, broke box office records and secured its spot in the all time hall of fame. During the opening weekend, *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* premiered in 4,024 movie theaters and earned \$140.7 million – more than four times as much as first runner up, *The Blind Side* (box office earnings of \$34.5 million).<sup>2</sup>

The number of weeks a novel is on bestselling lists and being a box office hit does not necessarily prove the worth of a novel or film. The worth, from a religious studies perspective, is in the use of religion that has now become a part of popular culture.

Asked if her views on religion affected her way of writing in *The Twilight Saga*, Meyer replied, "Really, not so much. Not consciously at all. When I'm writing the stories I'm just looking to have a good time. But I do think that because I'm a very religious person, it does tend to come out somewhat in the books, although always unconsciously." This is almost hard to believe since she begins the saga with a quote from the Bible, uses stories from the Bible as illustrations, has characters discuss belief and non-belief, faith, heaven, hell, angels, demons, miracles, the Ten Commandments, prayer, immortality, and a dominate theme throughout the saga, the soul.

The objective of this course is to use the novels, and the films based upon the novels, as a way to learn more about these religious topics that appear in the work.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.stepheniemeyer.com](http://www.stepheniemeyer.com)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.twilightseries.ca/new-moon/new-moon-box-office-record-statistics/>

## Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

- (1) understand the historical and religious significance of vampires and werewolves in history and popular culture;
- (2) discuss the concepts of the soul in various philosophical and religious thought;
- (3) understand the Biblical sources used in the novels;
- (4) comprehend the concepts of heaven, hell, angels, and demons;
- (5) discuss the theological importance of the Ten Commandments; and,
- (6) to form an educated opinion about the use of religious concepts used in *The Twilight Saga*.

## Secondary Learning Outcomes

Although our main objective is to analyze religious information presented in *The Twilight Saga*, there are several other outcomes that naturally flow from this:

1. to analyze data, and to reach and form opinions, about religious matters based upon reliable sources;
2. to develop an awareness of the problems involved in obtaining reliable sources when doing religious studies research; and,

## Textbooks

Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Saga* (*Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), *Breaking Dawn* (2008), *Midnight Sun*

The films based upon the novels will also be treated as texts.

In addition to the novels, various articles may be assigned.

## Course Oddities and Requirements

1. Class attendance is mandatory. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for the material that was covered.
2. In following the phenomenon initiated by Meyer and Twilight fans, the class will be divided up into two teams (Team Edward and Team Jacob).
3. Blackboard is an integral part of this course. You will find bibliographies, a copy of the syllabus, and other documents and forums related to class there. You are expected to contribute to discussions on the Blackboard Discussion Board,
4. As teams, you will be given time in class to organize some of your research items and present the combined results to the class. Other items will be researched and presented individually. The number of items required will depend upon the class size. Each team member must submit a bibliography of individually consulted works.
5. It is assumed that because you have registered for this course you are an inquisitive student who has a thirst for knowledge, a desire for truth, and are motivated to study and learn. You are expected to do all of the assignments, to think theologically, and to contribute to class discussions.
6. There may be an occasional pop quiz to be sure that you are motivated to

learn the material and have completed the assignments.

### **Grading**

Your grade will consist of your research items (40%), 2 team tests (40%), and the exam (20%). The grading scale is: A= 95-100; B+ = 88-89; B = 80-87; C+ = 78-79; C = 70-77; D+ = 68-69; D = 60-67; F = 59-0.

Please note: The following Course Outline is not written in stone. It is subject to change should students want to spend more time on a topic or should the Professor discover new information that would benefit students' education.

## ***The Twilight Saga*** Course Outline and Assignments

### **August 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Course Introduction

Assignment of teams

Who is Stephanie Meyer?

*The Twilight Saga* titles

Recognizing the Bible and religious motifs

Genesis 2:17 & 3:22-24 (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil)

Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18-24, 3:20 (Eve)

Team consultation

Assignment for next class:

Begin reading *Twilight*

Team Edward will research vampires (don't forget to confirm/deny the vampires Meyers discusses on p. 134) and team Jacob will research werewolves (don't forget the difference between werewolves and shape-changers). You will be looking at the history of, and how religions have dealt with, vampires and werewolves. Each team member must supply a minimum of 5 references for your topic and prepare bibliography to be submitted to the Professor.

### **August 30<sup>th</sup>**

Team Edward and team Jacob consultations

Vampires

Hebrew Estrie

Rev. Montague Summers

Rousseau

History Channel *Vampire Secrets*

Werewolves

Genesis 6:1 – 9:17 (Noah and the Ark)

Isaiah 11:6 & 65:25 (the lion and the lamb)

Assignment for next class:

Team research on the soul – Wikipedia and two other sources are required for each team member.

Each team member will prepare bibliography of at least 5 works they consulted to be submitted to the Professor.

Continue reading *Twilight*

### **September 13<sup>th</sup>**

The importance of the soul in *The Twilight Saga*

The Soul

In Egyptian thought

Babylonian immortal soul concept

In Chinese mythology

In Greek philosophy

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle

In Aztec, Inca, and Maya immortal soul

African mythologies

In Hinduism

In Buddhism

Assignment for next class:

Team research on the soul – Wikipedia and two other sources are required for each team member.

Each team member will prepare bibliography of works they consulted to be submitted to the Professor.

Continue reading *Twilight*

### **September 20<sup>th</sup>**

In Judaism  
 In Christian Theology  
   The early church  
   Thomas Aquinas  
   Augustine  
   The Reformers  
   Recent theology  
 In Islam  
 In other religious faiths (Janism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Bahai, Scientology)

Assignment for next class:  
 Finish reading *Twilight*

### **September 27<sup>th</sup>**

View *Twilight* (2008)  
 Discussion: novel vs. film

Assignment for next class:  
 Begin reading *New Moon*  
 Research topics: Team Edward will research heaven and hell; team Jacob will research angels and demons. Concentrate on these concepts as they are understood in Judaism and Christianity unless a team member wants to look at them in depth in another religion. Regardless, briefly discuss these concepts in a wide range of other religions.  
 Prepare bibliography for submission. Each team member must individually consult 5 works.

### **October 4<sup>th</sup>**

Team Consultations  
   Heaven  
   Hell  
   Hades  
   Angels  
   Demons

Assignment for next class:  
 Continue reading *New Moon*

**October 11<sup>th</sup>**

Visions and Dreams  
 Pagan god of beauty  
 Immortality  
 Acts 20:35  
 Suicide

Assignment for next class:  
 Finish Reading New Moon

**October 18<sup>th</sup>**

View *New Moon* (2009)  
 Discussion: novel vs. film

Assignment for next class:  
 Prepare for Team Test #1

**October 25<sup>th</sup>**

Team Test #1

Assignment for next class:  
 Begin reading *Eclipse*  
 Team Edward will research and present the supernatural. Team Jacob will research and present miracles.

**November 1<sup>st</sup>**

Team Consultation  
 Supernatural  
 Miracles  
 The Ten Commandments  
 I Kings 3:16-28 – Solomon and the two women

Assignment for next class:  
 Continue reading *Eclipse*

**November 8<sup>th</sup>**

Assignment for next class:  
 Finish reading *Eclipse*

### **November 15<sup>th</sup>**

View *Eclipse* (2010)  
Discussion: novel vs. film

Assignment for next class:

Begin reading *Breaking Dawn*

Team Edward will research the concept of the soul in contemporary novels and music. Team Jacob will research the concept of the soul in contemporary films and poetry.

### **November 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Team consultation  
Another look at the soul  
Meyers vs. other works in popular culture  
Living in sin  
Omniscience  
Devout people  
Religious devotion  
The wedding  
The birth  
Christmas  
The other side of death  
Bearing false witness

Assignment for next class:

Continue reading *Breaking Dawn*

### **November 29<sup>th</sup>**

TBA

Exam Assignment: Finish reading *Breaking Dawn*

### **Final Exam**

Your exam (individual, not team) will cover the last two novels in the saga: *Eclipse* and *Breaking Dawn*. You will also be given sections from *Midnight Sun* to analyze the difference between Edward's and Bella's perspectives. The exam time will also include viewing *Breaking Dawn* if it has been released.