

**INCARNATE MINDS, EMBODIED GODS**  
**RELG 336—Contemporary Theological Issues**

**MCGILL UNIVERSITY**  
 Faculty of Religious Studies  
 Winter 2015

**I. COURSE DETAILS**

<i>Instructor</i>	Frederick S. Tappenden, Ph.D.
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<i>Office</i>	Birks 016
<i>Office Hours</i>	Monday, 10.30 AM – 12.30 PM, or by appointment
<i>Course Webpage</i>	myCourses
<i>Course Weight</i>	3 Credit Hours
<i>Time</i>	Tuesday and Thursday, 2.35–3.55 PM
<i>Location</i>	Birks 203
<i>Prerequisites</i>	RELG 320 or RELG 338 or permission of instructor.
<i>Language</i>	Lectures will be in English. In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

**II. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS**

According to the McGill University course description, RELG 336—Contemporary Theological Issues is described as follows:

*A study of contemporary theological issues. Topic varies by year.*

The Winter 2015 offering of RELG 336 will explore issues that relate to human embodiment, cognition, and the incarnation. A brief synopsis of the course is as follows:

*There is a growing body of evidence in the cognitive sciences (including philosophy, neuropsychology, and linguistics) that suggest there can be no thought without a brain in a body in an environment. Increasingly, the locus of human personhood is to be found not in the (disembodied) soul or mind but rather in the matter of human everydayness. The ramifications of these trends are far reaching, affecting the identity of the human being him/herself, the ontology of the divine, and the interaction there between. What implications for theology does the mind–body problem present? What might it mean to think theologically about these issues? What kinds of theological tools might we employ in exploring mind–body holism? This course will examine questions and issues such as these first by locating the mind–body problem within trajectories of Western*

*philosophical thought and modern cognitive science, and second by exploring how theological notions of the incarnation provide a rich and robust space in which to engage—even embrace—mind–body holism. These historical, scientific, philosophical, and theological insights will finally be brought to bear on a number of contemporary social challenges posed by the mind–body problem.*

In fulfilment of the above descriptions, students who successfully complete RELG 336 will meet the following goals:

1. Students will be able to identify major streams in the Western tradition of philosophical and theological reflection on the mind–body problem (Part I), and to relate these streams to theological developments/reflections on the incarnation (Part II).
2. Drawing from the cognitive sciences, students will be able to identify the major philosophical, psychological, and linguistic reasons that garner support for mind–body holism.
3. Students will be able to identify and trace major developments of incarnation theology throughout the Christian tradition, and to explore the contemporary relevance of this theological stream in addressing the mind–body problem.
4. Students will be able to critically identify the scope of the mind–body problem within a range of contemporary social and moral issues, and to further engage such issues within a theological framework that draws on the rich variety of incarnational theology.
5. Students will develop critical thinking and public-speaking skills through class discussions, presentations, and written assignments.

### III. REQUIRED, RECOMMENDED, AND RESERVE TEXTS

The following textbooks are **required** for this course. They can be purchased at the McGill University Bookstore.

Green, Joel B. *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible*. Studies in Theological Interpretation. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008.

Jeeves, Malcolm and Warren S. Brown. *Neuroscience, Psychology, and Religion: Illusions, Delusions, and Realities about Human Nature*. Templeton Science and Religion Series. West Conshohocken, Penn.: Templeton Press, 2009. Also available online (VPN required for off-campus access): <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/754718089>.

Readings from the following materials are **required** throughout the semester. All print materials (books and articles) are all on **reserve** at the Birks Reading Room; all digital materials are linked here and on the MyCourses Website. Please see the course outline below for the reading schedule. Because these readings will form the basis of student Readings Logs, **it is strongly recommended that students photocopy the relevant portions well in advance**.

Barrett, Justin L. *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology: From Human Minds to Divine Minds*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2011, pp. 40–57, 96–129, and 146–69. Also available online (VPN required for off-campus access): <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=10506625>.

- Clayton, Philip. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 596–632 (these are the two chapters titled: “Theologies of Divine Action” and “Ground-of-Being Theologies”). Also available online (VPN required for off-campus access): <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199543656.001.0001>.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 3–32, 41–68.
- Martin, Dale B. *The Corinthian Body*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 3–37.
- Mitchell, Margaret M. and Frances Young, eds. *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Volume 1, Origins to Constantine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 452–69. Also available online (VPN required for off-campus access): <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521812399>.
- Murphy, Nancey. “Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues.” Pages 127–48 in *Whatever Happened to the Soul? : Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*. Edited by Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- Simpson, Christopher Ben. *Merleau-Ponty and Theology*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014, pp. 3–20, 45–48, 95–116, and 131–134.
- Slingerland, Edward. *What Science offers the Humanities: Integrating Body and Culture*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 151–218.
- Stendhal, Krister. “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West.” *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199–215. Available online (VPN required for off-campus access): <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0000673339>. Also on reserve in print: pp. 78–96 in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays*. Edited by K. Stendhal. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.
- Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 111–76.
- Tippett, Krista and Vigen Guroian, “Restoring the Senses.” On Being Podcast. Online: <http://www.onbeing.org/program/restoring-senses-gardening-and-orthodox-easter/164>.
- Udoh, Fabian E., ed. *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008, pp. 352–71. Also available online (VPN required for off-campus access): <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/mcgill/reader.action?ppg=377&docID=10425464&tm=1418230533724>.

Varela, Francisco J., Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991, pp. 3–12, 15–33. Also available online (VPN required for off-campus access): <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/42328775>.

Wright, John P. and Paul Potter. *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind–Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, pp. 37–77, 133–45, 173–96.

Young, Frances. *God's Presence: A Contemporary Recapitulation of Early Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 146–201. Also available online (VPN required for off-campus access): <http://ebooks.cambridge.org/ebook.jsf?bid=CBO9781139814836>.

#### IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be graded on the following requirements:

1. **Reading-Logs (5% each, = 35%):** Students are expected to attend all class sessions regularly and participate in class discussions. Each week, students are to prepare a short (600-900 word, or 2–3 page) **Critically Reflective Reading Log**. In these logs, students will engage each week's assigned readings (see Course Outline below). Students are (a) to pick two elements in the readings that stand out to them, and (b) to engage those elements critically and to formulate positions that can be subsequently argued in class. This might be something the student finds compelling, something the student finds erroneous, or something the student finds confounding. Whatever the student chooses to focus on, they are to engage these issues critically and to formulate arguments that can be defended in class. These Reading Logs will become the basis of classroom discussion, so please come prepared to share your reflections. These logs should be written clearly and well, either in academic prose or in point-form notes; if you use point-form, be sure your points and their organisation will be clear to a weary and slightly sceptical reader!
2. **Two Book Reviews (10% each, = 20% total):** In addition to the course reading, students are required to complete two book-reviews, one each of Malcolm Jeeves and Warren S. Brown's *Neuroscience, Psychology, and Religion* and Joel Green's *Body, Soul, and Human Life*. Each review should be 1,500 words in length (approx. 5 pages). These book reviews afford the student concentrated engagement with the mind–body problem, both from a scientific (Jeeves and Brown) and theological (Green) perspective. In addition to summarising the main points of each book, student reviews should also critically engage the author's perspectives from a theological perspective.
3. **Presentations (20%):** Students will be required to pick either a contemporary issue (be it social, moral, medical, legal, etc.) OR a longstanding theological issue, and explore that issue in light of the course's main content; that is to say, students are required to think incarnationally about their chosen topic. Presentations are to be 30–40 minutes in length and should consist of (a) an introduction and overview of the chosen issue (10–15 mins),

(b) a critical engagement in light of the mind-body problem (10–15 mins), and (c) facilitation of classroom discussion (10 mins). Students are encouraged to think creatively and dynamically about their topic and its presentation, and they are free to select an issue of their choice (suggestions are provided in the Course Outline below, Part 3). **All topics must be approved by the instructor by 12 February**; presentations will happen from **19 March through 2 April**.

4. **Final Paper (25%):** In lieu of a final exam, students are required to complete one final research paper of 3,000–3,500 words (approx. 10–12 pages). The topic of this research paper will extend from the student presentations—students are expected to expand and deepen their presentations. More information will be handed out in class. The paper is **due on 24 April 2015**.

Grade Breakdown:

Reading Logs (x7)	35%
Book Reviews (x2)	20%
Presentation	20%
Final Paper	25%
	Total 100%

**V. RESEARCH QUALITY, ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION, AND GRADING**

*Paper Format and Style:* All papers are to be double-spaced, paginated, and typewritten in 12 pt. Times New Roman font; margins set at 1-inch (sides) and 1½ (top and bottom). All sources should be cited as in-line citations. An excellent guide to the preparation of essays, including citation styles, may be found at [www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/current/papers](http://www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/current/papers). This guide also reviews standards of academic integrity; if you have questions on how to avoid plagiarism please see the instructor.

*Assignment Submission and Due Dates:* All assignments are to be submitted on the day they are due as indicated in the Course Outline below. **Book Reviews and Reading-Logs are due in class on their respective due dates; the Final Paper is to be handed in no later than 11.59 PM on 24 April 2015.** Any extensions of these deadlines must be arranged beforehand (barring unforeseen circumstances).

All assignments can be submitted either as a hardcopy to the instructor during class periods, during office hours to Birks 021, or as a softcopy via the myCourses website. When submitting a hardcopy, please be sure the time, date, and signature of the receiver are noted on the submission. When submitting electronically, be sure that you receive confirmation of your submission via the myCourses system (myCourses will automatically note the date and time of submission). For a helpful overview of electronic submission via myCourses, see the video at the following web address: <https://training.desire2learn.com/shared/StudentHelp/Dropbox/Dropbox.htm>. Please note that, barring unforeseen circumstances, appeals to technical difficulties experienced while trying to submit an assignment electronically is not a valid excuse for handing something in late.

*Late Policy:* Assignments are considered late if they are submitted after the prescribed times outlined in the *Assignment Submission and Due Dates* section above. Late assignments will be penalised one grade point per day (e.g., from B to B- for one late day; from B to C+ for two late days, etc.) up to a maximum of 3 grade points in accordance with the McGill University Grading Scale (e.g., from B to C; or B- to D). Exceptions will only be made for unusual circumstances such as illness or by prior arrangement (or at the discretion of the instructor).

*Grading Scale:* In keeping with McGill University's grading system, RELG 336 will be graded on the following scale.

Grade	GPA	%	Grade Interpretation Guidelines
A	4.0	85–100	<b>Very Good:</b> Exceptional performance with strong evidence of original thinking; clear capacity to analyse, synthesise, and evaluate; written expressions are eloquent, insightful, well organised, and well documented; demonstrates an excellent grasp of the subject matter and an extensive and detailed knowledge base.
A-	3.7	80–84	
B+	3.3	75–79	<b>Good:</b> Laudable performance with evidence of some original thinking; good critical and analytical capacity; reasonably error-free written expressions, supported with arguments, careful organisation, and sufficient documentation; a good grasp of the subject matter.
B	3.0	70–74	
B-	2.7	65–69	
C+	2.3	60–64	<b>Satisfactory:</b> Fair performance but limited evidence of original thinking and the capacity to analyse, synthesise, or evaluate; fairly clear but uninspiring written expression, with problems in mechanics/syntax, structure/organisation, and poor documentation; satisfactory grasp of basics, but lacks detailed understanding of the subject matter.
C	2.0	55–59	
D	1.0	50–54	<b>Conditional Pass:</b> Minimally acceptable performance with limited evidence of original thinking; minimal ability to analyse and synthesise; written expressions frequently lack clarity, organisation, and documentation; a minimal grasp of the subject matter.
F	0	1–49	<b>Fail:</b> Inadequate performance with little evidence of original thinking; written expression lacks coherence and evinces multiple mechanical and conceptual errors; shows little evidence of even basic competency in the subject matter.

*Academic Integrity:* McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest)).

## VI. RELATED COURSE INFORMATION

*Electronic Devices in the Classroom:* Mobile computing and communications devices are permitted in class insofar as their use does not disrupt the teaching and learning process. Students are permitted to record lectures only with the instructor's permission.

*Disabilities:* If you have a disability and feel the instructor should be alerted, please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at (514) 398-6009 before you do this. We will make every effort to accommodate your needs and to help ensure successful learning. Such matters will be treated with appropriate confidentiality.

*Course Evaluations:* End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available on Mercury, the online course evaluation system. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.

*General Policy:* My intent and desire is to assist and guide you in the learning of the material of this course, as well as to stimulate your own thinking. Should you have any questions and/or concerns with the course content, readings, assignments, etc., *please do not hesitate* to contact me by email or in person during office hours. I am also happy to listen to suggestions about how we use class time, the texts, and the assignments. If you need help at any point in the course, please ask. During office hours I hold an open-door policy and look forward to hearing any questions and/or concerns that you may have.

Your responsibility is to come to class prepared, especially in terms of familiarity with primary sources for discussion, and to be willing to explore ideas. I ask that you be willing to take risks, venture new ideas, ask questions, critique your preconceptions, and respect the perspectives, questions, and statements of your colleagues.

## VII. COURSE OUTLINE—LECTURE TOPICS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENT DUE-DATES

### Jan 6 **Course Introduction**

*Topics:* General Course Introduction; Key Categories and Concepts; Introduction to the Mind–Body Problem; the Prospect of an Incarnational Method

### Jan 8 **Exploring the Mind–Body Problem**

*Topics:* In class group exercise with the “What are Mind–Body Problems” website ([www.closetotruth.com/topics/consciousness/mind-body-problems](http://www.closetotruth.com/topics/consciousness/mind-body-problems))

## Part 1: Incarnate Minds

### Jan 13, 15, 20, 22 **Incarnate Minds in the Western Tradition (from Plato to Merleau-Ponty)**

*Topics:* Demarcating Strong and Weak (Folk) Dualisms in Plato and Aristotle; Augustine; Rene Descartes and John Locke; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty

*Read Jan 13:* Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 111–26; Wright and Potter, *Psyche and Soma*, 37–77.

*Read Jan 15:* Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 127–42; Wright and Potter, *Psyche and Soma*, 133–45.

*Read Jan 20:* Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 143–76; Wright and Potter, *Psyche and Soma*, 173–96.

*Read Jan 22:* Simpson, *Merleau-Ponty and Theology*, 3–20, 45–48; Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, 3–12 and 15–33.

### Jan 27, 29 **Incarnate Minds and Language: The Cognitive Linguistic Project**

*Topics:* The Cultural Turn, the Cognitive Turn; The Embodied Foundations of Human Creativity; Image Schemata; Conceptual Metaphor; Conceptual Blending

*Read:* Slingerland, *What Science offers the Humanities*, 151–218; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3–32 and 41–68.

### Feb 3, 5 **Incarnate Minds in Modern Neuroscience and Psychology**

*Topics:* Putting Culture and Religion in Mind; Religion in an Evolutionary Framework; Theory of Mind; Religion as Natural or Pathological?

*Read:* Barrett, *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology*, 40–57, 96–129, and 146–69; Murphy, “Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues.”

*Due Feb 5:* Review of Jeeves and Brown, *Neuroscience, Psychology, and Religion*

## Part 2: Embodied Gods

- Feb 10, 12      **Biblical Dimensions of the Embodied God**  
*Topics:* Theological Hermeneutics: the Bible in/before the Western Tradition; In class group assignment on Paul and *pneuma*, The Colossian Christ Hymn, Moses and the Great Glory, Jewish Apocalyptic and Other Worldliness, and Matthew’s Sheep and the Goats  
*Read:* Stendhal, “Paul and the Introspective Conscience”; Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, pp. 3–37; Udoh, *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities*, pp. 352–71.  
Due Feb 12: Presentation/Paper Topic
- Feb 17, 19      **Patristic and Historical Dimensions of the Embodied God**  
*Topics:* Incarnation, Christology, and the Trinity: Early Christian and Historical Debates about Jesus, the God/Man.  
*Read:* Simpson, *Merleau-Ponty and Theology*, 95–116 and 131–134; Young, *God’s Presence*, 146–201; and Mitchell and Young, *Cambridge History of Christianity: Vol. 1*, 452–69.
- Feb 24, 26      **Pre- and Post-Modern Dimensions of the Embodied God**  
*Topics:* The God of the Gaps; Vertical Integration—Differentiating Meaning and Explanation; Resurrection in Eastern Orthodox Christianity; Metaphor and the Ontology of the Divine; Ground of Being Theologies  
*Read:* Clayton, *Oxford Handbook*, 596–611 and 612–32.  
*Listen:* Tippet and Guroian, “Restoring the Senses” (On Being Podcast, online: <http://www.onbeing.org/program/restoring-senses-gardening-and-orthodox-easter/164>)  
Due Feb 26: Review of J. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*
- Mar 3, 5      **Reading Week**
- Mar 10, 12      **Embodied Minds/Gods in Non-Western Religious Contexts**  
*Topics:* Buddhism (guest lecture: Mr. Tom Troughton), Indigenous/Tribal Religions (guest lecture: TBD)  
*Read:* TBD

### **Part 3: Thinking Incarnationally about the Embodied Mind**

- Mar 17, 19, 24, 26, 31, Apr 2, 7      **From the Embodied God to the Incarnate Mind—Case Studies**  
*Guest Lecture—March 19:* Sacramental Theology and Modern Legal Discourse  
(guest lecture: Mr. Blair Major)  
*Suggested Presentation Topics:* Resurrection and the Self; Environmentalism and Creation; Sin and Ethics; Consciousness and Human Nature; Free Will; Gender and the Body; Pain and Suffering; Sacraments and the Body; Justice and Rights; Scripture and Biblical Interpretation; Mythology and Meaning  
*Due March 17, 24, 26, 31, April 2 and 7:* Student Presentations
- Apr 9      **Course Conclusion**  
*Topics:* Overview of Course Content and Major Themes  
*Due April 24:* Final Paper