



**RELG 399-F2 Fall II, 2014**  
**Haruki Murakami and Religion**  
(the nature of religion in *1Q84* and  
*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki*)

Meeting time: Fridays 1:30-3:00 in EHFA 279

Instructor: Dr. Ronald Green      Office: EHFA 279

Phone: 349-2782

Office hours: M-W-F 10:00-12:00, T-Th 9:20-11:30

"I am not religious. I only believe in the power of imagination. And the fact that there isn't only one reality."

Haruki Murakami  
Interview in *Die Zeit*

**Course Description:**

This course focuses on underlying religious and philosophical assumptions in the most recent works of Haruki Murakami (1949-), *1Q84* in three volumes and *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*. Murakami is the most popular and widely read novelist in Japan today and a major literary figure worldwide. He cites as his two sources for inspiration in writing *1Q84* George Orwell and the *AUM* religious cult, responsible for bombing Tokyo subways with sarin gas in the 1990s.

**Course Objectives:**

Students will explore the ways Murakami's recent writings assume multiple realities, his characters struggle with the existence of God, and how his themes incorporate shamanic elements.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

On completion of this course, students will be able to

1. demonstrate knowledge of various theories of multiple realities past and present,
2. express themselves on topical issues concerning the relationship of modernity and religious beliefs,
3. describe shamanic practices and beliefs in relationship to literature, and
4. identify and evaluate critically cultural religious and philosophical assumptions as they appear in writings of modern Japanese literature.

**Required primary texts:**

*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* (400 pages). NY: Knopf, 2014. ISBN: 0385352107

*1Q84* (three volumes, 1184 pages). NY: Vintage, 2013. ISBN: 0307476464

## Supplemental readings:

“The Fierce Imagination of Haruki Murakami”

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/magazine/the-fierce-imagination-of-haruki-murakami.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/magazine/the-fierce-imagination-of-haruki-murakami.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

“How Haruki Murakami's *1Q84* was Translated into English” by Alex Hoyt, *The Atlantic*

<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/10/how-haruki-murakamis-1q84-was-translated-into-english/247093/>

“Time and space reconsidered: the literary landscape of Murakami Haruki” by Akins, Midori Tanaka (2012) . PhD Thesis. SOAS, University of London

<http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/15631> or [http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/15631/1/Atkins\\_M\\_3437.pdf](http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/15631/1/Atkins_M_3437.pdf)

## Expectations and Grading:

Students are required to meet with the instructor Fridays from 1:30 to 3:00 (or a day and time determined to be best for all participants) in EHFA 279 to discuss the readings for the week. During those meetings, students will lead the conversation about the narrative content of the readings; the instructor will explain related religious and philosophical issues as well as the cultural assumptions and historical connections (such as the history of *AUM*). In order to complete this study in Fall II, students will need to read approximately 200 pages per week. Class preparation and discussion quality is worth 33% of the grade for the course.

Students must write seven journal entries of around 500 words each, one for each week of class. Each of these is to consider one half of each of the four volumes we read (excluding the last half of the last volume). These journal entries may be used to form a part of the required research paper of 10-12 pages due at the Final Exam day and time. They may also serve as notes for weekly discussions. The general topic of the Final Research Paper is “underlying religious and philosophical assumptions in the most recent works of Haruki Murakami.” Specific themes on particular religious and philosophical assumptions in the readings will be decided in coordination with the instructor by the end of the third week of classes.

Accordingly, students will be evaluated for grading as follows:

Class preparation and discussion quality: 33%

Journal Entries (average of the seven): 33%

Final Research Paper: 33%

Based on this, students will earn a letter grade for the term according to the following system:

A = 91 - 100%

B+ = 88 - 90%

B = 81 - 87%

C+ = 78 - 80%

C = 71 - 77%

D+ = 68 - 70%

D = 61 - 67%

F = below 60%