

ICS Calendar Title: Philosophy at the Limit: Richard Kearney on Language and Religion
ICS Course Code: ICS 220508 F24
Instructor: Dr. Ronald Kuipers
Term and Year: Thursdays, 2:00-5:00 PM, Fall 2024

1. Course Description

This seminar will explore Richard Kearney’s philosophy or religion, paying special attention to his emphases on the roles that narrative and imagination play in shaping a postmodern religious sensibility that eschews certainty and embodies hospitality. The seminar begins with a study of Kearney’s trilogy *Philosophy at the Limit*, comprised of the books *On Stories*, *The God Who May Be*, and *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters*, and will conclude with an exploration of *Anatheism: Returning to God after God*. With Kearney as our hermeneutic guide to that “frontier zone where narratives flourish and abound,” we will navigate his attempt to sketch the outlines of a narrative eschatology that draws on the work of such diverse thinkers as Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida, and Ricoeur (amongst others). Throughout, we will be paying specific attention to the particular religious imaginary that Kearney develops, one that seeks to open a path for human religious life that is alive to redemptive possibility amidst oppressive actuality.

2. Reading Schedule

	Topic	Reading
1. Sept. 12 (16 pp.)	Introduction	“Enabling God”
2. Sept. 19 (66 pp.)	<i>On Stories</i> I	Part I: Where do Stories Come From? Part II: Three Case Histories
3. Sept. 26 (77 pp.)	<i>On Stories</i> II	Part III: National Narratives Part IV: Narrative Matters
4. Oct. 3 (59 pp.)	<i>Strangers, Gods, and Monsters</i> I	Introduction: strangers, gods and monsters Ch. 1: Strangers and Scapegoats Ch. 2: Rights of Sacrifice
5. Oct. 10 (45 pp.) (Need to reschedule)	<i>Strangers, Gods, and Monsters</i> II	Ch. 3: Aliens and Others Ch. 4: Evil, Monstrosity and the Sublime
6. Oct. 17 (68 pp.)	<i>Strangers, Gods, and Monsters</i> III	Ch. 5: On Terror Ch. 6: Hamlet’s Ghosts

		Ch. 7: Melancholy
7. Oct. 24 (53 pp.) (Need to Reschedule)	<i>Strangers, Gods, and Monsters IV</i>	Ch. 8: The Immemorial Ch. 9: God or <i>Khora</i> ? Ch. 10: Last Gods and Final Things Conclusion
Oct. 28-Nov. 1 Reading Break		
8. Nov. 7 (38 pp.) Paper Outlines Due	<i>The God Who May Be I</i>	Introduction Ch. 1: Toward a Phenomenology of the <i>Persona</i> Ch. 2: I Am Who May Be
9. Nov. 14 (40 pp.)	<i>The God Who May Be II</i>	Ch. 3: Transfiguring God Ch. 4: Desiring God
10. Nov. 21 (31 pp.)	<i>The God Who May Be III</i>	Ch. 5: Possibilizing God Conclusion: Poetics of the Possible God
11. Nov. 28 (53 pp.)	<i>Anatheism I</i>	Introduction: God after God Ch. 1: In the Moment Ch. 2: In the Wager
12. Dec. 5 (73 pp.)	<i>Anatheism II</i>	Ch. 3: In the Name Ch. 4: In the Flesh Ch. 5 In the Text
13. Dec. 12 (52 pp.)	<i>Anatheism III</i>	Ch. 6: In the World Ch. 7: In the Act Conclusion

3. Course Learning Goals

a. To develop a critical understanding of a major figure in contemporary philosophy of religion, in order to compose an essay on the cultural relevance of this philosopher's understanding of religion that can be shared with a public audience.

- b. To think creatively and constructively about the role that religious imagination plays in shaping our understanding of modernity and postmodernity, in order to be able to lead a public workshop on how such understanding might address contemporary social concerns.
- c. To gain knowledge of leading debates in continental philosophy of religion, in order to critically assess one position in that array and to develop an original interpretation of one's own.

4. Description and Weighting of Elements to be Evaluated

a) Total reading: 1250 pages, including research for paper, of which approximately 50-70 pages per week is required to prepare for class.

b) In-seminar leadership: Two presentations: one presentation A; one presentation B.

Presentation A: Assigned reading discussion generator, taking the following format:

1. The presentation leads off with a 'pressing question' that the assigned reading raises for the student. This question might be pressing for intellectual, but also existential and religious reasons.
2. Identify and transcribe the particular location(s) in the text where this question emerges.
3. Provide a close reading of that limited portion of text. This close reading should take the form of a line-by-line analysis of the selected text, and include a suggested interpretation and explanation of the reasons that portion of text raises the question it does. This interpretation may in turn radiate out from that selection and touch on other parts of the assigned text, but complete coverage is neither required nor requested.
4. Suggest further questions for discussion that may have arisen in the course of dealing with the initial pressing question.

Presentation B: Practical testing of Kearney's ideas about imagination and narrative, taking the following format:

1. Select an imaginative literary or narrative artefact to present to the class; e.g., a novel, movie, play, short story, poem, song lyric, etc. If the artefact is short enough, you may recite/play/read it to the class. If it is something longer, like a movie or novel, you should introduce the main contours of the piece, provide a plot summary, show some scenes, etc., especially those that are salient for your presentation.
2. Provide a brief discussion of the way the piece exhibits (or fails to exhibit) the features of narrative imagination that Kearney discusses. These features may include, but are not limited to: the way the piece enlivens us to alternative possibilities by opening up a (strange, foreign, alien) world for the reader/viewer/listener; the way the piece portrays and conceptualizes 'the other'—the way it encourages us to understand the stranger within and the stranger without; the way the piece enriches our sense of reality by enlarging our sympathies; the way the piece develops our eschatological anticipation, or points to 'signs of the kingdom'; the way the piece enables us to imagine good and evil, sin and redemption, suffering and hope; the way the piece illustrates the ability of imagination and narrative to give a different future to the past, to change one's life, to tell a different story, or to remain imprisoned in an old story.

Other features of the narrative imagination than those I have listed here might make you think about a film you have seen, or a novel you have read, etc. Feel free to explore that connection in this assignment; i.e., do not feel bound by these suggestions.

3. Conclude your presentation by suggesting some questions and themes relating to the artefact for subsequent group discussion. Don't be afraid to be provocative in your attempt to elicit a response from your fellow classmates!

c) Description of course project: Term Paper: MA 3000-6000 words; Ph.D: 5000-8000 words. Term Paper Deadline is no later than **January 24, 2025** (TST: **December 12, 2024**). I encourage early submission. A term paper outline is due after the reading break, on **November 7, 2024**.

d) Description and weighting of elements to be evaluated:

- i. Class participation: 10% (TST 15%)
- ii. Seminar Presentation: 30% (TST 35%)
- iii. Research Project/Paper: 60% (TST 50%)

5. Required Readings (All books to be purchased by student, except the article “Enabling God,” which will be distributed in class)

Kearney, Richard. 2001. *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BT103 .K43 2001]

[Amazon CA Purchase Link](#): \$27 CAD

_____. 2003. *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*. London and New York: Routledge. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BD236 .K43 2003]

[Amazon CA Purchase Link](#): \$76 CAD

[Publisher website link](#) (Routledge): \$47 USD

_____. 2004. *On Stories*. London and New York: Routledge. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: PN3353 .K43 2002]

[Amazon US link](#): \$42

[Amazon CA Purchase Link](#): \$65

[Publisher website link](#) (Routledge): \$40 USD

_____. 2006. “Enabling God.” In [Manoussakis, John Panteleimon, ed. *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*. New York: Fordham University Press.](#)

_____. 2010. *Anatheism: Returning to God after God*. New York: Columbia University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL473 .K43 2010]

[Amazon CA Purchase Link](#): \$40 CAD

6. A (non-exhaustive) List of Recommended Readings

- DeRoo, Neal. 2009. "[Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology: Richard Kearney's \(Double\) Vision](#)." In *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*. 65: Supplement.
- _____. 2020. "[Richard Kearney's Relevance for Psychology](#)." In *Journal for Phenomenological Psychology*. 51: 207-225.
- _____. 2023. "[Carnal Sacrality: Phenomenology, the Sacred, and Material Bodies in Richard Kearney](#)." In Treanor and Taylor, eds., "Anacarnation and returning to the lived body with Richard Kearney," 2023.
- Doude van Troostwijk, Chris, and Matthew Clemente, eds. 2018. [Richard Kearney's Anatheistic Wager: Philosophy, Theology, Poetics](#). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Gratton, Peter and John Panteleimon Manoussakis, eds. 2007. [Traversing the Imaginary: Richard Kearney and the Postmodern Challenge](#). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B945 .K384 T73 2007]
- Kearney, Richard. 1998. [The Wake of Imagination: Toward a Postmodern Culture](#). London: Routledge. [ICS Stacks: PN56 .I45 K43 1994]
- _____. 1998. [Poetics of Imagining: Modern to Post-modern](#). New York: Fordham University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B105 .I49 K42 1998 ; Robarts Library: B105 .I49 K42 1998]
- _____. 1995. [States of Mind: Dialogues with Contemporary Thinkers](#). New York: New York University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: CB 203 .K43 1995 ; Robarts Library: CB203 .K43 1995X]
- _____. 1995. [Poetics of Modernity: Toward a Hermeneutic Imagination](#). Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BD232 .K39 1995 ; Robarts Library: BD232 .K39 1995X]
- _____. 2004. [Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers](#). New York: Fordham University Press. [B804 .K43 2004]
- _____. 2021. [Touch: Recovering Our Most Vital Sense](#). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kearney, Richard, ed. 2003. [Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy](#). London and New York: Routledge. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B804 .T84]
- Kearney, Richard, and Matthew Clemente, eds. 2017. [The Art of Anatheism](#). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Kearney, Richard, and Mark Dooley, eds. 1999. [Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy](#). London and New York: Routledge. [ICS Stacks: BJ 319 .Q47 1999]

- Kuipers, Ronald A. 2012. "[Working through the Trauma of Evil: An Interview with Richard Kearney](#)," In *The Other Journal*. 20: 7-14. (Access via the ICS Institutional Repository)
- Littlejohn, M.E., ed. 2020. [Imagination Now: A Richard Kearney Reader](#). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Manoussakis, John Panteleimon, ed. 2006 [After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy](#). New York : Fordham University Press. (Includes the essay "Divine Metaxology" by ICS Professor Emeritus Jim Olthuis.) [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BT103 .K4333 2006]
- Treanor, Brian, and James L. Taylor, eds. 2023. [Anacarnation and Returning to the Lived Body with Richard Kearney](#). New York: Routledge.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Student Services as soon as possible.