

***The DaVinci Code***  
University of South Carolina  
Spring, 2005, Religion 491  
Dr. Cheryl Rhodes  
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Course Description

Not since the production of the film *The Last Temptation of Christ* in 1988 has a work of fiction caused as much uproar in the Christian community as has Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code*. Even so, people seem to be enthralled by this 2003 novel that has been on the best selling list for ninety-two weeks (as of 12/29/04). The film, directed by Ron Howard, is currently in production and due to be released in 2006. More than a dozen books have been written that either discredit or support the information Brown presents to his readers. ABC produced a special program on *The DaVinci Code* focusing on the alleged marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

After a thorough reading and discussion of the novel, this course will seek to expose students to the cause of the uproar and help them critically investigate allegations made both by and about Brown and his book. Students will go from the halls of the Louvre to the halls of the Vatican as they study such topics as Mary Magdalene and the role of women in the early Church, the Opus Dei, the Priory of Sion, the Knight Templars, the Holy Grail, the humanity versus the divinity of Christ, Gnostic writings, the Council of Nicea, and Leonardo DaVinci.

Because of the diversity of information that will be presented in this course, guest lecturers will assist in our quest. Tentative lecturers are: Dr. Arne Flaten, an art historian and Professor at Coastal Carolina University will speak to the class on Leonardo DaVinci and the *Last Supper* painting. Dr. Eliza Glaze, History Professor at Coastal Carolina University will lecture on women and the role of women. Dr. Roy Moye, English Professor of at Coastal Carolina University will make a presentation on the Grail legends. (Guest lecturers will be videotaped to be shown at U.S.C.)

Brown said during an interview, "My hope in writing this novel was that the story would serve as a catalyst and a springboard for people to discuss the important topics of faith, religion, and history." Indeed it has.

Course Objectives

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

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

Course Oddities and Requirements

1. Everyone who had registered for the course in the fall was emailed and asked to read the novel during the semester break if they had not already read it. (If you did not receive this email, please correct your email address on blackboard). If you registered late and have not yet read the book, don't worry, you will read it during the semester...but you probably won't be able to put it down once you start it until you've finished!
2. Everyone begins this class with an A (100 pts). Failure to attend class or to complete your assignments on time will result in the following subtractions from your grade:  
Failure to hand in an assignment on time = -2pts.; Failure to hand in an assignment = -5 pts.

3. Because we meet only once a week, class attendance is mandatory. There are no excused absences and any absences will affect your grade in the following manner: the first absence = -5 pts; the second absence = -15 pts.; the third absence = -40 pts. (no better than a D for the course); the fourth absence = -50 pts. (an F for the final course grade). Should you be hospitalized, or severely ill, you will be required to complete an extra assignment to make up for your absence. You are also responsible for obtaining any notes, etc. that you missed.
4. You must use the Discussion Board on Blackboard at least 10 out of the 15 weeks of class. For each of the 10 weeks you do not use it, you will receive -1 pt.
5. Depending upon the number of students in the class, you will be expected to research one item for discussion, probably every 2 weeks. Some items to be researched are merely definitions and will require little time, others are more complicated and will require more time. We will divide these items up in an equitable manner, and hopefully in a way that will help you in your other studies.  
Please note that your research item should contain how it is used in *The DaVinci Code*. You will compile what you have discovered in written form to be submitted to the Instructor no later than the day before the next class. You will be expected to present what you have researched to the class and the Instructor will post your information on WebCt. If you have a problem with public speaking/presentations, please notify the Instructor in advance.
6. There are no tests or papers for this course. It is assumed that because you have registered for this course you already have a thirst for knowledge, a desire for truth, and are thereby motivated to study and learn. You are expected to do all of the assignments, to think theologically, and to contribute to the class.
7. There will be a final exam that will assess your ability to reach a conclusion about what you have learned. You will be allowed to use the novel and your class notes.

Because this is the first time this class has been taught, there may need to be adjustments made to the syllabus and the Instructor reserves the right to do so when it is believed it will be beneficial to you. Any suggestions you have to improve the class are welcomed.

***The DaVinci Code***  
Class Outline and Assignments

January 10<sup>th</sup>  
Introduction

- I. Course Introduction
  - A. Syllabus, Class Schedule, and Assignments
    1. Internet searches
    2. Student research
  - B. Maymester Study Trip Abroad
  - C. *New York Times* article
- II. Who is Dan Brown?
  - A. Information from Brown's web site [www.danbrown.com](http://www.danbrown.com) and [www.davincicode.com](http://www.davincicode.com)
  - B. Other Novels
    1. *Digital Fortress*, 1998
    2. *Angels & Demons*, 2001
    3. *Deception Point*, 2002
    4. Currently working on 5<sup>th</sup> novel to be released summer, 2005
- III. *The DaVinci Code*
  - Acknowledgments
  - FACT

Amy Welborn's study guide  
 Literary Assessment  
 Controversy – good, bad, or neutral?

IV. The Novel

- A. frequently asked facts [http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci\\_code/faqs.html](http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/faqs.html)
- B. Interviews [http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci\\_code/breakingnews/html](http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/breakingnews/html).
- C. The Film [http://movies.go.com/movies/D/davincicode\\_2004/](http://movies.go.com/movies/D/davincicode_2004/)

V. An Alternate Universe (Steven Kellermeier)

Assignment for next class

Intensive reading of *The DaVinci Code*, Chapters 1 – 5 (pp. 3-33) (even if you have read the novel, you are required to read the assignments!)

Read “Dismantling The DaVinci Code” by Sandra Miesel at

<http://catholiceducation.org/articles/persecution/pch0058.html>

Research assigned item from the next class, email information for class hand-out to professor no later than Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

January 17<sup>th</sup> no class Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

January 24<sup>th</sup>

Main Topic: Opus Dei

Miesel's article – can we trust her? Does she also make errors?

Chapters 1-5, (pp. 3-33)

1 Jacques Saunière (Berenger Saunière - research item)

12 Cilice with corporal mortification (p. 14)

[http://www.odan.org/corporal\\_mortification.htm](http://www.odan.org/corporal_mortification.htm)

14 The Way (research assignment)

16 Interpol

<http://www.interpol.int/Public/Icpo/default.asp>

17 Obelisk of Ramses

<http://members.aol.com/Sokamoto31/paris.htm>

19 astrological symbols – Taurus (research item)

21 666 # of Satan (research item)

23 Louvre's collection of goddess art (research item)

25 crux gemmata

<http://www.symbols.com/encyclopedia/24/2456.html>

29 Manuel Aringorosa (research assignment)

29 Opus Dei

Josemaria Escriva, 1928 (research item); 1934 published *The Way*

30 [www.odan.org](http://www.odan.org) (site has everything related to Opus Dei that is negative)

30 prelature (research item)

31 Psalm 51 “...wash me, that I may become whiter than snow....”

Opus Dei

Preview for next class

Assignment for next class

Intensive Reading of *The DaVinci Code*, chapters 6-17 (pp. 33-83)

Research assigned item, email professor no later than Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> page for class hand-out

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

January 31<sup>st</sup>

Main Topic: Leonard DaVinci and Religion

Guest Lecturer, Dr. Arne Flaten, Art Historian at Coastal Carolina University

Chapters 6-17 (pp. 33-83)

- 35 The pentacle (research item)
- 36 Pagans
- 41 original sin; Eve and APPLE of knowledge
- 43 Draconian devil (research item)
- 45 (& 95) The Vitruvian Man (research item)
  - homosexuality/sin
  - DaVinci
- 54 The Lord's Prayer
- 57 Resurrection
- 57 crucifix vs. cross
- 58 Acts 16:26 "...And suddenly, there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and all the doors fell open."
- 61 Fibonacci sequence (research item)
- 73 vow of celibacy and relinquishment of personal assets

Assignment for next class

Intensive reading of chapters 18-27 (pp. 84-123)

Research assigned item, email information to professor no later than Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

February 7<sup>th</sup>

Main Topic: The Priory of Sion

Chapters 18-27 (pp. 84-123)

- 88 The Church of Saint-Sulpice (research item)
- 89 Peace of the Lord be with you
- 92 Tarot cards (in detail later)
- 92ff PHI The Divine Proportion (research item)
- 96 art an attempt to imitate beauty of Creator's hand
- 98 Kabbala (research item)
- 99-100 Mona Lisa & 119 ff
  - <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/vinci/joconde/joconde.jpg>
- 105 the Rose Line (research item)
  - Egyptian Obelisk
- 106 fleur-de-lis (research item)
- 107 Divine Intervention
- 108 Priory of Sion (begins)
  - Pierre Plantard (research item)
- 120 androgony
  - <http://www3.azwestern.edu/psy/dgershaw/lo/androgyny.htm>
  - Amon (research item)
  - Isis (research item)

Assignment for Next Class

Intensive reading of chapters 28-37 (pp. 124-161)

Research information to professor no later than Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>  
 Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

February 14<sup>th</sup>

Main Topic: The Knights Templar

Chapters 28-37 (pp. 124-161)

- 124 goddess worship (research item)
- 125 *Malleus Maleficarum* – *The Witches' Hammer* (book published by the Catholic Inquisition)  
<http://www.malleusmaleficarum.org/>
- 125 Hieros Gamos (save for 308)
- 127 Moses
- 128 Job 38:11 (“Thus far shall you come and no farther....”)
- 134 Madonna of the Rocks (research item)  
[http://www.danbrown.com/secrets/davinci\\_code/davinci2.html](http://www.danbrown.com/secrets/davinci_code/davinci2.html)
- 138 Uriel (research item)
- 145 cruciare
- 146 Arc DeTriumphe  
<http://www.kerstentriumphe.com/arcetriumphe.jpg>  
<http://members.fortunecity.com/syberboy/arcetriumphe.html>
- 153 Sacre-Coeur  
<http://www.paris-tourism.com/hotels/object.php?idContent=44>
- 158 Knights Templar ***Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade***
- 159 Holy of Holies (research item)
- 160 Sangreal (research item, possible meanings of the word)
- 161 Holy Grail

Assignment for next class

Intensive Reading of *The DaVinci Code*, chapters 34-47 (pp. 148-202)

Research information to professor no later than Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

February 21<sup>st</sup>

Main Topic: The Holy Grail

Guest Lecturer, Dr. Roy Moye, Professor of English and Journalism at Coastal Carolina University

Chapters 34-47 (pp. 148-202)

- 165 Noah an albino (research item)
- 175 Papal Seal  
<http://medievalwriting.50megs.com/decoration/seal7.htm>
- 195 Lamb of God
- 197 Rosicrucians (research item)

Film Clips from *The Fisher King*

Assignment for next class

Intensive Reading of *The DaVinci Code*, chapters 48-55 (pp. 203-236)

Research information to professor no later than Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

February 28<sup>th</sup>

Main Topic: Constantine and the Council of Nicea

Guest Lecturer, Dr. Elize Glase, History Professor at Coastal Carolina University

Chapters 48-55 (pp. 203-236)

- 203 Keystone (research item)
  - Knights of the Rosy Cross (research item)
- 205 Masons (research item)
- 206 Les Dossiers Secrets (research item)
- 226 Byzantine Temple
  - Gargoyles (research item)
- 232ff Constantine and early Christianity; the Bible
  - transmogrification
- 232 Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.)
  - Mithras & Osiris (research item)
  - Adonis & Dionysus (research item)
  - Krishna
- 234 Dead Sea Scrolls
  - Coptic Scrolls
- 235 The Last Supper painting (# of cups)

Assignment for next classIntensive reading of *The DaVinci Code*, chapters 56-59 (pp. 237-250)Research Information to professor no later than Mar. 13<sup>th</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

March 7<sup>th</sup> – no class Spring BreakMarch 14<sup>th</sup>

Main Topic: Mary Magdalene

Chapters 56-59 (pp. 237-250)

- 237 male/female symbols (research item)
- 243 Mary Magdalene and Holy Grail
- 246 Gnostic Gospels (Gospel of Phillip)
  - <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gop.html>
- 246 *The Last Temptation of Christ* ***The Last Temptation of Christ***

Mary Magdalene in the Bible

Mary Magdalene in Film (various film clips)

View: NBC special documentary – *Jesus, Mary, and DaVinci*Assignment for next classIntensive reading of *The Davinci Code*, chapters 60-62 (pp. 253-262)Research information mailed to professor no later than Mar. 20<sup>th</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

March 21<sup>st</sup>

Main Topic: Goddess Worship & Women in the Early Church

Chapters 60-62 (pp. 253-262)

254ff Rose

255 Georgia O'Keefe paintings

257 Merovingians (research item)

King Dagobert (research item)

258 Pepin d'Heristed (research item)

Sigisbert Dagobert (research item)

Godefroi de Bowltons (research item)

*The Little Mermaid* and Walt Disney's

***The Little Mermaid***

262 The Penitent Magdalene by Georges de la Tour

Eve (research item)

Pisces – fish goddess (research item)

Ariel in Isaiah 29 ( Ariel = sacred feminine = the Holy city besieged) (research item)

Mary Magdalene in Art

[http://www.textweek.com/art/mary\\_magdalene.htm](http://www.textweek.com/art/mary_magdalene.htm)

Assignment for next class

Intensive reading of *The Davinci Code*, chapters 62-73 (pp. 263-306)

Research information mailed to professor no later than Mar. 27<sup>th</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

March 28<sup>th</sup>

Main Topic: The Humanity vs. the Divinity of Christ

View: NBC Special Documentary – *Jesus, Mary, and DaVinci*

Chapters 62-73 (pp. 263-306)

266 priest cover-up

End of Days (research item)

Apocalypse (research item)

274 Spanish monastery

277 God alone judges the worthy

304 Atbash Cipher (research item)

Assignment for next class

Intensive reading of *The Davinci Code*, chapters 74-85 (pp. 307-357)

Research information mailed to professor no later than Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

April 4<sup>th</sup>

Was Jesus Married?

Chapters 74-85 (pp. 307-357)

308 Hieros Gamos

*Eyes Wide Shut* – is this an example?

309 Shekinah (research item)

YHWH

316 Baphomet (research item)

- 319 Mystery of Sheshach and Jeremiah
- 321 Sofia (research item)
- 338 The Temple Church in London
- 341 definition of faith
- 342 Koran
  - Torah
  - Pali Canon (research item)
- 355 tombs, effigies, crypts

Assignment for next class

Intensive reading of *The Davinci Code*, chapters 83-96 (pp. 357-394)

Research information mailed to professor no later than Apr. 10<sup>th</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

April 11<sup>th</sup>

Main Topic: Tarot Cards and Religion

Chapters 83-96 (pp. 357-395)

- 368 & 377 Kings College and renowned electronic theological database (research item)
- 378 Don Quixote (research item)
- 379 Boolean search (research item)
- 380 Vatican Secret Archives (research item)
- 385 St. James's Park, London
- 389 Freemasons (Mozart, Bethoven, Shakespeare, Gershwin, Houdini, Disney)
- 390 Wagner's opera *Parsifal* (research item) ***Parsifal***
  - Troubadours (research item)
  - The History of the Holy Grail Through Tarot
- 393 *The Gravity of Genius: Biography of a Modern Knight* (Sir Isaac Newton)

Assignment for next class

Intensive reading of *The Davinci Code*, chapters 97-102 (pp. 395-426)

Research information mailed to professor no later than Apr. 17<sup>th</sup>

Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

Email Instructor a topic you would like to consider as the Main Topic for the next class.

April 18<sup>th</sup>

Main Topic: Student Choice

Chapters 97-102 (pp. 395-426)

- 395 Westminster Abbey (research item)
- 398 Goddess of Astronomy (research item)
- 401 End of Days, Pisces, Aquarius, millennium (research item)
- 403 cloisters
- 412 Knight of the Realm (research item)
- 425 The orb from which Eve partook
- 427 The Lord would not take him before his time
  - Our Lord is a good and merciful God

Assignment for next class

Intensive reading of *The Davinci Code*, chapters 103-Epilogue (pp. 427-454)

Research information mailed to professor no later than Apr. 24<sup>th</sup>



Visit all web sites listed for the next class session.

April 25<sup>th</sup> – last class  
Main Topic: The Louvre

Chapter 103-Epilogue (pp. 428-454)

- 429 St. Mary's Hospital
- 429/430 confession and restitution
- 432 Rosslyn Chapel, the Cathedral of Codes, Scotland
  - Mithraic temple
  - Symbols from Jewish, Christian, Egyptian, Masonic, and pagan traditions
- 434 West Wall of Solomon's Temple (research item)
  - "Line of the Rose"
  - Roses as the womb of the goddess (research item)
- 435 & 446 Star of David (research item)
  - Boaz, the Mason's Pillar; Jachin, the Apprentice Pillar
  - Apprentice Freemason, Fellowcraft Freemason, Master Mason
  - Rosslyn Trust
- 445 Blade and Chalice (research item)
- 446 The Star of David
- 453 *La Pyramide Inversée* (research item – Brandon Eubanks)
  - [http://www.danbrown.com/secrets/davinci\\_code/louvre.html](http://www.danbrown.com/secrets/davinci_code/louvre.html)

Assignment for next class

Visit web sites listed under exam class.

For your exam, you will need to think about all you have learned and what impact it has had, not only on your understanding of *The DaVinci Code*, but also upon how you may view sources on other subjects as well.

Final Exam – Wed. April 27<sup>th</sup> 5:30

Your exam will be done on computer, no class.

Just for fun! Uncover the codes on *The DaVinci Code* jacket cover!

<http://www.randomhouse.com/doubleday/davinci/> - "Uncover the Code"

<http://www.randomhouse.com/doubleday/davinci/index-ctc.html> – "Make the Quest"

If you get really stumped and can't figure it out, go to <http://www.matt-thornton.net/topics.php?topic=14&subcat=99>

Book Group Questions from Brown's web site

After you complete the above, you will be ready to take your exam. Exams will be emailed to you at 6:30 and you will have until 7:30 to email them back to the Instructor. Exam – success on your final exam means no points will be deducted from your grade.