Course Description:
Religion, not religious commitment or behavior per se, but the public visibility and awareness of the discursive realities of religion, has made a comeback in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Scholars across a range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences are pushing forward the “postsecular turn.” The study of literature, which has been coming to terms with the impact of globalization, has just begun to take its own postsecular turn. Reading contemporary literature against the background of colossal changes of our time, especially changes concerning the contour and configuration of religion and the secular, this course aims to extend the study of religion and literature beyond its current parameters. We will read renowned writers such as the Irish Colm Tóibín, the South African J.M. Coetzee, the Canadian Margaret Atwood, and the Chinese Mo Yan, and put them in dialogue with latest scholarship in the fields of history of religions, sociology and anthropology of religion, and critical theory and continental philosophy.

Required Texts:
Margaret Atwood, The Year of the Flood (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2009).

Supplementary reading will be available in PDF form.

Assignments:
Attendance and Participation 10%
Three Analysis Essays (2-3 pages): on the required texts 30%
Two Summary Essays (2-3 pages): summary of supplementary readings 20%
One Final Research Project (10-15 pages): may be developed from one of the analysis papers, or based on your own selection of text(s) and question(s). 30%
One Final Self-Assessment Essay 10%

Schedule:
Introduction
Week 1: Conceptualizing Religion and Literature

Unit 1: Drawing from Christianity
Week 2: Testament of Mary
Week 3-5: Childhood of Jesus
Supplementary reading:
Christian foundation of the study of religion and literature
Cultural politics of rewriting

Unit 2: Fiction and New Religion
Week 6-9: Year of Flood
Supplementary reading:
Formation of religion and the secular
New Religious Movement
What is the postsecular turn?

**Unit 3: Other Religion, Other Literature**
Week 10-13: *Life and Death*
Supplementary reading:
Formation of modern Chinese literature
Religious question in modern China
What is posthumanism?

Conclusion
Week 14: Rethinking Religion and Literature