REL 460 is a special topics seminar in Religious Studies. Students taking the course are primarily minors and majors or students with special permission of the instructor. Upper level seminars are designed to introduce students to emerging issues, questions, and topics within the field of Religious Studies. They typically involve a significant amount of discipline based reading and seminar-style discussion.

This assignment is designed to help students prepare for class discussions, which are focused upon working through and understanding the readings, and to help them develop their skills as strategic and effective readers. Another goal of the assignment, primarily embedded within the response, is to encourage students to practice engaging the work of their course colleagues.

The Assignment I Distribute to Students

REL 460 – Religious Studies Seminar: Gods and Monsters in Biblical Traditions

Weekly Summary Statements and Responses

Every week on the course blog you will 1) write a summary statement for each of the assigned readings and 2) respond to the post of a class colleague. This assignment will help you learn to summarize and synthesize complex secondary and primary sources.

Process (Summary)

For secondary sources, the statement should include a summary of the readings’ main points and a brief response to the reading, identifying what you might not have understood or highlighting what you think makes the reading innovative or unique. For primary sources, summarize the main points of the text and then respond to the text using Beal’s suggestion that monsters and the monstrous are
about revealing or showing: What does the text seek to reveal or show to its audience?

These summary statements will be written to share with your colleagues in this course and they will be posted on the course blog by class time every Tuesday. They should be at least 500 words in length, although for weeks with multiple readings the summary may be as long as 1000 words. You should proofread your summary for spelling and grammar and you should include parenthetical citations to relevant pages or passages.

Note: In this course “primary sources” refers mainly to ancient texts and texts that have not been written from an academic or critical perspective (i.e. films). “Secondary sources” refers to those writings that analyze and assess a primary source or develop a theory that can be applied to primary sources.

**Process (Response)**
Write a brief (approximately 500 words) response to another student’s summary, answering a question he/ she may have raised or noting a significant point that your colleague may not have noted in his/ her summary. Make sure to include parenthetical citations to relevant pages or passages. (If someone has already responded to a particular colleague, please respond to someone else.)

These responses will be posted on the course blog by class time every Thursday.

**Evaluation (Summary)**
Weekly summaries will be graded on a 5-point scale. These grades will be posted on Moodle with brief feedback on whether the assignment is on target or what it should include or do to receive a higher grade.

5 = The student has completed the assignment in a thoughtful manner, identifying the major points of the reading(s) and explaining why these are the major points. He/ she has incorporated significant detail into the summary and has articulated either a significant question or insight into the significance of the reading(s) for the study of monsters, the Bible, or religious studies.

4 = The student has completed the assignment in a thoughtful manner, identifying the major points of the reading(s) and explaining why these are the major points. He/ she has incorporated some detail into the summary and has begun to articulate either a significant question or insight into the significance of the reading(s) for the study of monsters, the Bible, or religious studies.

3 = The student has completed the assignment and has identified a number of points in the reading(s). The points identified may not be the most significant or the student may not have engaged all of the readings. The student may have begun to articulate a question or insight into the significance of the reading(s), although it may be more of an explanatory question.
2=The student has completed the assignment, but has not identified the reading’s main points. The summary lacks detail and the questions raised, if any, are primarily explanatory in nature.

1=The student has started the assignment, but not completed it.

**Evaluation (Response)**
Weekly responses will be graded on a pass/ fail basis. These grades will be posted on Moodle with brief feedback on whether the assignment is on target or what it should include or do to pass, if it has received a “fail.” If you complete the response in a thoughtful manner, engaging your colleague in a respectful manner and yet offering him/ her additional insight into the reading, the response will be passing. If the response is not completed, if it is not respectful, or if does not offer your colleague additional insight, the response will be failing.

**The “Fine Print”**
- You are allowed one “pass” on both the summary and the response during the semester. These *must* be taken the same week.
- Since these are designed, in part, to facilitate class discussion, late work will not be accepted. A “zero” will be given for missing work.
- Blog posts and responses may be incorporated into class discussions.