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# Syracuse University professor to launch 'Doctor Who' class next semester



Peter Capaldi is the Twelfth Doctor on the BBC series "Doctor Who." (BBC video still)



By Geoff Herbert | gherbert@syracuse.com  
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Put down your pencils and grab your sonic screwdrivers. The Doctor is in.

[Syracuse University](#) Professor Anthony Rotolo is launching a class on "Doctor Who" next semester. The course will explore the history and cultural impact of the BBC series, which first premiered in 1963 and is still on the air today with its Twelfth Doctor, played by Peter Capaldi.

Rotolo describes the spring 2015 offering as a "Doctor Who (Un)Class" because it's not an official college course. As a result, SU students -- and any member of the Central New York community -- can take it free of charge and expect zero homework.

Students can, however, register the course as an independent study to receive academic credit if approved by their advisors and departments.

"I do hope to make this an official course for SU credit in the future," Rotolo tells [syracuse.com](#).

He says he was given a green light to teach #WhoClass, as he calls it on Twitter, last year but "a variety of administrative issues and red tape" have delayed its addition to the official curriculum. Rotolo, who also teaches an official course on "[Star Trek](#)," was overwhelmed by students who still wished to sign up, "and the un-class was born."

"...As the 'Star Trek' course got more popular, I started to receive regular requests from students to create a similar course on 'Doctor Who,'" he explains. "So, a few years ago, I started my research and work toward that goal. I obtained the entire, 50-year library of 'Doctor Who' content, from classic and rare episodes and restorations to the latest seasons of the series (of which I was mostly familiar)..."

"I was inspired to put this course together because it is my belief that learning can and should be fun, and while not all courses can be about television series, some can! My 'Star Trek' course has been a tremendous success, and I am proud to say that it has inspired countless students to find their path in media and even science and technology fields. As a teacher, there is nothing more important than that, and nothing more rewarding than hearing from a student that your course has had an impact in his or her life."



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According to Rotolo's [website](#), lectures will cover both classic and recent episodes of "Doctor Who," with discussions taking place over social media and in the classroom much like his #TrekClass. Sessions will include showings of rare clips, food ("Would you like a Jelly Baby?") and analysis of how the science-fiction drama has offered social commentary over the years and evolved with modern technology.



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An updated handout photo made available by the BBC shows the first Eleven Doctors, from left, William Hartnell, Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee, Tom Baker, Peter Davison, Colin Baker, Sylvester McCoy, Paul McGann, Christopher Eccleston, David Tennant and Matt Smith.

BBC | The Associated Press

"#WhoClass is a whole new way to learn about and experience 'Doctor Who,' whether you are a longtime 'Whovian' or a total newbie looking for a crash course on The Doctor and his travels in time," the course description explains.

Of course, die-hard fans of the show might have an advantage in periodic Trivia Challenges for prizes, including "Doctor Who" toys, books and other collectibles.

"[Doctor Who](#)," which currently airs Saturdays in the U.S. at 9 p.m. on BBC America, follows the titular Time Lord who can take on a new body and personality after death. Besides a dozen Doctors, the show has also featured a variety of traveling companions in his T.A.R.D.I.S. space ship and villains like Daleks and Cybermen.

For more information, including registration, visit [rotolo.info/whoclass](http://rotolo.info/whoclass). Classes begin in January on the SU campus, but space is limited -- Rotolo says 50 students have already signed up since he announced it Sunday night.

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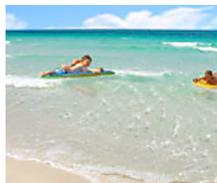
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**Beverly Snyder**

Nov 14, 2014

I have followed the series since the days of Tom Baker. This will give me something to enjoy when I'm snowed in on the Tug.

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**cactusfox**

Nov 6, 2014

From another article about the class, "Along the way, students will also learn to identify and discuss cultural, social and political issues that have been addressed in the series over five decades, and how Doctor Who, like many science fiction series, applies futuristic and alien concepts to deliver social commentary on current affairs."

For everyone who has snarky comments about this class: It's 2014. Stop being so close-minded.

I can't wait to take this class!

Flag



**PennyLane**

Oct 27, 2014

They are teaching some interesting courses these days...

Flag



**Atari2600**

Oct 27, 2014

Think I'll skip this one, I'm gonna hold out for The Brady Bunch classes myself.

Flag



**Cynicuse**

Oct 27, 2014

I usually save this for December but ... why not. I have evidence that Dr Who is not the last of his kind, there is another Time Lord who we are all quite familiar with.

Santa Claus is a Time Lord, here is my evidence:

A- How can Santa visit all the houses in one night? He can't, unless of course his sleigh is a TARDIS. Traveling through time he could spend weeks delivering toys and to us it seems to only take one night.

B- How can he fit all the toys in one sack? Easy using Time Lord technology - It's bigger on the inside. It also uses Time Lord technology to negate the mass, as we know if not for that technology the TARDIS would crush the Earth.

C- Why else do you think there is always a Dr. Who Christmas special?

Flag



**Jondo2**

Oct 27, 2014

Don't tell the NCAA

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**yougotsomesplainintodolucy**

Oct 27, 2014

I like the idea of this course.

Many courses are designed to make the students think and look at things in a different way. How many people were asked about Shakespeare's meaning of this and motives for that? As a matter of fact one of the ways one of my English professors got us interested in Shakespeare was to show us that many (if not most) of the Star Trek episodes was based on his plays (that would be the original Star Trek).

In high school one of our English teachers used to use the class time to have "rap sessions" (as the word rap was slang for talking for those of you that haven't been out of high school for almost 50 years).

What these courses did was make us think outside the box and to see how cultural influence was determined (if it was) by something popular at one time.

We had classes that covered the rock opera Tommy and Jesus Christ Superstar. When we were done reading and studying the lyrics we were asked the same questions that are asked after reading poetry (what did the author mean by this or what was the author trying to say or what did the author REALLY mean by that).

I and many of my friends thought it was easier to relate to something more popular than something written centuries ago.

Also when I DID have to take poetry and literature I felt more prepared and had a better understanding of it.

If this course helps some students' thinking I'm all for it. If it relieves some of the stress of college I'm all for it and if it allows some students to have some fun I'm all for that too.

Flag



**yensid**

Oct 27, 2014

[@yougotsomesplainintodolucy](#) exactly! This type of course is also relevant to students who major in film, creative writing, etc!!!!

Flag



**Geoff Herbert | gherbert@syracuse.com**

Oct 27, 2014

[@yougotsomesplainintodolucy](#) Well said. There are many different ways to teach the same subject, and if pop culture references help reach/teach a student, then I'm all for it.

Flag



**upstate\_guy**

Oct 27, 2014

will Abbott and Costello's who's on first also be taught?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTcRRaXV-fg>



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**Think First**

Oct 27, 2014

@upstate\_guy I studied that on my own as a kid. Great routine.

Flag



**Katrina Tulloch | ktulloch@syracuse.com**

Oct 27, 2014

It's free? Anyone can take it? This is brilliant. I'm signing up right now. I love Doctor Who.

Flag



**whatismyemail**

Oct 27, 2014

heard they already teach this course to athletes at North Carolina!!

Flag



**The Pale Orc**

Oct 27, 2014

There probably are some interesting things to know about a long-standing TV program and its incarnations against the backdrop of changing culture -- but for real, a college course?

American students have some major catching-up to do to close the knowledge/literacy gap with their overseas counterparts and should probably be spending more time on derivatives and Eudora Welty than Dr. Who.

Just saying.

Flag



**Auwtsnae**

Oct 27, 2014

Ditto on Eudora Welty.

Flag



**Richard U. Diaz**

Oct 27, 2014

"Dr. Who?" for 90 percent of Americans.

Flag



**upstate\_guy**

Oct 27, 2014

I'm waiting for the course on Debbie Does Dallas.

Flag



**joe4point1**

Oct 27, 2014

50k a year tuition.

Flag



**FrankGrimes23**

Oct 27, 2014

@joe4point1

"Rotolo describes the spring 2015 offering as a "Doctor Who (Un)Class" because it's not an official college course."

I'm wondering how much you spent on tuition considering this line seemed to evade your grasp.

Flag



**BetterOswegoMan**

Oct 27, 2014

@FrankGrimes23 @joe4point1 Come on. There's no need to throw insults about education even if someone didn't read the article as thoroughly as you'd like.

Flag



**christoff9**

Oct 27, 2014

@FrankGrimes23

"Students can, however, register the course as an independent study to receive academic credit if approved by their advisors and departments."

Are you sure YOU read the article?

Flag

**joe4point1**

Oct 27, 2014



**@christoff9 @FrankGrimes23** He doesn't understand how academic credits work.

Flag



**dagipper**

Oct 27, 2014

No homework, no cost. I'm guessing the men's basketball team and football team will be enrolled in this class for credit. Won't be any harder than any other SU class.

Flag



**Bonducca**

Oct 27, 2014

**@dagipper** I promise you that SU and every other college worth its salt an tuition \$\$\$ teaches difficult courses where one must do the work. That was just a dumb thing to say.

Flag



**Rodent**

Oct 27, 2014

**@Bonducca @dagipper** i guess you weren't an SU student. The Ball players only showed up on Exam days.

Flag



**Geoff Herbert | gherbert@syracuse.com**

Oct 27, 2014

**@dagipper** No credit is currently offered for the course, except as an independent study -- and that requires approval of both the department and a faculty advisor.

Flag



**BetterOswegoMan**

Oct 27, 2014

**@Geoff Herbert | gherbert@syracuse.com @dagipper** Thank you for being aware of the UNC case and researching this story thoroughly enough to have a response ready for such questions. Excellent work there.

Flag



**whatismyemail**

Oct 27, 2014

**@BetterOswegoMan @Geoff Herbert | gherbert@syracuse.com @dagipper**

"I do hope to make this an official course for SU credit in the future," Rotolo tells syracuse.com.

FYI

Flag



**Bonducca**

Oct 27, 2014

In what SU department does this fellow teach? And is this a 3-credit course (please, no) or no credit unless given a dispensation by one's advisor?(Please, say no.) I'm mildly curious to know what the title of his dissertation was, and which institution conferred it. If one wants social commentary, etc in Britain, one can always read (READ!!!) Dickens, Orwell, Austen, etc. Some of the courses in universities now fall into the "I want a class where I do no work and still get a degree and a good job" category.

Flag



**Geoff Herbert | gherbert@syracuse.com**

Oct 27, 2014

**@Bonducca** Rotolo is a teacher in the Newhouse school. And no, this course currently does not count for credit -- except as independent study. (See above in the article.)

Flag



**FrankGrimes23**

Oct 27, 2014

**@Bonducca**

Yup because Dickens (died 1870), Orwell (died 1950), and Austen (died 1817) are going to be good for studying historical and cultural impacts from the last 50 years.

Moreover, I guess you believe people can only study one thing at a time?

Lastly, its not an offered course unless you pursue it under independent study. It clearly states in the article that its a not for credit course. Please try reading (READING!!!) next time.

Flag



**whatismyemail**

Oct 27, 2014

**@FrankGrimes23** "I do hope to make this an official course for SU credit in the future," Rotolo tells syracuse.com.

I'll bet perspective employers are chomping at the bit to hire students taking this course!!! LMAO!!!

Flag

**Geoff Herbert | gherbert@syracuse.com**

Oct 27, 2014

 **@whatismyemail @FrankGrimes23** I've never had any employer ask me about specific courses I took in college.

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 **yensid** awesome!

Oct 27, 2014

[Flag](#)

 **Dan in Cicero** Because the "Batman" classes were already full.

Oct 27, 2014

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 **Fiddler66** Oh, kaaay.

Oct 27, 2014

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 **Bonducca** @Fiddler66 I looked up the 'course' website. Il Professore teaches in Gnuhouse. Quelle surprise.

Oct 27, 2014

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 **FrankGrimes23** @Bonducca @Fiddler66

Oct 27, 2014

Yeah, that darn Newhouse and its very well recognized communications degree.

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