

Reading *The Satanic Verses* with Randy Boyagoda

Rosenbach Museum and Library, 2023

Instructor: Randy Boyagoda (randy.boyagoda@utoronto.ca)

Meetings: Tuesdays, 7:30-9:00 PM, (March 14, April 4, April 25, May 16, June 6)

Format: Zoom (link to be provided)

Description: Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is the best known least read novel of our time. Dating from its 1988 publication and punctuated by the declaration of a *fatwa* against the author in 1989, the novel has long been the object of geopolitical controversy, religious strife, freedom of expression defenses, and acts of violence committed against people around the world, including, most recently, the author himself. Throughout this time, the meanings and textures of the novel itself have long been diminished by its fraught public reputation. This is unfortunate. In its ideas, themes, characters, plot and structure, *The Satanic Verses* poses a profoundly important question: How does newness come into the world? In multiple settings, moods, and storytelling modes, the novel explores answers to this question, focused, particularly on acts of personal migration and the creation of a new world religion. In this seminar, novelist and professor Randy Boyagoda will guide participants through a sequenced reading of the novel.

Primary Text: Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* ([Random House, 2008 edition](#)).

Background Readings:

Boyagoda, Randy. "[To Support Salman Rushdie, Just Read Him](#)." *The Atlantic* (August 2022).
Rushdie, Salman. "[The Disappeared](#)." *The New Yorker* (September 2012).

Schedule of Readings:

March 14: Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, Parts I & II (pp. 1-129).

April 4: Rushdie, *Verses*, Parts III & IV (pp. 130-248).

April 25: Rushdie, *Verses*, Part V (pp. 249-367).

May 16: Rushdie, *Verses*, Parts VI & VII (pp. 368-484).

June 6: Rushdie, *Verses* (complete)

Instructor biography: Writer, critic and scholar [Randy Boyagoda](#) is Professor of English at the University of Toronto. He is the author of six books, including, most recently, the novels *Original Prin* (2018) and *Dante's Indiana* (2021). He regularly contributes essays and reviews to publications including the *New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and the *Financial Times* (UK).