

# **Astrobiology, UFOs, ETI, and Theology**

8 Weeks, 8 Sessions, **June 24 – August 17, 2025**

Tuesdays, 5:00 – 8:00 pm EDT / 2:00 – 5:00 pm PDT

## **Instructor**

Professor Ted Peters, GTU / CTNS, [tedfpeters@gmail.com](mailto:tedfpeters@gmail.com)

## **Course Description**

This online overview course will follow the history of the interaction between science, culture, and religion during the modern UFO period from 1947 to date. Because the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) is the most widely accepted putative explanation, the UAP question will be connected to the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI) among astrobiologists at NASA and SETI.

Special attention will be given to the divergence and convergence between established science, on the one hand, and broad cultural fascination with the prospect of ETI, on the other. We will attempt to connect the dots between anomalous aerospace sightings along with contactee claims, abduction claims, ancient aliens, UFO cults, disclosure, the paranormal, and the interdimensional hypothesis (ID).

Scientific methods of research will be combined with extra-scientific disciplines as found in the humanities and phenomenology of religion. Attention will also be given to UAP Studies as an academic discipline, coordinating the sciences, the humanities, and theology.

**Ted Peters** is Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus of Theology and Ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and currently serving on the doctoral faculty at the Graduate Theological Union. He co-edits the journal, *Theology and Science*, on behalf of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences. Throughout his academic career he has invested scholarly interest in the astronomer's question about extraterrestrial life as well as the enigma of UFO sightings and their cultural importance.



Professor Peters formerly served as Louisiana State Director of investigations for the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON). He is author of *UFOs—God's Chariots? Spirituality, Ancient Aliens, and Religious Yearning s in the Age of Extraterrestrials* (New Page 2014).

## **Topics**

June 24, Session 1: Are we alone in the universe?

July 1, Session 2: Are we being visited?

July 8, Session 3: Ufology, Science, and the Humanities

July 15, Session 4: The Ancient Alien Hypothesis and Religious Sensibilities

July 22, Session 5: Abduction and The Ariel School Incident of 1994

July 29, No Class Meeting

August 5, Session 6: The Celestial Savior Model

August 12, Session 7: Disclosure

August 19, Session 8: Student led topics

## **Class Meeting Content**

Each online class meeting will open with a presentation or two offered by Ted Peters or by guest faculty or both. This will be followed by an

open discussion of the selected readings. Finally, the class meeting will open up to a wider discussion on matters the students bring.

## Pre-Class Meeting Preparation

This syllabus will select readings and viewings to prepare for each class meeting as well as recommend additional reading or viewing material. Student preparation before each class meeting will enrich the group discussion.

## Selected Readings for Advanced Purchase

- Abd [\*Abduction\*](#). John Mack. New York: Ballentine, 1994.
- AsTh [\*Astrotheology: Science and Theology Meet Extraterrestrial Life\*](#). Eds., Ted Peters Martinez Hewlett, Joshua Moritz, and Robert John Russell. Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2018. Paperback ISBN 978-1-5326-0639-7. \$57.
- BD [\*Beyond Darwinism\*](#). JJ Hurtak. Los Gatos CA: Academy for Future Science, 1977 (free).
- Char [\*Chariots of the Gods? Eric von Däniken\*](#). NY: Putnum (Original) 1968.
- Imm [\*Imminent: Inside the Pentagon's Hunt for UFOs\*](#). Luis Elizondo. NY: William Morrow, 2024.
- Pow [\*UFOs: A Scientist Explains What we Know \(and Don't Know\)\*](#), 2024. Robert Powell. Roman and Littlefield. ISBN978-1-5381-7538-9 or -6.
- UFO [\*UFOs—God's Chariots? Spirituality, Ancient Aliens, and Religious Yearnings in the Age of Extraterrestrials\*](#). Ted Peters. Pompton Plains NJ: New Page / Career Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1-60163-318-7; eBook ISBN 978-1-60613-468-9.

## Recommended Readings

- AsBio [\*Astrobiology: Science, Ethics, and Public Policy\*](#). Eds., Octavio Chon Torres, Ted Peters, Joseph Seckbach, Richard Gordon. Hoboken NJ: Wiley, 2021. ISBN 978-1-119-71116-2.
- Clark [\*The UFO Encyclopedia\*](#), 2 Volumes. Ed., Jerome Clark (2024).
- Cond [\*Final Report of the Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects...\*](#) Edward U. Condon. 1968. <https://www.explorescu.org/post/the-condon-report>
- Denz [\*The Lure of the Edge: Scientific Passions, Religious Beliefs, and the Pursuit of UFOs\*](#). Brenda Denzler. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- EE [\*Extraterrestrial Ethics\*](#). Jensine Andresen. Jensine Andresen, 2024. ISBN: 9798323382231.
- Hynek [\*The UFO Experience\*](#). J. Allen Hynek. MUFON 1972, 2023.
- Jung [\*Flying Saucers: Myth of Things Seen in the Sky\*](#). Carl Gustav Jung. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959, 1979.
- MC [\*Making Contact\*](#). Ed. Alan Steinfeld. New York: Macmillan, 2021. ISBN 9781250773951.
- MER [\*Myth of the Eternal Return 1971\*](#). Mircea Eliade, Princeton University Press.
- SP [\*The Sacred and the Profane\*](#). Mircea Eliade. Tr. Willard Trask. New York: Harcourt, Brace, And World, 1957. LCC 58-10904. ([Free eBook](#))

# Calendar

June 24 – August 12, 2025

## June 24. Session 1

### Are we alone in the universe?

**Introduction to the Course & Introduction of students, TP**

#### **Astronomy, Astrobiology, and the Search for Off-Earth Life, TP**

The scientific search for extraterrestrial life right along with the UFO phenomenon has prompted the widely asked question: are we on Earth alone in the universe? The following claim is frequently made: if we confirm the existence of an intelligent civilization living on another planet, then traditional terrestrial religions will face a crisis and collapse. We will test that hypothesis with the data gained from the [\*Peters ETI Religious Crisis Survey\*](#).

We will then compare and contrast the search for ETI among astrobiologists and ufologists. Despite the unwillingness of astrobiologists to admit ufologists to their laboratories, we will show how both groups see themselves as scientific.

#### **Guest Faculty: Jennifer Wiseman, NASA Astronomer (Tentative)**

Astronomers and astrobiologists are looking for two types of extraterrestrial life: microbial life within the solar system and intelligent life on exoplanets outside the solar system yet still within the Milky Way. The astrotheological significance of microbial life would be this: there is a second

genesis. The astrotheological significance of intelligent life would be this:  
Yeow!

## 1 Selected Reading & Viewing:

AsTh 6 Margaret Race, "Exobiology, Astrobiology, and the Big Picture"

AsTh 7 Jennifer Wiseman, "Exoplanets..."

AsTh 1 Ted Peters, "Introducing Astrotheology"

View Michael Cherniak, "UFOs: The Secret History"

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#search/jensine/FMfcgzQZSZGfKfwWRgZqtsqCRZCcmFlg?compose=CllgCJNrcmlKFMsdGwhVTCfZhNzwXfhFcwGzXCXhVDNFjkBHfvmsVsGmzQZGGGXtlNnsqDmntL&projector=1&messagePartId=0.3>

Ted Peters, "[A UFO for Christmas](#)" blog post

## 1 Recommended Reading & Viewing:

AsBio 7 Chris Impey, "Astrobiology Education"

View Nouri Sardar, "What does Islam say about Aliens?"

<https://themuslimvibe.com/faith-islam/what-does-islam-say-about-aliens-a-look-at-quranic-verses-and-hadith>

View Ted Peters, "[Are UFOs God's Chariots?](#)"

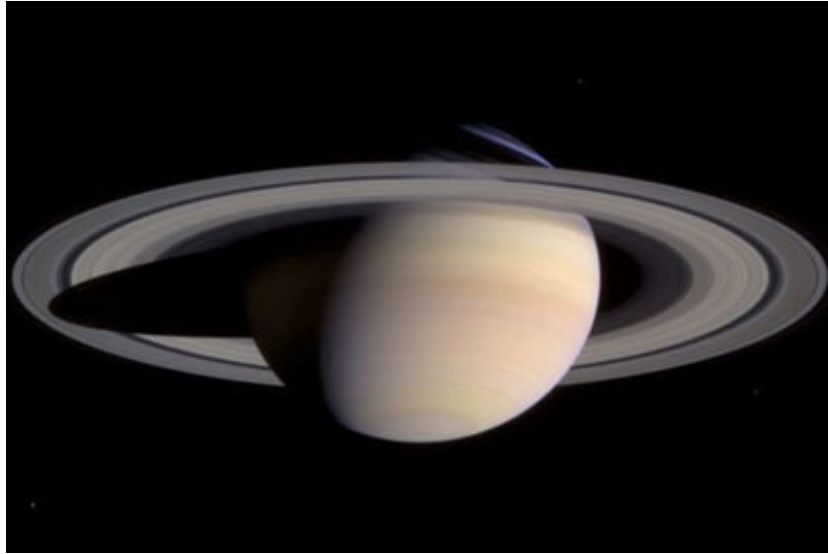
View Jennifer Wiseman, "[Are We Alone in the Universe?](#)"

AsTh 3 José Funes, "Roadmap to Other Earths"

AsTH 4 Robert John Russell, "Discovering ETI..."

Survey [Peters ETI Religious Crisis Survey](#), basic data

Royal "[Implications of the Discovery of ETL for Religion](#)" Peters ETI Religious Crisis Survey summary, Royal Society



## **July 1. Session 2**

### **Are we being visited?**

**Guest Faculty: James Fox, filmmaker (Tentative)**

#### **Has extraterrestrial intelligence visited Earth in UFOs/UAPs?**

Dr. Peters will provide a very brief history of the UFO/UAP phenomenon from 1947 to date. This will include the so-called Roswell crash of 1947, “The Day the Earth Stood Still” film 1951, flying saucer contactees of the 1950s, the Betty and Barney Hill abduction of 1961, the Condon Report of 1969, “Close Encounters of the Third Kind” film 1977, disclosure projects, and recent U.S. government involvement. This history will provide a framework within which to order the enduring controversies.

#### **2 Selected Reading & Viewing:**

AsTh 8 Heidi Manning, “Drake Equation”

UFOs Preface, 1,2,3 Political Model

View Film, “The Day the Earth Stood Still” ([1951, not the remake](#))

Study [Klaatu’s speech](#)

View James Fox, “UFOs: 50 Years of Denial” <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2229150/>

## 2 Recommended Reading & Viewing:

EE     Andresen, Preface, Chapters 1,2,3

Clark   Keyhoe; McMinnville Photos;

View    Netflix. “Top Secret UFO Projects Declassified: The White House Cover Up”

[https://www.netflix.com/watch/81066338?trackId=255824129&tctx=0%2C0%2C03943fae-8f2e-457f-b42b-736c28b5bad3-81287415%2C03943fae-8f2e-457f-b42b-736c28b5bad3-81287415%7C2%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%2CVideo%3A81018709%2CdetailsPagePlayButton](https://www.netflix.com/watch/81066338?trackId=255824129&tctx=0%2C0%2C03943fae-8f2e-457f-b42b-736c28b5bad3-81287415%2C03943fae-8f2e-457f-b42b-736c28b5bad3-81287415%7C2%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%2CVideo%3A81018709%2CdetailsPagePlayButton)

View    Netflix. “Top Secret UFO Projects Declassified: Project Blue Book Unknown”

<https://www.netflix.com/watch/81066337?trackId=255824129&tctx=0%2C0%2C03943fae-8f2e-457f-b42b-736c28b5bad3-81287415%2C03943fae-8f2e-457f-b42b-736c28b5bad3-81287415%7C2%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%2CVideo%3A81018709%2CdetailsPagePlayButton>

AsBio   4 Jacques Arnould, “Who goes there?”

AsBio   10 Jensine Andresen, “Two Elephants in the Room of Astrobiology”

View    [“Star Trek Universe—Cosmic Thoughts”](#)



## July 8. Session 3

### Ufology, Science, and the Humanities

**Guest Faculty: Robert Powell, scientist (Tentative)**

**Guest Faculty: Michael Cifone, SUAPS (Tentative)**

**What should the discipline of Ufology look like?**

Since 2017, credentialed scientists have gathered together to investigate UAP with sober empirical methods. To be sure, during previous decades, organizations such as MUFON have included a scientific component. What is new is the formation of fresh organizations such as [Harvard's Galileo Project](#), the [Scientific Coalition for UAP Studies](#), the [Sol Foundation](#), and the [Society for UAP Studies](#). Just where do the parameters of scientific research fit within the larger study of the UFO phenomenon? How should we define the discipline of ufology? Should ufology add the humanities to the science?

### 3 Selected Reading & Viewing

Pow Robert Powell, *UFOs* (Introduction and chapters of your choice)  
Kevin Knuth, "Are We Alone? The Question Is Worthy of Serious Scientific Study." *The Conversation* (June 28, 2018).  
<https://theconversation.com/are-we-alone-the-question-is-worthy-of-serious-scientific-study-98843>.  
UFOs Chapters 4,5. The Scientific Model  
View Jacques Vallée, "[The UFO Phenomenon: A Genuine Scientific Problem](#)"  
Review the mission of the Society for UAP Studies. <https://www.societyforuapstudies.org/>  
Michael C. Cifone, editorial. <https://limina.scholasticahq.com/article/92781-editorial>  
Mick West, "UFOs over Kyiv," *Skeptical Inquirer* 47:1 (2023) 28-30.  
Ted Peters, "[Are UFOs Real? A Sea Change](#)" (post)

### 3 Recommended Reading & Viewing

Hynek *The UFO Experience*. J. Allen Hynek. MUFON 1972, 2023.  
Condon *Final Report of the Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects...* Edward U. Condon. 1968.  
<https://www.explorescu.org/post/the-condon-report>  
Clark Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Science; Society for UAP Studies; University of Colorado  
Clark Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Ufology  
Clark Powell, Robert  
EE *Extraterrestrial Ethics*. Preface, 1,2,3  
Kevin H. Knuth, Robert M. Powell, and Peter A. Reali, "Estimating Flight Characteristics of Anomalous Unidentified Aerial Vehicles," *Entropy* 21:10 (2019) 939. <https://doi.org/10.3390/e21100939> /  
<https://www.explorescu.org/post/scu-review-5-3>  
Ted Peters, "[UFOs and Atomic Weaponry](#)" (post)





## **July 15. Session 4**

### **The Ancient Alien Hypothesis & Religious Sensibilities**

Guest Faculty, James J. Hurtak and Desiree Hurtak, [Academy for Future Science](#)

#### **The Ancient Alien Hypothesis & Religious Sensibilities**

Since the staggering popularity of Erich von Däniken's books and films exploded a half century ago, ancient astronaut theorists have rewritten the history of our archaic ancestors. Instead of appealing to a religious mindset to explain early petroglyphs and architecture, the [History Channel's Ancient Alien](#) scholars posit that advanced science and technology better account for advances in civilization. These advances in science and technology, allegedly, were a gift to terrestrials from extraterrestrials.

What is needed here is a comparison of the ancient astronaut theory with more traditional theories espoused by History of Religions scholars such as [Mircea Eliade](#). What we will then see is that ancient astronaut theory tells us

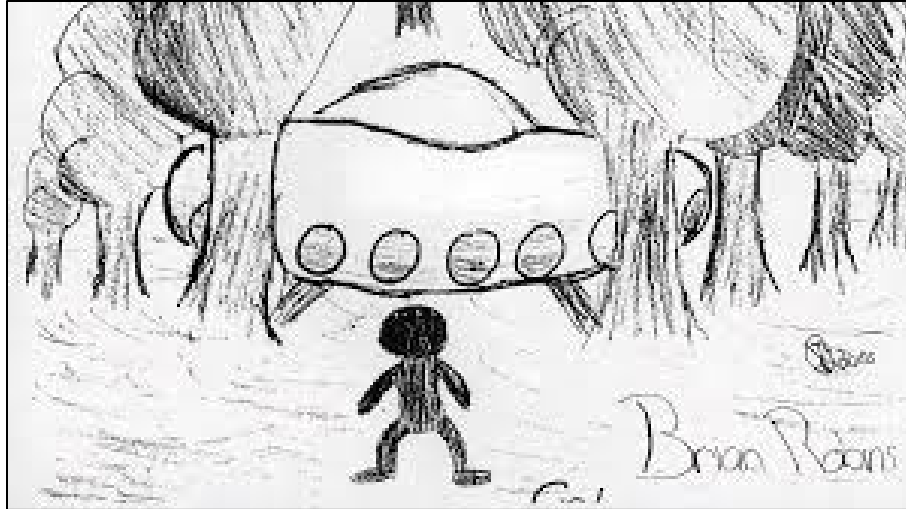
very little about our ancestors but a great deal about ourselves. Our modern culture largely defines itself in terms of science and technology; and it even tends covertly to place faith in progress to bring salvation. In short, our inherited religious sensibilities have been co-opted by faith in science and technology.

#### **4 Selected Reading & Viewing:**

Char Eric von Däniken, *Chariots of the Gods?*  
BD Hurtak, [Beyond Darwinism](#)  
UFOs 6,7 Ancient Astronaut Theology  
Ted Peters, "[Ancient Alien Alternative History](#)" (post)

#### **4 Recommended Reading & Viewing:**

SP Eliade, *Sacred and Profane* (entire book)  
AA Ancient Aliens, [the von Däniken Legacy](#)  
View [JJ Hurtak and Desiree Hurtak on Great Pyramid](#)  
Clark Ancient Astronauts in UFO Literature  
AsTh 4 Ted Peters, "Tasks of Astrotheology"  
AsTh 5 Hewlett, "The Copernican Revolution that Never Was"  
Ted Peters, "[UAP: The Interdimensional Hypothesis](#)" (post)



## **July 22. Session 5**

### **Abduction and The Ariel School Incident 1994**

**Guest Faculty: Interview with Jerome Clark or Salma Siddick (Tentative)**

#### **CE3s, Contactees, Abductees, and Religious Sensibilities, TP**

This brief presentation will distinguish between Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Contactees, and Abductees. Each of these include encounters with extraterrestrial intelligence, yet they play slightly different roles in the history of ufology. At this juncture we will give focused attention on the abduction phenomenon as recorded by John Mack.

#### **5 Selected Reading & Viewing**

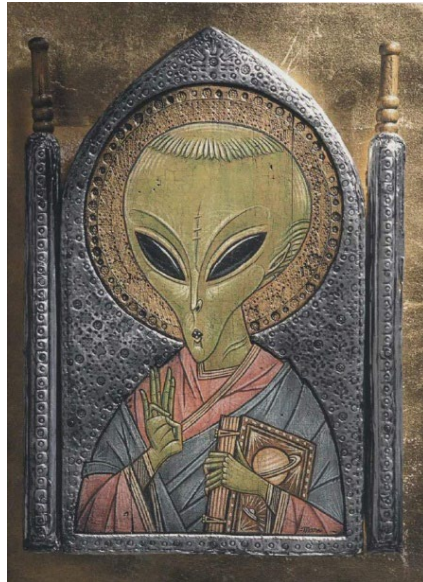
- Abd     John Mack, *Abduction* (entire book or your selected portions)
- R.       [Wikipedia: Ariel School UFO Incident](#)
- V.       ["The Ariel School Encounter" 1994](#)
- V.       [John Mack on UFO Encounter at Ariel School 1994](#)

## 5 Recommended Reading & Viewing

- Hynek *UFO Experience*
- MC 5 John Mack, *Studying Intrusions*
- Clark Abduction Phenomenon; Hill Abduction Case; Pascagoula; Schirmer; Vallee
- V. Encounters S1.E2. Believers (Netflix)
- V. [Encounters: Ariel school UFO Incident denier Dallyn Vico 2008](#)
- V. [Children talk about witnessing the 1994 UFO Landing](#)
- V. Randall Nickelson film on Ariel School Incident 1994 (buy?)  
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt20216382/>
- V. [The Man Who Attracts UFOs - Chris Bledsoe - Full Documentary](#)

Eticon

## July 29. No Class Meeting



Eticon

## August 5. Session 6 The Celestial Savior Model

### The Celestial Savior Model and the ETI Myth

By exacting a hermeneutic of secular experience in which we identify the religious dimensions hidden within the modern disenchanting worldview, we

discover an incipient cultural trust in science and technology. Many among us even trust in science and technology to bring utopia, to bring the equivalent of salvation. However, when science fails us and technology is used to make warfare more deadly, the human spirit looks to the skies in hope of heavenly technology. A great deal of the UFO phenomenon – the messages delivered by contactees and even some abductees – promise redemption coming from a more evolutionarily and scientifically advanced extraterrestrial civilization. Today’s flying saucers replace yesterday’s angels.

We call this *The ETI Myth*. Curiously, we can find this myth at work within the heart of sciences such as astrobiology as well as within the assumptions made by ufology.

## **6 Selected Reading & Viewing**

UFOs 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 Celestial Savior Model

## **6 Recommended Reading & Viewing**

Jung Carl Jung book

Clark Angelucci; Bethurum; Contactees; Heavens Gate; Jung; Unarius;

AsTh 12 Norbert Samuelson, “Jewish Theology Meets the Alien”

AsTh 13 Muzaffar Iqbal, “Islamic Theology Meets ETI”

AsTh 16 Robert John Russell, “Many Incarnations or One?”

AsTh 14 Steven J. Dick, “Toward a Constructive Naturalistic Cosmology”

View Ted Peters, [Presentation to SETI on Myth within Astrobiology](#)

Ted Peters, [“UFOs and Aliens at the Vatican”](#) (post)



## August 12. Session 7

### Disclosure

**Guest Faculty: Daniel Sheehan or Nick Pope or Jensine Andresen  
(Tentative)**

#### Disclosure

Since 2017, the pressure on the US government and other governments has grown to release hitherto secret information regarding UAP. What is going on? What role does the disclosure movement play in the larger phenomenon?

#### 7 Selected Reading & Viewing

Imm Elizondo book (your selections or entire book)

Mick West, "NASA Studies UFOs?" *Skeptical Inquirer* 47:5 (2023) 18-20 (click)

View "The UFO Lie"

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#search/jensine/QgrcJHrjBRKxdktfQbZshMRgNhWQCqJDWVQ?compose=CllgCJNrcmIKFMsdGwhVTCfZhNzwXfhFcwGzXCXhVDNFjkBHfbvmsVsGmzQZGGGXtlNnsqDmntL&projector=1>

TTSA. 2019. 2004 USS Nimitz FLIR1? video. Available online: <https://thevault.tothestarsacademy.com/2004-nimitz-flir1-video>

New York Post. 2022. "The UFO Lie: Shocking truth of Pentagon AAWSAP program. | The Basement Office."

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XD4gQS\\_-qY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XD4gQS_-qY)

———. 2023. "Congress UFO Hearing – It's even crazier than you think." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0qi5GOROUQ>  
(Part 1)

———. 2023. "UFO Hearing Insanity." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKtl91TdRiQ> (Part 2)

- . 2024. “Pentagon UFO Hunter Reveals What He Knows About Aliens.”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4IWb1XBvVo> (Part 1)
- . 2024. “Pentagon UFO Hunter Says Alien ‘Religion’ Has Infiltrated US Government.”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0qi5GOROUQ> (Part 2)
- Ted Peters, “[Against UAP Disclosure](#)” (post)

## 7 Recommended Reading & Viewing

- Clark     Tic Tac Radar; UFO/UAP Tipping Point;
- MC        1 Nick Pope, “Government Mindset...”
- MC        2 Grant Cameron, “UFO Disclosure...”
- EE        Andresen, 4 “The US Government Weighs In”
- Mick West, “Psychics and Demons at the Pentagon,” *Skeptical Inquirer* 48:6 (2024) 28-31 (click)
- Brewer, Jack. 2024. “First Review: Inside the U.S. Government Covert UFO Program: Initial Revelations.” *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 38, no. 4: 707-710. (click)
- Hanks, Micah. 2024. “Second Review: Inside the U.S. Government Covert UFO Program: Initial Revelations.” *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 38, no. 4: 711-13. (click)
- Greg Eghigian, “Making UFOs make sense: Ufology, science, and the history of their mutual mistrust,” *Public Understanding of Science* (2015) 1-15. <https://www.explorescu.org/post/making-ufos-make-sense-ufology-science-and-the-history-of-their-mutual-mistrust>
- Ted Peters, “[Demons and UAP in the Pentagon](#)” (post)
- Danny Ammon, “Development, Dissemination, and Revision of Good Scientific Practice for Research On UAP,” *Limina* 1:1 (2024) 31-39.  
<https://limina.scholasticahq.com/article/92683-development-dissemination-and-revision-of-good-scientific-practice-for-research-on-uap>  
<https://www.explorescu.org/post/scu-review-5-3>
- View     Encounters S1.E3 Broad Haven Triangle (Netflix)
- View     “UFO Hearing Insanity...”  
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#search/jensine/QgrcJHrjBRKxdktfQbZshMRgNhWQCqJDWVQ?compose=CllgCJNrcmlKFMsdGwhVTCfZhNzwXfhFcwGzXCXhVDNFjkBHfbvmsVsGmzQZGGGXtlNnsqDmntL&projector=1>
- View     “Pentagon UFO Hunter....Alien Religion”  
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#search/jensine/QgrcJHrjBRKxdktfQbZshMRgNhWQCqJDWVQ?compose=CllgCJNrcmlKFMsdGwhVTCfZhNzwXfhFcwGzXCXhVDNFjkBHfbvmsVsGmzQZGGGXtlNnsqDmntL&projector=1>



## **August 19. Session 8**

### **Astrobiology, UFOs, ETL, and Theology**

This session will be jointly planned by both students and faculty to engage matters poised by enrolled students. Agenda yet to be determined. *Klaatu beratta nikto.*