Dear Professor Belli

Throughout this Sci-fi course, the over-arching themes of religion in the texts we have read have caught my interest. I personally am anti-religious and instantly fell in love with the Machine Stops for its harsh critique on religion. That said, I was also fascinated by the many way religion could be interpreted. Although I choose to believe that most of the texts we have read harshly attack religion, I can also see how someone could have a positive interpretation of the texts depending on their viewpoint.

Metropolis also fascinated me with its obvious religious propaganda, yet somehow most people either could not or did not want to realize the religious aspects of the texts. This made me question whether the religious aspects are truly there or maybe I'm simply grasping at straws due to my background. It is this that made me realize how interesting the use of religion is. Unlike a movie like Wall-e where people come to the same conclusion about its message, the presence of religion opens a Pandora’s box of interpretations.

I, however, did not immediately come to this conclusion. At first, all I knew was that I wanted to write a paper discussing the use of religion in sci-fi texts. I was originally leaning towards exploring the use of religion as a form of propaganda with Metropolis and The Machine Stops being the headline. I was having a hard time finding texts that had messages as strong as those two films. It is here where I became stuck. I had no Idea what to write about despite being really interested in the subject.

As I continued to do research I came across the Sub-genre Christian Sci-fi. I found it astounding that the religion had spawned a sub-genre of sci-fi. I fell in love with the idea of exploring the sub-genre for my paper, but alas there seems to be a lack of information on the history of it; therefore, I settled for just mentioning it briefly in my final product.

I continued to think about what to write, I deconstructed my propaganda idea into a basic science vs. religion theme. It was here I realized how society deems religion to be limiting to the advancement of the sciences, so wouldn't it also limit Sci-fi texts? No, religion has only opened greater discussion of sci-fi texts that include it, from here on out everything began to flow naturally. Evangelion and Superman instantly came into my mind when I thought about how small religious references cause people to come to religious conclusion of a texts meaning. Evangelion especially considering that I am familiar with the story behind it; even its creator openly claims that the show is meaningless and he wrote it as parody of typical animes. Yet, the presence of the religious symbols has opened up constant debate over their meaning despite the fact that creator has said there is no meaning.

Research for this topic, however was difficult. I had come across articles and videos in the past that discussed the use of religion in the texts I used; however, when I went looking for these sources it was hard to come across them again just by Google searching “Religion in...” I also wanted to expand on my Superman portion of the essay but again it was became rather difficult to come across the sources that I needed; both Angry Joe and The Nostalgia Critic have a vast library of content. I recall Doug Walker saying that he comes from a Roman Catholic background in one of his videos, but finding a random comment made in one of his reviews to verify that information would be near impossible. I am also unaware if he has ever mentioned whether or not he actually follows the catholic religion. And as for Joe, I was able to confirm that he indeed is an atheist that comes from a religious back ground; however, not being sure on Doug's background, I could not compare how their personal religious views affected the way they interpreted Man of steel.

I only wish we had been given more time to work on this assignment. Having more time would have allowed me to refine the idea of my paper and properly gather the information that I required to better express my argument; therefore, I am displeased with this essay as a whole. As I was writing it I did feel that it was begging to look too much like a close reading rather than a research paper, and after speaking with you my fear was realized. It was here that I was completely stumped: I could scrap what was now my third attempt at a paper, or I could live with the F that this paper obviously deserves.

I got back home and tried to wrap my brain around how I could write a paper that satisfied expectations. I went back to my original idea of just writing about the different ways sci-fi is used in texts, such as propaganda, social commentary, cautionary tales, hell even as a flavor enhancer (Evangelion); however, unless I could find quotes from the content creators to confirm the way the texts are used, I would simply come back to something similar to this paper: a collection of interpretations.

Literature is not like science: there are no facts, I’m sure many of you are familiar with the “There are no wrong answers” line, so then how can there be right answers? Researching the effects of cancer on the body would result in facts, facts that have been agreed upon. Researching literature results in interpretations.

This has also made me wonder about the way research papers are seen. Can one even truly write a research paper on such a topic? As I read through the books I found on the school database, about religion and sci-fi, I realized all of them consist solely of interpretations. In fact, one of the pieces I read, featured in an academic journal, was of a professors interpretations of a text followed by the interpretation of one of his students. In reading this I hoped that researching how different people had different interpretations of these texts was a valid paper.

You went on to suggest using a book by James M. Mcgarth as a source. But when reading it you find that it is page after page of interpretations of different texts. Take for example a chapter on Frankenstein. Mcgarth simply interprets the text as science playing God, but there is no mention of whether or not that was the author’s purpose, so isn’t that just an interpretation based on how he views religion? After all to some Frankenstein is just a horror story that pretentious people find deeper meaning in. In situations like these I admire the writing of Matt Stone and Trey Parker. They directly comment on and make fun of such people in one of their episodes of South Park entitled The Tale of Scrotie Mcboogerballs.

Should things always be left to interpretation? No, it’s problematic and creates loopholes. It seems that adding intellectual wording to something is what truly defines something as a fact rather than interpretation. Scholars will find that interpretations are only valid based on the academic background of a person. If content creators do not clearly state the purpose of a text, then in reality there is no purpose, no message. It is for this reason that I chose to only make some slight changes to my current catastrophe of a paper and come to terms with failing.