description:

Images of journeys, quests, and pathways have often served as images that many cultures have found apt for depicting humanity's spiritual and religious aspirations. Prior to the emergence of the cultures of modernity in the West, the fulfillment of these aspirations was understood in terms of living and having a proper relationship to a divine realm that transcended the human. In terms of the three traditions of Abrahamic religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, this spiritual human quest had both its source and it fulfillment in God.

In many influential realms of contemporary culture, the character of these human aspirations and the possibility of their fulfillment have come into question. They may be seen as illusions (Freud), as masks of “a will to power,” (Nietzsche), or as by-products of natural processes (reductive materialism), with a corresponding skepticism or outright denial of their fulfillment in a human relationship to God.

In the context of this contemporary cultural reality, which the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor calls "a secular age," this course will thus explore key questions about these aspirations

• What are they?
• What are their sources?
• What do they tell us about our humanity?
• What do they tell us about the possibility of their fulfillment in terms of a human relationship to the divine
• In short, do these aspirations place us paths that lead to nowhere? Or do they set us on paths that lead to God?