

RELIGION & CONTEMPORARY FILM RLG 233S

Description	Goals	Requirements	Evaluation
Textbooks	Suggested Readings	Weekly Readings	Weekly Assignments

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Course Room 158, Lash Miller
Location:
Course Hours: Wednesdays 6:00 to 9:00 P.M.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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This course is as much about the use of film to study religion as it is about the use of religion to study film. In other words, we will use different genres of films to facilitate discussion about various dimensions of and issues in religion. And conversely, we will use images, metaphors, and teachings found in religion to discuss the layers and elements visually and audibly portrayed on screen. Through the three critical approaches of theology, mythology, and ideology this course will examine how religion, as variously defined, pervades the modern cinema and how one may engage in dialogue with this phenomenon.

WARNING

Some of the films viewed in this course contain scenes of explicit violence, sexual brutality, and offensive language. It is not our intent to de-sensitize students, but rather to enable them to discuss the relevant issues that these films introduce.

COURSE GOALS

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1. To think, discuss, and write critically about film from a religious studies perspective.
2. To broaden understanding of the term "religious" and then to realize its significant role in film plot, narrative, and imagery.
3. To foster insight into other perspectives through a careful examination of one's own thinking.

COURSE EVALUATION

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- 1. Class participation** including Attendance; Weekly Class Assignments **20%**
 - an emphasis on an open-forum discussion of the assigned films
 - one-page weekly assignments responding to specific questions asked by the instructor and based on personal observations and insights about each film - these may be submitted either in writing, by [e-mail](#), or via the internet page.
- 2. First Paper** - 1000 words/4-5 pages; worth **20%** and due on **February 10, 1999**
 - papers reflecting U of T standards are expected and graded accordingly
- 3. Second Paper** - 2000 words/8-10 pages; worth **40%** and due on **March 24, 1999**
 - papers reflecting U of T standards are expected and graded accordingly
- 4. Final In-Class Test** based on the readings and lectures worth **20%** and due on **April 7, 1998**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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1. CLASS ATTENDANCE

- Weekly class attendance for the tutorials and lectures is required. Whether you decide to stay for the screening or view the film on your own time, you are responsible for the content of each film in the course.

2. WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

- Weekly assignments are distributed during tutorials and then collected the following week at the start of the class. They may also be accessed through the web-site. These are simple, one-page inquiries concerning your impressions or interpretations of the film as directed by a question from the instructors. They should not take more than 15-45 minutes to write. Considering that class-time is limited, the number of students are many, and **20% of your grade** is based on participation, we use the weekly assignments to give every student the opportunity to voice their opinions. The assignments will be assessed essentially on how much thought we think you put into them. If you like you may e-mail your responses to us BEFORE each Wednesday class.
- These assignments are not meant to substitute for in-class discussion but rather to facilitate them. The expectation is that you will verbalize some of your well-thought out ideas before your peers and as a result promote a more engaging debate.
- **LATE ASSIGNMENTS will NOT be accepted.** The point is to have what are uniquely your thoughts on record BEFORE the discussion. There are no excuses accepted, medical or otherwise.
- Please make personal copies of the work you submit because it **will not** be returned.

3. WEEKLY READINGS

- Each week's readings concern the film viewed that evening and therefore are part of the following week's discussion.

4. GRADED TERM WORK

- A First Paper - 5 pages (25%) Topic & Due Date: February 10, 1999.
 1. This will be a critical analysis of a film using one of the three methodologies presented in *Screening the Sacred*.
 2. Papers reflecting U of T standards are expected and graded accordingly. If you are unclear about these standards, please see the "Grading Regulations" section of the *Arts & Science Undergraduate Calendar* (p. 498 in the 1998-99 edition).
- A Second Paper - 10 pages (35%) Topic & Due: March 24, 1999.
 1. This will be a comparative analysis of two films.
 2. Papers reflecting U of T standards are expected and graded accordingly.
- Late papers are accepted but with a **deduction of 1% per day** - NO exceptions.
 1. No penalty will apply if you present a valid U of T Student Medical Certificate and/or an explanatory

letter from your college registrar.

2. And once again, late weekly assignments will simply NOT be accepted, no exceptions.)

- Weekly assignments are simply NOT accepted late

5. FINAL IN-CLASS TEST

- The test, worth 20% and held on Wednesday, April 7, is based on the lectures, films, and all required readings. It will be made up mostly of short answer and multiple choice questions, and include one essay question.

TEXTBOOKS

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1. Joel W. Martin & Conrad E. Ostwalt, Jr. , eds., *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film*, Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1995. Available at the U of T Bookstore (basement).
2. Readings Packet -- compiled by the instructors and available at the U of T Bookstore.
3. Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, 2nd. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1994). An essential tool for writing both papers -- Readings will be assigned.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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BOOKS SPECIFICALLY ON RELIGION & FILM

- Baugh, Lloyd *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ Figures in Film*, 1998.
- Butler, Ivan *Religion in the Cinema*, 1969.
- Ferlita & May *Film Odyssey: The Art of Film as Search for Meaning*, 1976.
- Hurley, Neil P. *Theology Through Film*, 1970.
- Jewett, Robert *Saint Paul at the Movies*, 1993.
- Kreitzer, Larry J. *The New Testament in Fiction and Film*, 1993.
- Marsh & Ortiz *Explorations in Theology and Film*, 1997.
- Martin, Thomas *Images and the Imageless: A Study in Religious Consciousness and Film*, 1991.
- May & Bird *Religion in Film*, 1982.
- May, John R., ed. *Image and Likeness: Religious Visions in American Film Classics*, 1992.

- May, John R., ed. *New Image of Religious Film*, 1998.
 - Miles, Margaret R. *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies*, 1996.
 - Scott, Bernard B. *Hollywood Dreams and Biblical Stories*, 1994.
 - Tatum, W. Barnes. *Jesus at the Movies: A Guide to the First Hundred Years*, 1997.
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JOURNALS

- *Cineaction*
 - *Cineaste*
 - *Literature /Film Quarterly*
 - *Film Quarterly*
 - *Premiere*
 - *Sight and Sound*
 - *Journal of Religion and Film* <http://www.unomaha.edu/~wwwjrf/>
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WEB-SITES

- The Internet Movie Database <http://us.imdb.com>
 - All Movie Guide http://205.186.189.2/amg/movie_root.html
 - Complete Film Listing <http://www.corona.bc.ca/films>
 - Roger Ebert Film Reviews <http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebertrev.html>
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