

# Religion and Film: Viewing Films Religiously

Department of Religious Studies, University of Calgary, Fall 1999  
Instructors: Anne Moore and Kathleen O'Grady ([kaogrady@home.com](mailto:kaogrady@home.com))

Class size: 80 students (approximately)

Duration: A "block course" of 5 consecutive days, eight hours a day.

## Handouts

- [Reading List](#)
- [Oral Presentation and Individual Analysis Questions](#)
- [Individual Analysis of a Film](#)
- [Final Exam](#)

## Course Outline:

**Block Course:** The course will run for five consecutive days (Tuesday through to Saturday, September 7-11, 1999), eight hours a day (9am-5pm). The course requires patience, endurance and fortitude. Attendance and participation are compulsory in order to fulfill all the requirements. All the requirements of the course must be completed and submitted. An uncompleted or not submitted requirement will result in a grade of "F". No late papers will be accepted without medical certificates. There will be no extensions. The course is designed so all requirements will be finished before the regular class session begins.

For your patience, endurance, fortitude and submission of all the requirements, you will earn a half-course credit. You will also hopefully acquire various skills including: 1) An understanding of the presence of religion within popular culture (film) and 2) an awareness and critical appreciation of the religious themes and symbolism present in films.

## The Course and the Films:

Pleasantville (dir. Gary Ross, 1998)

Blade Runner (dir. Ridley Scott, 1982/91)

Babette's Feast (dir. Gabriel Axel, 1987)

Antonia's Line (dir. Marleen Gorris, 1995)

Before the Rain (dir. Milcho Manchevski, 1994)

Alien (dir. Ridley Scott, 1979)

Please note: Several of the films are rated "R". There are scenes of violence, nudity, and sex and there is the speaking of foul language. The respective directors have considered these elements integral to the development of their film and we therefore accept their artistic vision.

## Topics Covered:

The connection between the body and soul/spirit  
Association of body with sin and appetites  
Issue of gender  
Relationship between the creator and creation  
Human free will and sin  
The idea of the self  
The connection of the stranger/foreigner with salvation and forgiveness  
Evil and the community

A course pack containing readings is required for the course. This course pack may be purchased from the University bookstore in advance of the course. In order to gain full benefit from the lectures and the films, we urge that all students read all the material in the pack before the course commences.

### **Requirements:**

A schedule of each student's requirements will be provided on the first day of the course. This schedule will specify the particular questions and specific deadlines for the presentations and essays required of each student. These requirements and their deadlines must be followed in order to pass the course. An uncompleted or not submitted requirement will result in a grade of "F". All assignments may be submitted by fax or email if that is more convenient. If you select these methods, the assignments must still be received by the required deadline.

The first few articles in the course pack are intended to provide some ideas, considerations and pattern for writing the various essays. We urge all students to view these articles before writing any of the requirements.

#### 1. Oral Report and Discussion 10%

Each day at the start of class 15 students will present a short oral report on the film viewed in class the previous day. Each student has been assigned a question and will present orally a 5 minute (maximum) response to the specified question. Students will be timed and stopped after 5 minutes. Therefore, it is vital that the presentations be fully prepared beforehand unless you are extremely confident at speaking. If you should require use of the blackboard, computer or CD/Tape recorders during your presentation, please see the instructors before the class. A mark will be assigned based on the oral presentation and participation in the following discussion.

#### 2. Revision of Oral Report 20%

Each student will then submit a written version of their presentation that has been revised in light of the in-class presentations and discussion. This written version of the revised presentation will be a maximum of 3 pages, double-spaced, font size 10 or 12 with margins of 1 and 1.5 inches.

#### 3. Individual Reaction Paper 20%

Based on an assigned question, each student will complete an individual reaction paper related to the film viewed in class the previous day. In other words, the paper will need to be completed overnight and submitted by noon the following day. The paper will draw upon material in the course pack and the lectures. The maximum length will be 3 pages, double-spaced, font size of 10 or 12 with margins of 1 and 1.5 inches.

#### 4. Test 20%

There will be a 30 minute test covering key terms from the lectures and readings, visual and aural recognition from the films and short answer questions based on the lecture and films, to be held on the final afternoon of class.

#### 5. Individual Analysis of Film 30%

The individual analysis will be based on a film selected by the student but addressing the question provided in the schedule of requirements. The analysis is due on the Tuesday immediately after the end of classes (September 14) at noon in the Department of Religious Studies. Students will need to include a narrative outline of the film with their analysis. Maximum length is 6 pages, double-spaced, font size 10 or 12 with margins of 1 and 1.5 inches.

Written assignments will be judged on several bases, including the following:

1. The completeness and effectiveness with which one fulfilled the stated requirements of the assignment
2. The logic of the presentation (meaning the flow and development of your ideas and argument).
3. The ability to summarize and rephrase key ideas and concepts thus revealing a clear understanding of those ideas and concepts.
4. The ability to see the complexity of an issue and discuss the various aspects of an issue
5. Spelling, grammar, punctuation and proper bibliographical format.

#### On the Web

There has been a discussion group established on the University computer system to facilitate student work during the Block Week course. Here you can exchange ideas about and reaction to the films you have to watch in class, get some feedback and further your thoughts. The instructors will participate in the discussion as much as possible and try to help out, but this is mainly a vehicle for students to exchange their ideas.

You should be aware that the Discussion Group is open to whoever discovers its existence. So, follow normal rules for "public discussion".