

# THE “CINEMATIC SALON”

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

DSPT RAST 4490 Prof. Michael Morris, O.P.

**3 units. Appointments: 1 hour before class, TBA**

In this theological reflection class students will meet once a week for three hours (5:10 PM to 8 PM Tuesday nights at DSPT) after having viewed a selected film playing in local theaters. It is a discussion class in which the student will learn to engage in analyzing a work of art, in this case film, from a variety of perspectives: theological, historical, aesthetic, etc. Knowledge of theology and cinema is a prerequisite. Tools of assessment are class discussion, presentations and a term paper. (16 students maximum)



## **RAST 4490**

### The Cinematic Salon: Theological Reflections on Contemporary Cinema

#### *Purpose of the Course*

We hope to create a Salon atmosphere in which students will practice advanced and insightful theological reflections on contemporary cinema, analyzing selected films in current release from theological, historical and aesthetic perspectives.

#### *Facilitating Class Discussions*

It is the objective of the course that each and every class session will be an invigorating exercise of discussion and discovery. Two students will volunteer each week to manage the presentation and bring refreshments. The facilitators will start the class by giving an overview of the film and render any added information that might be pertinent to discussion. The facilitators will devise questions for the entire class to discuss and control the discussion in order to keep it moving.

#### *Participation in Class Discussions*

The success of the Salon depends on the investment of each student in the conversation. The goal for each student will be to reach that level of discourse wherein analysis is intelligently articulated. Interpretations are sure to reflect a diversity of opinion, so an attitude of respect and patience is another goal worthy of cultivation. The resulting discussion will then deepen our overall understanding of the film and its context as filtered by the various philosophical and theological perspectives offered by the students.

#### *Term paper*

An instrument of assessment in the class is the ability to write down one's thoughts coherently and convincingly. A ten-page paper will be required from each student. The topic should be relevant to film and theology. Suggested topics: an analysis of themes treated by a particular director or in a particular genre of contemporary cinema; a comparison of two or more films seen during the course; an application of certain theological principles to the art and craft of filmmaking., etc.

#### *Grades*

Facilitating and participation in class discussions will account for 50% of the final grade. The term paper will account for the remaining 50%. Because we hope to develop a degree of freedom and conviviality within the

group, students are encouraged to bring refreshments to share with the class. The quality of the refreshments will have no bearing on one's grade!

### *Readings*

The films themselves are the text we will read and analyze. For those who are new to film analysis, a recommended help for reference is James Monaco's *How to Read a Film: The world of Movies, Media & Multimedia*. Oxford University Press, 2000. The Reading list that accompanies the companion course to this class, Religion and the Cinema, is provided below as an added help and reference. Furthermore, the following websites provide added help for finding information and analysis.

Christian Spotlight on the Movies.

<http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/>

Reviews from a generically Christian" point of view, evaluating both on moral content and quality of filmmaking

Grading the Movies. <http://www.gradingthemovies.com/html/index.shtml>

A family-values-based movie review site.

The Internet Movie Database. <http://www.imdb.com/>

Useful for all sorts of basic information on films past and present

The Journal of Religion and Film. <http://www.unomaha.edu/~wwwjrf/>

An academic online journal filled with interesting essays.

Metacritic. <http://www.metacritic.com/>

A summary of critical reviews of films and other media

National Conference of Catholic Bishops official site, film page.

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/movies/>

Short reviews on past and current cinema from a Catholic perspective with a content based rating system.

Rotten Tomatoes. <http://www.rottentomatoes.com>

Scholarly Resources on Internet for Film Study and Evaluation

<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/engl/filmrev.html>

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