

Religion and Cinematic Culture

Religion & Culture 105

Term: Fall, 2011 (Sept. 12 – Dec. 5); Day/Time: Tuesdays 4:00-6:50p.m.; Place: Peters Bldg., 1025/1027
(Students are also required to register and attend a tutorial session)
PLEASE BE SURE TO READ THE COURSE OUTLINE CAREFULLY

If you find any errors or inconsistencies in the syllabus, please let me know, ASAP.

Course Description

From the Calendar: “An introduction to the study of religion and cinematic culture, the course utilizes feature-length films as ways of exploring visions of personal identity and human community.” Required tutorials, consisting of 20-25 students, are led by graduate teaching assistants (TAs). You must register for a tutorial at the same time you register for the course; otherwise, your name will be removed from the class list. **Note:** Some of the films in this course are for mature viewers. Films may contain offensive subject matter (such as controversial religious practices, scenes of violence, sexual content, ethnic stereotypes, critical views of religious traditions) and should not be taken as representative of the values of either individual instructors or the Department of Religion and Culture. You are advised to register for the course only if you are over 18 and able to deal with such topics.

Course Goals

1. To explore the religious facets of cinematic culture, in particular film plots and narratives.
2. To practice thinking and writing in dialogue format about the relations between religion and cinema.

Instructor

I hold a PhD in Religious Studies, from the University of Calgary. My research and teaching focus on religion and modernity, emphasizing the areas of religion and literature and ritual studies. For a link to my CV, and other information on my work and teaching, visit <http://barrystephenon.ca>.

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Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30pm

Teaching Assistants

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Tutorials

The tutorial sessions are an integral part of the course. Tutorials are located in the Peter's Bldg. (P3027), on Wednesdays, at the following times:

- Tutorial 1 - 8:30 am - 9:20 am
- Tutorial 2 - 9:30 am - 10:20 am
- Tutorial 3 - 10:30 am - 11:20 am
- Tutorial 4 - 11:30 am - 12:20 pm
- Tutorial 5 - 12:30 pm - 1:20 pm
- Tutorial 6 - 1:30 pm - 2:20 pm

For each tutorial, you are responsible to prepare and submit a Response/Summary and, where assigned, a Tutorial Assignment. See "RE 105 Course Work and Evaluation" for more details.

Required Reading

The readings are an important part of the course, and are listed in the course schedule, below. Readings are accessible through the Primo library catalog, or over the internet, or via MyLearningSpace. Readings are to be completed before the respective class and following tutorial session. The reading load for the course is not heavy, but does form a regular part of your work.

Feature Films

We view the following films, in the entirety, in class:

- Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring.* Ki-duk Kim, Sony Pictures Classics, 2004, 103min
- Travellers & Magicians.* Khyentse Norbu. Prayer Flag Pictures, 2003, 108min
- Babette's Feast.* Gabriel Axel, Panorama Film A/S, Det Danske Filminstitut, 1988, 103min
- Monsieur Ibrahim.* Francois Dupeyron. ARP Selection/France 3 Cinema, 2003, 94minutes.
- Jesus of Montreal.* Denys Arcand. Koch Lorber, 1989, 118min
- The Darjeeling Limited.* Wes Anderson. Fox Searchlight. 2007, 91 min.
- Crimes and Misdemeanors.* Woody Allen. 1989 (104min).
- Blade Runner.* Ridley Scott. Warner Home Video, 1982, 117 min.
- The Sacrifice.* Andrei Tarkovsky. SFI (Swedish Film Institute), 1986, 142min

Class Schedule

- Classes are each Tuesday, as shown below. Tutorial sessions are on Wednesday, as shown above.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Film</u>	<u>Reading/Assignment</u>
September 13 th	<i>Introduction to the Course</i>	The Course Syllabus and supporting documents (See MyLearningSpace)
September 20 th	<i>Jesus of Montreal</i>	Scalia, "Re-Figuring Jesus: Christ and Christ-Figures in <i>Jesus of Montreal</i> ."
September 27 th	<i>Babette's Feast</i>	Edwards, " <i>Babette's Feast</i> " T1 (due Sept. 28th)
October 4 th	<i>Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... Spring</i>	Sofair, "Review of <i>Spring, Summer...</i> " Dialogue 1 Due Today, in class
October 11 th	<i>Travellers and Magicians</i>	Pearlman, "Once Upon a Time in Bhutan" T2 (due October 12th)
October 18 th	<i>The Darjeeling Limited</i>	Aisenberg, Joseph, "Wes's World" (online) http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/59/59wesanderson.php
October 25	<i>Monsieur Ibrahim</i>	Ruf, "A Review of Monsieur Ibrahim" T3 (due October 26th)
November 1 st	<i>Pan's Labyrinth</i>	Alison Frank, "Pan's Labyrinth, A Gateway Film" (online) http://www.themovingarts.com/pans-labyrinth-a-gateway-film/ Dialogue 2 Due Today, in class
November 8 th	<i>Blade Runner</i>	Keefer, "Knowledge and Mortality in Blade Runner" Oswalt, "Hollywood and Armageddon: Apocalyptic Themes..." T4 (due November 9th)
November 15 th	<i>Crimes and Misdemeanors</i>	Roche, "Justice and the Withdrawal of God..."
November 22 nd	<i>The Sacrifice</i>	Green, "Andrei Tarkovsky" (obit piece) Tarkovsky, "On The Sacrifice" T5 (due November 23rd)
November 29 th	<i>Conclusion</i>	Dorsky, Devotional Cinema Dialogue 3 Due Today in class

Course Requirements & Assessment

For detailed information, see “RE 105 Course Word and Evaluation”, available through MyLearningSpace.

1. Tutorial (25%). Tutorials meet every week; their purpose is (a) to make connections between readings and films, and (b) to practice thinking, speaking, and writing in dialogue. You are expected to study the required readings before each tutorial and to come prepared for discussion. For each tutorial, you are to write a one-page (max, single spaced, 10pt font) *Response/Summary* in which you react to the film, lecture material, and weekly reading. Students may be called upon to present their reading *Response/Summary* during the tutorial, so be sure to bring the readings and your responses. Time will also be spent working on the course dialogues. In addition, tutorials also have 5 assignments (listed as T1 – T5 in the course Schedule, below). So, for each tutorial you will bring with you either one or two items, depending on the schedule: A *Response/Summary* and *Tutorial Assignment*. The written assignments will be assigned a grade of complete or incomplete. Attendance: For each tutorial missed, your overall tutorial mark will be penalized 5%. If you miss 6 or more tutorials (half of them) you will fail the tutorial portion of the course.
2. Two out of the three dialogues (each weighted at 25%). Again, not three dialogues, but two out of three. Length: 4-5 pages (approx. 1500 words; 12 point standard font; double-spaced; 1” margins). Refer to the guide to Dialogue Writing Guide on MyLearningSpace. Note that each dialogue gives you limited choices. Each dialogue has a specific due date, so you cannot, for instance, submit dialogue #1 on the due date for dialogue #3. Dialogues should be submitted as hard copies, in class, on the day they are due. Late papers are subject to the penalties noted above.
3. Final exam (25%). The final exam will be a combination of multiple choice (focused on the second-half of the course) and one long answer question, on Tarkovsky’s *The Sacrifice*.

MyLearningSpace

This course is managed through Laurier’s MyLearningSpace. Materials essential to the course are posted on this site, so it your responsibility to learn to use it and to check it weekly.

Missed Films

All required films ought to be viewed in class. If you miss in-class showings, you must borrow notes from other students, as well as secure and view films outside of class time by borrowing, renting, or purchasing them (this is extremely difficult for some of the films, as they are rare, few, and far between). It is your responsibility to make the necessary arrangements. Not all the films are easily available through video rental outlets, if at all. Although we cannot guarantee their availability, *some* videos and DVDs *may* be available through Media Resources Technology or local video rental stores such as GenX. Neither the Department nor individual instructors loan visual materials.

Note-Taking

You are used to studying books but perhaps not used to studying films, so doing so may take practice. Even if you are used to taking notes on lectures or books, you may not be used to taking notes on films. The standard cultural practice is to lean back, fill our mouths with popcorn, and drift into a trance-like state. We turn off our critical faculties so we can enjoy the movie. There is nothing wrong with entering altered states of consciousness—in religious studies we value and study them—but the state of consciousness we aim at in this course is critical and analytical rather than dreamy. So it may require considerable effort to think and take notes.

Resources for the Course

- ❖ This course outline – read it well.
- ❖ The course MyLearningSpace site.
- ❖ The Trellis Databases (useful for tracking down scholarly articles, books, and reviews on particular films and particular issues in the study of religion and film; helpful in writing your dialogues; learn how to use scholarly databases)
- ❖ The Journal of Religion and Film www.unomaha.edu/jrf (online articles)

Course Policies

University Policies: 1. Plagiarism can result in failure of an assignment or, if a repeated offense, the entire course. Since it is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism, you must read the Calendar statement on academic and research misconduct. I may use software to check for plagiarism, and you may be required to submit written work in electronic form to facilitate such a check. 2. It is your responsibility to make yourself available for exams regardless of when they are scheduled. 3. Students with disabilities or special needs should contact Laurier's Accessible Learning Center for information regarding its services and resources, as well as review the Calendar for additional information regarding services available on campus. [Location: Arts Building 1C11; email Accessible_Learning@wlu.ca, telephone 884-0710 ext. 3086, TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf) 884-1141; fax: 884-6570] 4.

Instructor's Policies: 1. Assignments are due in class on the date specified, in the specified format. Papers that do not meet these specifications will be penalized. 2. Late papers unaccompanied by a letter from a doctor, counselor, or funeral director will be docked 10% per day. Even with such a letter, extension times must be reasonable, reflecting the seriousness of the illness or absence, and the note must specify what is considered a reasonable extension. 3. Do not leave papers in an instructor's or tutor's mail box without having them dated; otherwise, they are dated when in hand. 4. Except in the case of emergencies, you must notify the instructor or tutor *before* rather than *after* a late assignment is due. 5. Papers occasionally get lost, so you are required to retain a copy of your paper; do not hand in your *only* copy. 6. Attendance in this course is *required*; poor attendance or lack of participation can result in a lowering of your final grade or even failure of the course. As stated in the University Calendar, under Student Regulations: "*Class and Laboratory Attendance: Any student who, in the opinion of instructors, is absent too frequently from lectures or laboratory periods will be reported to the dean of the faculty. On the recommendation of the department concerned, such a student after due warning by the dean shall be debarred from taking the final examination in that course.*" I take this regulation seriously.