



Mission Statement:

Our mission is to serve as a leading center of Christian thought and action providing an excellent education from a biblical perspective and global context in pivotal professions to equip Christian leaders to change the world.

COURSE SYLLABUS

**SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & THE ARTS
COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

**COM 685: FAITH, CULTURE, AND INDEPENDENT FILM
SPRING 2012**

MODULAR CLASS MEETING AT THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Marc T. Newman, Ph.D.

Phone: (865) 429-5523

Fax: (865) 429-1561 (call ahead on office phone before faxing)

E-mail: marcnew@regent.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

Office Location: The Great Smoky Mountains or near the beach in Southern California

All students are required to read and have a thorough understanding of the syllabus. Any questions or concerns need to be addressed to the instructor.

Please initial here to indicate that you have read and understood the requirements outlined in this syllabus

Student initials

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The 2012 Sundance Film Festival in association with the Windrider Forum will be our classroom for this intensive modular course. Week 2 of the Sundance Film Festival showcases some of the freshest new talent in independent filmmaking. Regent students will take part in the Windrider Forum which will provide them with direct access to directors, screenwriters, cinematographers, and actors involved in the creation of the most thought-provoking films at Sundance. You will interact with faculty from Regent University, Pepperdine University, Biola University, and with industry professionals. The purpose of the class is to explore how film creates spiritual, moral, and ethical meaning; reinforces, modifies, and challenges worldviews; serves as aesthetic expression; and creates culture.

RATIONALE/COURSE OVERVIEW

Course Description

During this course you will learn to analyze the worldview content of independent cinema using a variety of techniques drawn from the field of rhetorical and film criticism. We will begin by examining divergent positions on how to best approach film – as something we examine, or as something that works on us. Next we will develop tools for discerning a film’s moral premise. Finally, we will learn to apply a variety of critical constructs to film in order to uncover meaning and reveal worldviews. Finally, we will discuss the nature and impact of independent films and filmmakers.

Each student will participate in group discussions held at Sundance, and will peer evaluate other students’ research. Finally, each student will submit a culminating research project utilizing one or more of the critical constructs explored in class.

Integration of Faith and Learning

C.S. Lewis, in his landmark essay, “Learning in War Time,” noted: “If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were uneducated. But, as it is, a cultural life will exist outside the Church whether it exists inside or not. To be ignorant and simple now – not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground – would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered. The cool intellect must work not only against cool intellect on the other side, but against the muddy heathen mysticism which deny intellect altogether...The learned life then is, for some, a duty.”

Faith informs knowledge as premises inform conclusions. All thought is founded on sets of presuppositions that will lead, inevitably to ends. The psalmist says, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” The soundness of our conclusions will be determined by the veracity of our presuppositions. Therefore, it is important that Christian scholars not think that that they must abandon presuppositions in order to achieve some chimerical objectivity and advance in the academy. Worse, it is a lie. The scholar will not abandon presuppositions in any case, instead one set will merely be substituted for another. G.K.

Chesterton, in *All is Grist*, explained, “The whole point of education is that it should give a man abstract and eternal standards by which he can judge material and fugitive conditions.” By integrating faith and learning we can bring the eternal into the temporal, allowing us to “test the spirits” and to “hold fast to what is true.”

COMMUNICATION STUDIES PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Christian Worldview - Doctoral students will critique the worldviews commonly held by communication scholars and will formulate their own Christian worldview as a developing communication scholar.
- Academics - Doctoral students will summarize and explain common ontological, epistemological and axiological approaches to the study of communication and will compose their own definition of communication based on their approach to the field.
- Christian Community - Doctoral students will contribute to the academic Christian community of communication scholars through their participation in on-line or on-campus doctoral colloquiums and academic conference gatherings with other Christian scholars.
- Mission Impact - Doctoral students will identify the major international organizations in the field of communication study and will explain their contributions to the field.

FAITH, CULTURE, AND INDEPENDENT FILM

In this course, students will:

- gain an academic and pragmatic understanding of how films rhetorically communicate spiritual and cultural worldviews.
 - Demonstrated through participation in discussion.
- grasp various approaches to film as a spiritual and cultural event
 - Demonstrated through participation in discussion and exam.
- understand the criterion for selecting significant films as appropriate rhetorical artifacts.
 - Demonstrated through discussion and in final paper assignments.
- analyze independent films by applying various rhetorical constructs.
 - Demonstrated through in-class discussion and final paper.
- craft critical evaluations of student scholarship.
 - Demonstrated through written blind peer evaluations of other student’s work.
- construct an argumentatively sound critical analysis of a significant independent film or set of films
 - Demonstrated through final paper.

COURSE MATERIALS

REQUIRED JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Bitzer, Lloyd F. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 1 (1968), 1-14.
- Brockriede, Wayne. "Rhetorical Criticism as Argument." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 60 (1974): 165-174.
- Fernandez, Ingrid. "In the Kingdom of Men: Love, Faith and Spirituality in von Trier's *Breaking the Waves*." *Journal of Religion and Film* 15 (April 2011). Web.
http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol15.no1/Fernandez_BreakWaves.html
- Frentz, Thomas S. and Janice H. Rushing. "The Rhetoric of *Rocky*: Part Two." *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 42 (September 1978) 231-240.
- Newman, Marc T. "It's Not Just a Job, It's a Calling: The Redemption of Soldiering as Vocation in *Saving Private Ryan*." *Journal of Religion and Film*, 10 (October 2006). Web.
<http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol10No2/NewmanPrivateRyan.htm>
- Romanowski, William and Jennifer L. Vander Heide. "Easier Said Than Done: On Reversing the Hermeneutical Flow in the Theology and Film Dialogue" *Journal of Communication and Religion* 30 (March 2007) 40-64.
- Rosteck Thomas, and Thomas S. Frentz. "Myth and Multiple Readings in Environmental Rhetoric: The Case of *An Inconvenient Truth*." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 95 (February 2009) 1-19.
- Rushing, Jancice H. and Thomas S. Frentz. "The Rhetoric of *Rocky*: A Social Value Model of Criticism." *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 42 (August 1978) 63-72.
- Scott, Robert L. "Focusing Rhetorical Criticism" *Communication Education*, 33 (April 1984) 89-96.

Other articles may be assigned as determined by the professor.

Popular Articles

- Newman, Marc T. "Lost at Sundance," *Catholic Exchange*, Feb. 1, 2011. Web.
<http://catholicexchange.com/2011/02/01/147048/>
- Ramji, Rubina. "Report from Sundance 2011: Religion in Independent Film." *Journal of Religion and Film* 15 (April 2011). Web.
http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol15.no1/sundance_2011.html

FILMS

Films for analysis will come from viewings at the Sundance Film Festival.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

A. Readings and Class Participation

Students will be expected to have read the assigned materials before the modular week begins. It is important that everyone participate, but also that none of us become completely overwhelmed. Once discussions begin, I expect the kind of robust analysis and debate that might accompany a conference panel. Some graduate students may be asked to lead discussions.

Another reason to make sure that you have kept your end of the reading bargain is that your classmates will be counting on you. If class members have not read the essays, discussion is going to be bleak. We will be co-learning in this class (even if we can't all co-grade :-). Do unto others...

B. Late Policy

All scheduled written assignments are due by 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time on dates indicated on the syllabus. All assignments turned in after that time will be considered late. All late assignments will receive a deduction of one letter grade. **Late assignments will be graded without comment – if you are looking for feedback, please submit your work on time.**

C. Extensions

All assignments are due on the date stated in the syllabus. Except in cases of emergency, requests for extensions must be made to the instructor, at least twenty-four hours before the assignment is due. Be prepared to defend your reason why you need the extension.

D. Incomplete Grades

In an effort to spur you to complete any missed assignments in a timely fashion, I will not assign incomplete grades. In extreme circumstances, when extensions are provided to students, outstanding assignments may be completed early in the following semester and a grade change, if warranted, will be issued at that time. The **only students who will be considered** for extensions on end of semester assignments will be those who have completed all of the other work for the semester, and who have been active participants in the class discussions.

E. Academic Integrity

The Regent University Graduate Catalogue notes: “A community of teachers and scholars recognizes the principles of truth and honesty as absolutely essential. The expectation at Regent University is that these principles will be rigorously followed in all academic endeavors, including the preparation of class reports and papers, giving and

taking of examinations, and in protecting the validity of assigned grades. This assumes that all work will be done by the person who purports to do the work without unauthorized aids. Instructors will exercise due diligence in planning and supervising the academic program so that the principles of truth and honesty are encouraged.”

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when a student utilizes the ideas or words of another author without appropriate citation. Plagiarism is a severe academic violation, and will not be tolerated. The university’s policy on plagiarism is that a first instance will result in a failure of the assignment in which it occurs. We will notify the dean of any act of plagiarism in our classes. A second instance will result in failure of the class, and a third instance may result in expulsion from the university.

Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism

In an electronic, cut-and-paste age, plagiarism is easy to do, even if you do not intend to do so. The best way to avoid plagiarism is to adopt a research regime that keeps quoted material separate from your original writing until such time as you need it. When doing research on the computer, open a separate file for every article or book you examine. At the top of the page, write in all bibliographic information, then, under that heading, type or paste quotations or paraphrases along with the page number associated with the quotation or paraphrase. Then, when you craft your paper, each time you paste a quotation or paraphrase, insert the parenthetical citation in text, and copy and paste the bibliographic information immediately into the “Works Cited” or “References” page.

F. Assignments

All essays written for this class must be turned in using Times New Roman, 12 point font (this assures uniformity in guidelines).

Sundance Class Participation – 20% of grade

As noted above, class participation in a seminar is a must. Like Santa, I’ll know “if you’ve been bad or good”...you know the rest.

Discussion Board Participation – 20% of grade

In the three weeks leading up to Sundance, students are expected to be active on the Discussion Forums in Blackboard.

Sundance and Spirituality Overview – 20% of grade

Each student will write a 4-6 page essay discussing their Sundance experience as an intersection of faith, culture, and film. While this is not a “research paper” students are expected to cite sources in order to justify the conclusions that they draw.

Final Paper – 40% of grade

Each student will write an original research paper critically analyzing a film, a group of films, or an auteur. The paper must justify the film(s) as falling into the category of Independent Film. The paper will consist of the following parts:

:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Brief review of literature
- 3) Methodology (be detailed and explicit)
- 3) Description of the film(s)
- 4) Critical analysis of the artifact through the lens of the stated methodology
- 5) Summarize the conclusions of your critique and provide implications for future research into this (or similar) films, or for this area of critical inquiry, or both.

Your research paper must utilize the current *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers 7th Edition*. APA is **not** acceptable for this assignment.

Ph.D. Students – 18-20 pages inclusive of bibliography. No fewer than 15 academic sources (books or journal articles). Film reviews and general periodicals should be cited (obviously) but do not count toward the required number of academic sources.

M.A. Students – 14-15 pages inclusive of bibliography. No fewer than 10 academic sources (books or journal articles). Film reviews and general periodicals should be cited (obviously) but do not count toward the required number of academic sources.

Class Peer Review: An Act of Grace

Each student will be assigned another student's paper for the purpose of a blind peer review. Getting someone else to read through your paper before final submission is an important preparation step. Make sure that the draft you turn in for peer review is the paper you would intend to turn in to me for final grading. You should have already proofread your paper thoroughly – do not place a burden on your classmates by submitting a rough draft.

As a peer reviewer, you want to comment on how well the paper fits the assignment, the depth of the arguments made, and the soundness of the conclusions drawn. While you are not required to thoroughly proof your peer review paper, any noticeable problems should be addressed. The best way to perform the peer review is by using "Track Changes" in Word. To maintain anonymity during the process, go to Tools, Options, User Information, and under "Name" type in Referee.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

In assigning grades to each of the graded sections of this class, I will use the following standards.

Discussion:

A = Student initiates. Student shows insight into the reading, often going beyond the text to incorporate ideas, theories, and constructs from other works. Student drives discussion by asking questions.

B = Student demonstrates comprehension of the reading and the ability to apply it. Student interacts consistently with other class members.

C = Demonstrates a grasp of the content. Responds to other class members.

Writing Assignment:

A = Strict adherence to appropriate style sheet. Assignments thoroughly proofed. The student establishes significance for the film(s) under analysis. The analysis is exceptionally well-organized and arguments are well-substantiated. Student demonstrates insight in conclusions and implications of the analysis. Writing style is strong.

B= Adheres well to appropriate style sheet. Assignments reveal few spelling, grammatical, or style errors. The student chooses appropriate film(s) for analysis. The analysis is organized and easy to follow. Student demonstrates an understanding of conclusions and implications in the analysis. Writing style is acceptable.

C = Paper meets the minimum standards for the assignment.

NOTE: Any paper written for this class that is accepted for publication in a scholarly journal or for presentation at a regional or national scholarly convention will be assigned an A as long as the acceptance for publication or presentation occurs within the time limits for grade changes for this course.

Numerical Assessments: I hate using these, but they are required. You are all more than numbers to me...

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	96-100
A-	93-95
B+	90-92
B	85-89
B-	81-84
C+	78-80
C	75-77
F	74 or less

COURSE SCHEDULE (WEEK-BY-WEEK)

FAITH, CULTURE, AND INDEPENDENT FILM

CLASS SCHEDULE

Prologue:

Week 1 – January 3 – Some Examples of the Rhetorical Criticism of Film

Before the beginning of this week you should have read essays by Fernandez, Newman (*Saving Private Ryan*), and Rostek and Frenz.

Week 2 – January 9 – Some Methods of Rhetorical Criticism and Adapting to Film

Before the beginning of this week you should have read essays by Scott, Brockreide, Bitzer, Frenz and Rushing, and Rushing and Frenz.

Week 3 – January 16 - Preparing for the Sundance Experience

Before the beginning of this week you should have read the essay by Romanowski and Vander Heide, and the two articles listed under popular articles.

Class: The week that we are at Sundance is VERY fluid. We will be integrating with the Windrider Forum and much of that schedule is impossible to know since the films have yet to be selected and the availability of filmmakers is, therefore, unknown at present. More details will be provided as the date approaches and film selections are made. We will have lecture and discussion times daily.

Epilogue – IMPORTANT DATES:

Sundance and Spirituality Overview Paper must be posted in the forum created for them by midnight Eastern time on February 8, 2012.

Final papers are due for peer review must be emailed to Dr. Newman on February 28th. **Please use marcnew@regent.edu AND copy marc@movieministry.com.**

Peer Review must be completed and papers emailed back to Dr. Newman by March 2.

Final papers with final corrections due on March 7th.

DEPARTMENT RESOURCES

Useful links:

National Communication Association: <http://www.natcom.org/>

Religious Communication Association: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/rca/index.html>
Journal of Religion and Film: <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/>
Journal of Religion and Popular Culture: <http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Please review the following links for important information on University policies:

- [Academic Calendar/Registrar Information](#)
- [Bookstore](#)
- [Honor/Plagiarism Policy](#)
- [Regent Library](#)
- [Student Services](#) (includes links to student handbook, disability services, University calendar, University Writing Center, etc.)
- [Technical Support – University Helpdesk](#)
- [Disability Statement](#) – the student is responsible for contacting the assistant director of Student Services at 757.352.4486 to request accommodations, provide necessary documentation, and make arrangement with each instructor. The following website is designed to help our disabled students learn of their rights and responsibilities with regard to disability services. The site also has resources for faculty to become better informed of their responsibilities toward the disabled students in their classes.
www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities.cfm

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS

Becoming Christian leaders includes learning how to evaluate others by providing honest evaluations that include positive affirmation and constructive feedback, as appropriate. Consequently, university policy requires that all students submit a formal student evaluation of teaching form at the end of the academic term. This mandatory requirement must be completed before students will be able to access their final course grade. This form is only available in an online format. Prior to the end of the course, students will receive an e-mail indicating that the form is available. Instructions on accessing the evaluation will be included. Since these evaluations are only available for a limited time, students should complete the evaluation as soon as they receive the e-mail notification that the evaluation form is available. Instructors will not have access to course evaluations until after grades have been submitted and will only have access to anonymous summary data. Students are also encouraged at any point during the term to offer comments that may be helpful to the improvement or refinement of the course. Students can access the online evaluation system at: <http://eval.regent.edu/regentsurvey/students.cfm>. If you have questions about the online evaluation please contact evaluation@regent.edu.

Last Updated: 10/25/2011

At times, due to unforeseen circumstances, course content may be subject to change. Please check with your professor to insure you have the most recently updated Syllabus for this course.

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