

Rel 350: Religion and Film

Fall 2016

Prof. Luft
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Office: CCC 489A
Office hours: Mon 3:30–4:30
Tues. 2:00–3:00

Required Texts	Rel 350 Course Pack
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Course Description	Religion and Film explores how the aesthetic, cultural, and historical dimensions of cinema have engaged with the topic of religion, and with religious communities, for over a century. Students will learn how different religious communities have engaged with the medium of cinema and how movies have represented, maligned, or promoted religions and religious concepts over time.
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Gen Ed Arts Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify aesthetic, cultural, and historical dimensions of artistic traditions and techniques.2. Demonstrate an understanding of creative expression by critiquing, creating, and collaborating on a specific work of art.3. Express their own understanding and interpretation of works of art critically and imaginatively.
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Rel 350 Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Describe and analyze the historical and cultural relationship between religion and film across the twentieth century.2. Read and write film criticism that demonstrates an understanding of movies both as art form as well as cultural artifact.3. Give a class presentation that employs the terminology of film studies in order to provide a substantive interpretation of the themes of a film of their choosing.
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Requirements and Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Preparation: Students are expected to watch the films and complete the assigned readings each day. Additionally, coming to class prepared requires that you have the daily assigned readings with you in class. Our ability to critically analyze texts depends on your having the material in front of you. Readings posted to D2L should be printed out and brought to class as well.2. Participation: Good participation requires active reading of the assigned texts, engagement with the materials in class, thoughtful involvement in class discussions, and active listening to your classmates. Laptops should be closed and cell phones should be silenced at the start of class.3. Civility: Students are expected to show respect for course content, classmates, and opinions that may differ from their own in deference to the educational atmosphere. Civil discourse means that we can disagree and challenge colleagues while maintaining an atmosphere of respect for people and ideas.
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4. **Due Dates:** Missed quizzes and exams cannot be made up unless arrangements have been made prior to the absence. Papers submitted late will receive a letter grade deduction for each late day. Students who miss an assignment because of illness or serious emergency should contact me as soon as possible. Students who know ahead of time that they will be absent should speak to me at least a week prior to the absence.
 5. **Communication:** During the semester, if a personal event or circumstance impacts your ability to succeed in our course, please come speak to me right away—before the problem becomes insurmountable. If you have a learning disability that might impact your work in our course, please speak to me in person (not via email) at the beginning of the semester.
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Email Policy

As a general rule, it is unwise to email me if you have a time-specific question (e.g., “What’s on the exam on Monday?”) Also, do not email me because you want to know what you missed in class. For concerns such as these, speak with me in person. Good reasons to email me include:

- Letting me know about a technical problem with D2L that is affecting your preparation for an upcoming class,
- Scheduling a time to meet face-to-face,
- Informing me as to why you missed class,
- Sharing your personal thoughts about our course material.

* When emailing me, always include the name of our class and section in your subject line.

Attendance Policy

It is expected that you will arrive to class each day on time. Over the course of the semester, you may miss three class periods (for whatever reason) without penalty. Students who miss more classes can expect to lose 3% percentage points from their final grade for each absence. If you have a severe illness or personal emergency that will affect your attendance, speak with me outside of class.

Tutoring- Learning Center

The TLC is an excellent service every student should use. One-on-one tutors can help with writing papers, reading challenging assignments, preparing for exams, lab reports, resumes, research papers, and personal statements. To sign up, call 346-3568 or stop by the bottom floor of the Media Resource Center, room 018.

Academic Integrity

The full text of the Community Rights and Responsibilities guidelines is available online in the Rights and Responsibilities section at: www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs. Students will be expected to adhere to all university expectations. In particular, please familiarize yourself with the definition of plagiarism and the disciplinary process. According to chapter 14 section 3 of the Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures, “Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to: cheating on an examination; collaborating with others in work to be presented,

contrary to the stated rules of the course; submitting a paper or assignment as one's own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another; submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas....” If you have questions about this policy, contact me. Infractions will be reported to the university and the minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment, although more severe infractions may be assessed. To ensure a fair assessment process in this course, students will be required to submit their papers to the D2L dropbox prior to the due date in class. D2L has plagiarism detection software, and will flag papers that are derivative of published texts, websites, and other student writing.

Assignments	Attendance and Participation	10%
	Class Presentations	20%
	Short papers.....	20%
	Three Unit Papers	50%

Rel 350: Religion and Film
Reading Schedule

unit I: aesthetic dimensions of film

Tues **Week 1: Introductions!**

Sept 6

Thurs **What is Film Criticism?**

Sept 8

Tues **Week 2: The Art of Watching Films**

- Sept 13 **Read:** “The Art of Watching Films” [Coursepack] (remember to bring to class)
- Today in class:** Groups will be assigned
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Thurs **Identifying Themes**

- Sept 15 **Read:** “Thematic Elements” [coursepack] (remember to bring to class)
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Tues **Week 3: Identifying Themes (day 2)**

- Sept 20 **Prior to class:** watch West Bank Story – The Musical (available on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgQfCUNf0no>)
- Prior to class:** watch “High Maintenance” (available on Vimeo:
<https://vimeo.com/11098509>)
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Thurs **Fictional and Dramatic Elements**

- Sept 22
- **Prior to class, watch:** Martin Scorsese’s “Last Temptation of Christ” (1988). The link for the film will be posted in D2L.
 - **In class:** Group 1 will give a presentation on: “Chap 3: Fictional and Dramatic Elements” [coursepack]
 - **After class:** Members of Groups 3 and 5 will submit 900-word papers (3 pages) to the dropbox in which you analyze fictional and dramatic elements in Martin Scorsese’s “Last Temptation of Christ.” (Due Sept 29, 5 PM)

Tues **Week 4: Cinematography and Special Effects**

- Sept 27
- **Prior to class, watch:** Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ” (2004). The link for the film will be posted in D2L.
 - **In class:** Group 2 will give a presentation on “Chap. 5: Cinematography and Special Effects” [coursepack]
 - **After class:** Members of Groups 4 and 6 will submit 900-word papers (3 pages) to the dropbox in which you analyze cinematographic and special effects in Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ.” (Due Oct 4, 5 PM)

Thurs **Sound Effects and Music**

- Sept 29
- **Prior to class, watch:** Norman Jewison’s “Jesus Christ Superstar” (1973). The link for the film will be posted to D2L.
 - **In class:** Group 3 will give a presentation on “Chap 8: Sound Effects and Dialogue and Chap 9: Musical Score” [coursepack]
 - **After class:** Members of Group 7 and 8 will submit 900-word papers (3 pages) to the dropbox in which you analyze sound effects and music in Norman Jewison’s “Jesus Christ Superstar” (1973). (Due Oct 6, 5 PM)
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Tues

Week 5: Film Editing

Oct 4

- Prior to class, watch:** Denys Arcand's "Jesus of Montreal" (1989). The link for the film will be posted on D2L.
 - In class:** Group 4 will give a presentation of "Chap 6, "Editing" [coursepack]
 - After class:** Members of Groups 1 and 2 will submit 900-word papers (3 pages) to the dropbox in which you analyze film editing in "Jesus of Montreal." (Due Oct 11, 5 PM)
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Thurs

The Art of Film Analysis

Oct 6

- Prior to class, read: "Chap 12: Analysis of the Whole Film" [coursepack]
 - Bring laptop or tablet or smartphone to class today, as well as your coursepack.
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Tues

Week 6: Submit Paper #1

Oct 11

- Bring a printout of your paper to class to submit, and submit a digital copy to the dropbox in D2L. (Papers that are not submitted in person and to the dropbox will be considered late.)
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Unit II: Religious Communities on and around the Silver Screen

Thurs **Islam in Film**

- Oct 13 Read Rubina Ramji's, "Muslim in the Movies" [coursepack]
- Prior to class, watch "My Son the Fanatic" [e-reserve]
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Tues **Islam in Film**

- Oct 18 Prior to class, watch "East is East" [e-reserve] OR "The Infidel" [e-reserve]
- Submit final copy of paper #1 in class. (upload to d2l not necessary)
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Thurs **Native Americans and Film**

- Oct 20 Prior to class, watch one of the following films:
- Pocahontas (1995) [e-reserve] OR
 - Dances with Wolves (1990) [e-reserve]
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Tues **Native Americans and Film**

- Oct 25 Prior to class, watch one of the following films:
- Smoke Signals (1998) [e-reserve] OR
 - Atanarjuat—The fast runner [e-reserve]
- Submit a two-page paper on D2L in which you compare the portrayal of Native Americans in the film you watched last week, and the one you watched for class today.
- In class: Group 5 will give a presentation in which they apply the categories from the documentary "Reel Injun" to analyze three or four of the films about Native Americans assigned on Oct 25 and 27.
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Thurs **Catholicism and Movies**

- Oct 27 Read Peter Malone, "The Roman Catholic Church and Cinema" [coursepack]
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Tues **Class canceled because Strep Throat is stupid.**

Nov 1

Thurs **Catholicism and Movies**

- Nov 3
- Choose one of the following films to watch for class today:
 - “The Exorcist” (1973)
 - “The Mission” (1986)
 - “Priest” (1994)
 - “Dogma” (1999)

 - In class: Group 6 will give a presentation in which each member provides a ten-minute summary and review of each film listed above. Consider: How is Catholicism presented in the film? Does the film have any connections to our reading on Catholicism and cinema? What is the theme of the film? How does the filmmaker reinforce that theme?
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Week 10 **Protestants and Movies**

- Tues
- Read:** Bryan Stone, “Modern Protestant Approaches to Film” [coursepack]
- Nov 8
- In class: Group 7 will give a presentation in which each member provides a ten minute summary and review of each film listed below:
 - Christian Mingle (2014) [Netflix]
 - Left Behind (2014) [Netflix]
 - Fireproof (2008) [You’re on your own]
 - God’s Not Dead (2015) [e-reserve]
 - The Omega Code (1999) [e-reserve]Consider: How is Christianity presented in the film? Does the film have any connections to our reading on Protestantism and cinema? Contrast the portrayal of Christianity in these films with portrayals of Christianity in the Catholic films we discussed last week.
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Thurs **Buddhism and Movies**

- Nov 10
- Read:** Francisca Cho, “Buddhism” [coursepack]
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Tues **Buddhism in Movies**

- Nov 15 Choose one of the following films to watch for class today:
- The Cup (2007) [e-reserve]
 - Spring, summer, fall, winter ... and spring [e-reserve]
 - Little Buddha (1994) [e-reserve]
 - Kundun (1997) [e-reserve]
- In class: Group 8 will give a presentation in which each member provides a ten-minute summary and review of each film listed above. Consider: All the members in the group should watch all three movies. The presentation should provide a brief overview of each film, then a comparison/contrast between the portrayal of Buddhism in each film.
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Thurs **Unit II Paper Due**

- Nov 17 Bring a printout of your paper to class to submit, and submit a digital copy to the dropbox in D2L. (Papers that are not submitted in person and to the dropbox will be considered late.)
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Unit III: Religious Themes in Film

Tues **Denizens of the Afterlife**

- Nov 22 Go to <http://uwsp.kanopystreaming.com/>
 Finish “Wings of Desire” on Kanopy Streaming.
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Thanksgiving Recess (Nov 24 through Nov 27)

Tues **Denizens of the Afterlife: Angels**

- Nov 29 Read Garrett, *Denizens of the Afterlife*, pages 56–81 [coursepack]
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Thurs **Denizens of the Afterlife: Demons!**

- Dec 1 Read Garrett, *Denizens of the Afterlife*, pages 81–94 [coursepack]
- Watch one of the following films:
- Crossroads (available on e-reserve)
 - Witches of Eastwick (available on e-reserve)
 - Devil’s Advocate (available on e-reserve)
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Tues **Heaven**

Dec 6 Read Garrett, *Heaven*, pages 95–113 [coursepack]

Thurs **Heaven**

Dec 8 Read Garrett, *Heaven*, pages 113–124 [coursepack]

Tues **Purgatory**

Dec 13 Read Garrett, *Purgatory*, 156–178 [coursepack]

Thurs **Purgatory**

Dec 15 Read Garrett, *Purgatory*, 178–189 [coursepack]
