HRS 183  Religion and Film  Spring 2008

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Office Hours: MW 9:00-10:00am; W 4:15-5:15pm; and by appointment

Course Description

An examination of the religious and spiritual dimensions of selected films from around the world. The cinematic arts are examined in relationship to religious and spiritual concerns, concepts, and values.

Course Content and Learning Objectives

The course content and learning objective would be that by the end of the course students should be able to analyze spiritual and religious themes in the global selection of films we have watched in class. Students will be able to examine films by learning to interpret the cinematic elements of character, gender, dialogue, image, mise en scène, lighting, and music. Students will be able to identify and critique religious perceptions in film and interpret the cultural significance of each represented world religion and spiritual theme.

Required Texts

Used books will help you defray the cost.

Understanding Movies. Louis Giannetti
Older editions are fine, but no further back than the 9th Edition. There are too many important recent films.

World Religions Today. John Esposito, Darrell Fasching, Todd Lewis.
Any edition.

Recommended Texts

Christian & Islamic Spirituality. Maria Jaoudi

Explorations in Theology and Film. Edited by C. Marsh & G. Ortiz

Film as Religion. John Lyden
Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies. Margaret Miles

Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in American Film. J. Marin & C. Ostwalt, Jr.

The Story of Film: A Worldwide History. Mark Cousins

Tsotsi. Athol Fugard

Class Schedule

Lecture & Discussion

Reading Assignments

Week 1
Principle Concepts in the Study of Religion and Film
Cinematic Elements of Film Study

Seven Years in Tibet
Jean-Jacques Annaud

World Religions Today, pages 2-33; 340-415; 416-494

Week 2
Seasons of Spiritual Maturation

Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring
Kim Ki-duk

World Religions Today, pages 340-415; 416-494

Week 3
The Power of the Mind

The Matrix
Andy & Larry Wachowski

World Religions Today, pages 340-415; 416-494

Week 4
Values and Redemption

Tsotsi
Gavin Hood

World Religions Today, review pages 2-33; new pages 34-62 (especially, “Cataclysms of Colonialism”)

Recommended Reading: Tsotsi by Athol Fugard
Week 5
No Violence: Just a Confucian Story
Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles
Zhang Yimou
World Religions Today, pages 340-415; 416-494

Week 6
From Minimalist Storytelling to Excess
The Curse of the Golden Flower
Zhang Yimou
World Religions Today, pages 316-449

Week 7
12 March 2008
IN-CLASS WRITING REVIEW
(Remember: Do not be late)

Week 8
Religion as Oppression
Water
Deepa Mehta
World Religions Today, pages 270-339

Week 9
Intoxicated with Life
Monsieur Ibrahim
François Dupeyrón
World Religions Today, pp. 194-269
Recommended Reading: Christian & Islamic Spirituality

Week 10
“The law changes, conscience doesn’t”
Sophie Scholl: The Final Days
Marc Rothemund
World Religions Today, pp. 64-129

Week 11
A Star is Born
Bonjour Monsieur Shlomi
Shemi Zarhin
World Religions Today, pp. 64-129

Week 12
Faith, Philosophy, and Political Choices
Pope John Paul II
John Kent Harrison
World Religions Today, pp. 130-193
Week 13
Part II

World Religions Today, pp. 130-193

Week 14
The Depiction of Christianity in the Cinema

World Religions Today, pp. 130-193
Recommended Reading: Christian & Islamic Spirituality

Week 15  14 May 2008

IN-CLASS WRITING REVIEW
(Remember: Do not be late)

Research Paper Due

Research Study Paper – See Course Policy

Utilizing your text, Understanding Movies, explain each of the following assigned films according to the specified chapters in Understanding Movies. Be sure to have at least 2 quotations from EACH Chapter assigned.

Each film assigned is to have three typed pages, double-spaced. Additional pages are optional and encouraged to voice your own opinions.

Kundun  Chapters 2, 6, and 8
Martin Scorsese

Dead Man Walking  Chapters 1, 3, 5, and 10
Tim Robbins

Little Buddha  Chapters 4, 7, and 9
Bernardo Bertolucci