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.

**Living Religions; 7th edition.** Mary Pat Fisher  
Only as far back as the 5th edition.

Recommended Texts

**Christian & Islamic Spirituality.** Maria Jaoudi

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

**Film as Religion.** John Lyden
Guns, Germs, and Steel. Jared Diamond

Night. Elie Wiesel

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

No electronics:

This includes cell phones and laptops which must be Off and out of sight during class.

Class Schedule

Lecture & Discussion

Film
(Films selected may vary)

Reading Assignments

Week 1
Principle Concepts in the Study of Religion and Film Seven Years in Tibet
Cinematic Elements of Film Study Jean-Jacques Annaud

Living Religions, pages 1-32; 134-181

Week 2
Seasons of Spiritual Maturation Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter. . . and Spring
Kim Ki-duk

Living Religions, pages 134-181
Week 3
The Power of the Mind

Living Religions, pages 134-181

Week 4
Religion as Oppression

Living Religions, pages 72-119

Week 5
From Confucian Storytelling to Excess

Living Religions, pages 182-213

Week 6
The Meaning of Relationships

Living Religions, pages 182-213

Week 7
10 March 2009

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

Week 8
The Complexities of Love

Living Religions, pages 376-433
Recommended reading: Christian & Islamic Spirituality by Maria Jaoudi

Week 9
A Star is Born

Living Religions, pages 235-294

Week 10
“The law changes, conscience doesn’t”  
Sophie Scholl: The Final Days  
Marc Rothemund  
Living Religions, pp. 235-294; 295-375  
Recommended reading: Night  

Week 11  
Testing Love  
Ushpizin  
Giddi Dar  
Living Religions, pages 235-294  

Week 12 & 13  
Mystic and Political Activist  
Karol: The Man Who Became Pope  
Giacomo Battiato  
Living Religions, pages 295-375  
Recommended reading: Christian & Islamic Spirituality; Night  

Week 14  
The Depiction of Christianity in the Cinema  
The Mission  
Raoul Joffé  
Living Religions, pages 295-375  
Recommended Reading: Christian & Islamic Spirituality; Guns, Germs, and Steel  

Week 15  
12 May 2009  

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

Research Study Paper – See Course Policy  

Please read carefully the California State University’s Advisory Standards for Writing.  
www.csus.edu/acaf/umanual/advstndrds.htm
No late papers accepted.

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.

Youth Without Youth
Francis Ford Coppola

Chapters 2, 6, and 8

The Visitor
Thomas McCarthy

Chapters 1, 3, 5, and 10

Joveux Noël
Christian Carion

Chapters 4, 7, and 9