REL 3111

Religion in Film

Section: RVC

Internet/Fully Online

Spring Term 2027

Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Professor Information

Erin Weston

Roles: Primary Instructor

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Office Hours: By appointment

Office Location: DM 322B

Department or Academic Unit: Department of Religious

Studies

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

Cinema is probably the most popular art form of the modern era. It has been highly influential in how society understands itself, and while it is not necessarily meant to be factual or historical in nature, it is often perceived as such. One cannot deny the influence of this medium generally, but also specifically, on our broader ideas of religion. In this course, students will examine religious themes, images, symbols, and characters in various feature and short films, a specific method of critical analysis, and the religious and societal effects of contemporary films.

Global Learning Course Objectives

- **Global Awareness** - Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the complex relationship between the dimensions of Western and Non-Western religions and filmmakers' artistic choices, and the impact of this relationship upon viewers' experience and interpretation of

the film.

- **Global Perspective** - Students will be able to analyze the dimensions of religion as they are portrayed from multiple filmmakers' perspectives.
- **Global Engagement** - Students will explore key religious issues as they relate to the portrayal of religion in film and suggest possible solutions.

This is a Discipline-specific Global Learning course that counts toward your graduation requirement.

Textbook and Course Materials

No Textbook Required

Required/Recommended: N/A

Authors: N/A

Publisher: N/A

Publication Date: N/A

Copyright Date: N/A

ISBN 10: N/A

ISBN 13: N/A

Chapters/Pages: N/A

Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for $22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

For more details, to compare costs, and to learn how to access your course materials, visit the Panther Book Pack information page on FIU OneStop.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- examine the role of media in the production of belief and understanding
- identify several basic dimensions of religion in film
- evaluate how artistic choices impact the viewer's perception of the religion, and analyze how theologically accurate these depictions may be
- examine the relationship between artistic choices and myth making
- recognize how artistic choices can impact our understanding of our own religions and other religious traditions around the world
- explore world religions through various film depictions

Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **Review the how to get started information** located in the course content
- **Introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self introduction video in the appropriate blog
- **Take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with Blackboard
- **Interact** online with instructor/s and peers
- **Review** and follow the course calendar
- **Log** in to the course at **least 3 times per week**.
- **Respond** to discussion boards, blogs and journal postings **within 3 days**
- **Respond** to messages **within 3 days**
- **Submit** assignments by the **corresponding deadline**

The instructor will:

- Log in to the course at least **5 times per week**
- Respond to discussion boards, blogs and journal postings

within **3 days or sooner**

- Respond to [emails/messages] **within 3 days or sooner**
- Grade assignments within **2 weeks or sooner** of the assignment deadline

Assignments & Assessments

Structure Of The Course

This class is a religious studies course where we will be looking at religion through the lens of film. The course is constructed in three main modules. The first section will cover a brief introduction to film. We will be introduced to some of the key elements of film making in order to help us better understand and analyze the films that we will be watching over the course of the semester. The second module uses Ninian Smart's Seven Dimensions of Religion as the basis to explore various world religions as they are portrayed in specific films. The third module will focus on student film critique presentations and film wiki project.

REL3111 Film Library Status

Discussion Forums

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when

determining what to post.

Introduce Yourself Video Blog

Blogs are an open communications tool for students to share their thoughts. Here you can post text, images, links and attachments, open for comments.

1. This course has 1 assignment untilizing the Video Blog tool. Within the lesson 1 folder you will find information on how to upload a video to YouTube and how to upload a video through Video Everywhere into the Introduce Yourself blog. Students will upload all course videos to their personal YouTube channel and then into the assignment's particular blog by the due date noted in the Blogs portion of this syllabus:
2. Blogs can be found in the Bog portion of the course menu or within the content area of the course.

Assessments

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements.

Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile

devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance please contact FIU Online Support Services .

Course Blogs

Blogs are an open communications tool for students to share their thoughts. Here you can post text, images, links and attachments, open for comments.

There will be eight blog topics. The topics will be posted on "Blog Topics" folder in the Course Content. Students must post well thought-out comments based on the required work throughout the semester. Participation is required and represents 15% of your final grade. Both the quantity and the quality of your posts will contribute to your grade. All students are required to participate in all the eight topics (at least 200 words). Blogs must be posted during the period they are assigned and are due by noon on the Monday after the end of the lesson.

Once you have composed your original posting, take some time to carefully review other postings within your discussion group. Pick two that are most interesting to you and provide meaningful, detailed, and constructive feedback.

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

Journal

A Journal reflection will be due at the end of each lesson, which will only be seen by you and the professor. These reflections will only be graded that they were completed, but not for content. This will provide an opportunity for students to interact privately with the professor in regards to the course content feel free to share your personal views on the film and how it affect your life. Journals may be a short paragraph, but must be turned in on time to receive credit. Altogether, the journal entries will be worth 10% of your overall grade.

Quizzes

There will be fully online quizzes covering each lesson. Your quiz scores will be averaged together for a final quiz score worth 20% of your final grade. All quizzes consist of 10 multiple-choice questions, and each question will be worth 10 points. A quiz will be available from Tuesday 12:00 am till Monday 11:59pm. Once you open a quiz, you will have 20 minutes to complete and submit it. You will have two attempts to take a quiz. The highest score will be counted.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements .

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Exams

There will be one cumulative exam based on the readings and materials covered throughout the course. The exam will be worth 20% of your final grade. The exam consists of multiple choice and true/false questions worth 2 points each. Exams will be available for one week from 12:00am to 11:59pm. Once you open an exam, you will have 100 minutes to complete and submit it.

The exam will utilize Honorlock, for more information, please refer to Honorlock FAQ page.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements .

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Capstone Essay

Throughout the course of the semester you have learned about the basic dimensions of religion, and how they manifest in various world traditions. We have explored and enhanced this knowledge through the use of film. For your capstone essay, you will write a film analysis that emphasizes the Religious Studies theory that we focused on in class. You will choose your own film with religious

content, and then analyze it using the theories and ideas covered in class and present it in a traditional film review. You may also add additional methods of film criticism if you desire. Before writing, you should familiarize yourself with the suggested resources on how to write a film review, but remember our analysis will emphasize the seven dimensions of religion.

This essay ought to thoughtfully reflect your learning throughout the semester. Remember to use examples from the film and citations to support your ideas.

Each essay will be between 1500 to 2000 words long and will be worth 18% of your grade. This is a formal academic essay, and students must cite their sources. MLA is the preferred citation style in Religious Studies. Do not present other people's film reviews as your own.

This paper will require 2 submissions. After your initial submission, the professor will provide feedback through Turnitin's grading/feedback features. Please review these comments before submitting your final draft.

If you have questions regarding how to cite or what to cite, ask me BEFORE you submit your essay. If you turn in your paper and you "accidentally" plagiarize parts of your essay, you will fail the assignment & be reported to the dept. It is better to be safe than sorry! To reiterate, ask me before the due date if you are unsure about how to cite your sources.

How to Write A Film Analysis Essay

Review the detailed Turnitin Instructions on how to submit your

assignments and how to review the Grademark comments (feedback) from your professor.

Late Papers: Late papers are only accepted under extreme and verifiable conditions. Papers are deducted 1 letter grade per calendar day and are only accepted within the first 3 days late.

Students are responsible for reading their messages and all announcements posted by the instructor. The instructor also reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus by means of announcements or messages with ample time allowed for students to respond and adjust appropriately.

Individual Wiki Page

After you have written your analysis, you will also create your own wiki page for your film. This wiki will be part of an ongoing Religion & Film Wiki project that your class will start. You will make a public page presenting your analysis of the film and applying the Religious Studies concepts, as well as presenting other relevant, important information. This assignment is worth 15% of your overall grade.

You may research other wikis, but you must write and create your own page. Please see the sample wiki in module 3 content area.

Other Resources:

Wiki How to Write A Movie Review

Seven Tips for Writing a Film Review

How to Write A Film Analysis Essay

Film Analysis Critique Guidelines

Wikipedia Film Criticism

*** Critic's Corner: A Guide to Film Critique by Philip C. Congleton

Course Requirements

In addition to the completion of writing assignments, blogs, quizzes, and exams, a key requirement for successful completion of this course will be an open mind. Students are expected to exhibit respect to all religious traditions and peoples at all times. Thus, disrespectful or derisive commentary will not be tolerated in this course. Religion is, after all, a very personal and sensitive subject for many.

On the other hand, class participants can expect academic freedom to express their views. Although religion can be personal, this is an academic course taken for college credit and thus students are expected to examine the topics rigorously. Religion shall not be exempt from the scrutiny placed on any and all academic subjects.

Grading

GRADING

Your final grade will be based on the quality of your assignments and your participation in this course. **Grades are not rounded. For example, an 89.7 is a "B+."**

Please see the Table, below, for a list of the major projects and points for each. If you feel that your final grade was incorrectly calculated, please let me know.

Final Grades Addendum

Final grades are non-negotiable, although if I have made a mistake posting your final grade, please let me know. By the time we have reached the final grade, it is TOO LATE to try to raise your grade. If Extra Credit opportunities are provided during the semester, you should take the time to complete them. DO NOT come to me at the end of the semester and ask for a grade change because you "deserve" a better grade, or because you really "want" a better grade and you normally receive "X" in your other classes. Your points are available to you throughout the semester; please make note of where you stand and take the initiative to meet with me if you have concerns.

Course Grades Distribution Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Weight
Intro Video Blog	1	2%
Journal	8	10%
Total	**10**	**100%**

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Weight
Blogs	8	15%
Individual Film Wiki	1	15%
Capstone Essay (2 submissions: Part I - 6% & Final Draft - 12%)	2	18%
Quizzes	8	20%
Exam	1	20%
Total	**10**	**100%**

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
A	95 to 100
A-	90 to 94
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86
B-	80 to 82
C+	77 to 79

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
C	70 to 76
D	60 to 69
F	0 to 59

Proctored Exams

This course uses Honorlock on the exams. For more information, please refer to Honorlock FAQ page.

Please visit our Student Proctored Exam Instructions webpage for important information concerning proctored exams, proctoring centers, and important forms.

Schedule of Topics

Module 1: Introduction to Film Studies

Module 2: The Seven Dimensions of Religion

Emotional / Experiential Dimension
Mythic / Narrative Dimension
Ritual Dimension
Ethical / Legal Dimension
Doctrinal / Philosophical Dimension
Social / Institutional Dimension
Material Dimension

Module 3: Student Presentations

This is an outline of the course. It is subject to change with written notice.

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via **the Canvas Inbox**. Check out the Canvas Conversations Tutorial or Canvas Guide to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox.

I will respond to all correspondence within **48 hours.**

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies, such as:

- University Policies
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity

- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Zoom Video Conference

Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities.

Zoom meetings can be accessed via the Zoom link in the course navigation menu. Once you click on the Zoom link, it will route you to join the meeting for the respective class session. You will also be able to view upcoming meetings, previous meetings that you have already joined, and meeting recordings. Before joining an actual class session:

- Reference the Zoom Student Tutorials to learn about the tool, how to access your meeting room, and share your screen.

- Access the Zoom Test Meeting Room to test out the software before joining an actual session.

If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact the

FIU Canvas Help Team. Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring.