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GENERAL INFORMATION

Professor Information



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Course Description And Purpose

Cinema is probably the most popular 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.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 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; and
- explore world religions through various film depictions.

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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.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Policies

Please review the [FIU's Policies](#) webpage. The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses.

Technical Requirements & Skills

One of the greatest barriers to taking an online course is a lack of basic computer literacy. By computer literacy we mean being able to manage and organize computer files efficiently, and learning to use your computer's operating system and software quickly and easily. Keep in mind that this is not a computer literacy course; but students enrolled in online courses are expected to have moderate proficiency using a computer. Please go to the "[What's Required](#)" webpage to find out more information on this subject.

This course utilizes the following tools:

- **YouTube**
- **Skype**
- **Video Everywhere**

Please visit our [Technical Requirements](#) webpage for additional information.

Technical Requirements and Skills

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Please visit our [Technical Requirements](#) webpage for additional information.

Accessibility and Accommodation

Please visit our [ADA Compliance](#) webpage for information about accessibility involving the tools used in this course.

Please visit [Blackboard's Commitment Accessibility](#) webpage for more information.

For additional assistance please contact FIU's [Disability Resource Center](#).

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Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

If you are looking for help for yourself or a fellow classmate, Panthers Care encourages you to express any concerns you may come across as it relates to any personal behavior concerns or worries you have, for the classmate's well-being or yours; you are encouraged to share your concerns with [FIU's Panthers Care website](#).

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) offers free and confidential help for anxiety, depression, stress, and other concerns that life brings. Professional counselors are available for same-day appointments. Don't wait to call 305-348-2277 to set up a time to talk or visit the online self-help portal.

Academic Misconduct Statement

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Academic Misconduct includes: **Cheating** – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. **Plagiarism** – The use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

Learn more about the [academic integrity policies and procedures](#) as well as [student resources](#) that can help you prepare for a successful semester.

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. This is a Global Learning Discipline Specific Course that counts towards your Global Learning graduation requirement.

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**

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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

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via Messages

Messages is a private and secure text-based communication system which occurs within a course among its Course members. Users must log on to Blackboard to send, receive, or read messages. The Messages tool is located on the Course Menu, on the left side of the course webpage. It is recommended that students check their messages routinely to ensure up-to-date communication.

Visit our [Writing Resources](#) webpage for more information on professional writing and technical communication skills.

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 be 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.

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.

Assignments

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.

26. This course has 1 assignment utilizing 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 assignments particular blog by the due date noted in the Blogs portion of this syllabus.

27. Blog 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](#).

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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 10% 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 if 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 topic and how it affect your life. Journals may be a short paragraph, but must be turned in online to receive credit. Altogether, the journal entries will be worth 9% 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.

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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 25% 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

<http://classroom.synonym.com/write-film-analysis-essay-4125.html>

From Notes to Essays: Writing a Film Analysis (From A Short Guide to Writing about Film)

[http://www.westport.edu/center/From notes to filmessay.htm](http://www.westport.edu/center/From%20notes%20to%20filmessay.htm)

Review the detailed [Turnitin Instructions](#) on how to submit your assignments and how to review the GraderMark 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.

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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

<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Movie-Review>

EHow – How to Write a Movie Critique

http://www.ehow.com/how_2278441_write-movie-critique.html

Seven Tips for Writing a Film Review

<http://www.dailywritingtips.com/7-tips-for-writing-a-film-review/>

How to Write A Film Analysis Essay

<http://classroom.synonym.com/write-film-analysis-essay-412.html>

Film Analysis Critique Guidelines:

<http://ohsfilmanalysis.blogspot.com/p/critique-guidelines.html>

Wikipedia Film Criticism

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_criticism

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

<http://www.mecfilms.com/critic1.htm>

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, course 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.

Skype

In this course we will use a free, online web tool, termed skype in order to schedule online meetings between students and Professor Weston.

With Skype, you can share a story, celebrate a birthday, learn a language, hold a meeting, work with colleagues – just about anything you need to do together every day. You can use Skype on whatever works best for you - on your phone or computer or a TV with Skype on it. It is free to start using Skype - to speak, see and instant message other people on Skype for example. You can even try out group video, with the latest version of Skype.

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Please select the following weblinks for assistance with navigating and utilizing **Skype**:

- [Getting Started with Skype](#)
- [How to Install Skype](#)
- [Navigating Skype](#)

Protocol For Technical Issues

If you have any technical problems,

- 1) Contact tech support to file a report, and
- 2) Contact me by email to let me know what is going on.

If you are having technical problems and an assignment is due,

- 1) E-mail me a copy of the assignment, so it is on time, and
- 2) Contact tech support.

Grading

| Course Requirements | | Number of Assignments | Weight |
|--|--|-----------------------|-------------|
| Intro Video Blog | | 1 | 1% |
| Journal | | 8 | 9% |
| Blogs | | 8 | 10% |
| Individual Film Wiki | | 1 | 15% |
| Capstone Essay (2 submissions: Part I - 10% & Final Draft - 15%) | | 2 | 25% |
| Quizzes | | 8 | 20% |
| Exam | | 1 | 20% |
| Total | | | 100% |

| Letter | Range | Letter | Range | Letter | Range |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|------------|
| A | 90 - 94 | B | 83 - 86 | C | 70 - 76 |
| A- | 87 - 89 | B- | 80 - 82 | D | 60 - 69 |
| B+ | 77 - 79 | C+ | 77 - 79 | F | 59 or less |

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COURSE CALENDAR

Module Lesson Schedule

All assessments and assignments in this course are conducted fully online and, unless otherwise noted in your syllabus, are due on the Monday of a given week at noon.

Course Introduction

Introduction

Jan. 7 - Jan.
21

Course Introduction Review and fully familiarize yourself with the course and site. Print and read the course syllabus and course calendar.

Tasks:

31. **Student Introduction Video Blog**

Module 1

Lesson 1

Jan. 7 - Jan.
21

PowerPoints:

- Introduction to Film
- The Nature of Narrative in Film
- Modes of Screen Reality

Read:

- Film Book Chapters (PDFs)
- "Film, Movies, Meaning" David Browne
- "Mise-en-scene Reference Guide"
- "Cinematography Reference Guide"
- "Editing Reference Guide"
- "Film Sound and Music Reference Guide"

Videos:

41. *Quentin Tarantino Discussing Making Films*
42. *Scorsese Discussing the Difference between Plot and Story*

Tasks:

43. **Introduce Yourself Video Blog**
44. **Quiz 1**
45. **Blog Post 1**
46. **Lesson 1 Reflection**

Module 2

Lesson 2

Jan. 21 - Feb.
4

PowerPoints:

- Introduction to Module 2
- The Emotional & Experiential Dimension of Religion

Read:

- "Can the Guilty be Faithful?" by Flesher & Torry
- "Understanding the Charismatic Movement" by Ed Stetzer

Module 2

- “The God Chemical: Brain Chemistry and Mysticism” by Barbara Bradley Hagerty

Videos:

52. Introduction Video
53. The Apostle
54. Renegade
55. Ayahuasca – Visions of Jungle Medicine: Adam Oliver Brown
TEDxUOttawa

Tasks:

56. Quiz 2
57. Blog Post 2
58. Journal 2 Reflection

PowerPoints:

- The Mythic and Narrative Dimension of Religion

Read:

- “Tormenting Christ” Flesher & Torry
- “The Uses of Film in Theology?” David John Graham
- “Redeeming Violence in the Films of Martin Scorsese” David John Graham
- “On Reappreciating Kurosawa’s” by Martin Scorsese

Videos:

64. Introduction Video
65. The Last Temptation of Christ
66. Kundun

Tasks:

67. Quiz 3
68. Blog Post 3
69. Journal 3 Reflection

PowerPoints:

- The Ritual Dimension of Religion

Read:

- “Shinto and Buddhist Metaphors in Departures” by Yoshiko Okuyama
- “Jai Santoshi Maa: On Seeing a Hindu Mythological Film” by Philip Lutgendorf

Videos:

73. Introduction Video
74. Departures
75. Jai Santoshi Maa

Lesson 3
Feb. 4 - Feb.
18

Lesson 4
Feb. 18 - Mar.
4

Module 2

Tasks:

- 76. Quiz 4
- 77. Blog Post 4
- 78. Journal 4 Reflection

PowerPoints:

- The Ethical and Legal Dimension of Religion

Read:

- “Fill the Void Film Review” by John C. Lyden
- “Orthodox Jewish Weddings”
- “Misconceptions About Arranged Marriages”
- “Shidduch” – Wikipedia
- “A Practical Approach to Talking About Honor Killing” by Deepak Chopra
- “Turkish Girl Buried Alive for Talking to Boys” by Adam Taylor
- “‘Honor Killings’ Have Morphed into ‘Honor Suicides’ in Turkey” by Ramita Navai
- “LGBT – Targets of Honor Killings” by Juli Hilton

Videos:

- 88. Introduction Video
- 89. Fill the Void
- 90. Bliss (Mutluku)

Tasks:

- 91. Quiz 5
- 92. Blog Post 5
- 93. Journal 5 Reflection

Lesson 5
Mar. 4 - Mar.
18

Spring Break
Mar. 11 - Mar.
18

- 94. Complete Lesson 5 Tasks

PowerPoint

The Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension of Religion

Read:

- Timeline: Remembering the Scopes Monkey Trial by Noah Adams
- “Taking Darwin Personally” by Diane Roberts

Videos:

- 98. Introduction Video
- 99. Inherit the Wind

Lesson 6
Mar. 18 - Mar.
25

Module 2

Tasks:

- 100. **Quiz 6**
- 101. **Blog Post 6**
- 102. **Journal 6 Reflection**

PowerPoint:

- The Social and Institutional Dimension of Religion

Read:

- “Whale Rider: The Re-enactment of Myth and the Empowerment of Women” by Kevin V. Dodd
- “Anti-Muslim Discrimination in Post 9/11 America” by Nadine Epstein
- "The Emerging Phenomena Of Post-9/11." by Ahmad Abdul Rasheed Shaykh

Lesson 7

Mar. 25 - Apr.
8

Videos:

- 107. Introduction Video
- 108. Whale Rider
- 109. Mooz-Lum
- 110. How 9/11 Shaped the Lives of American Muslims

Tasks:

- 111. **Quiz 7**
- 112. **Blog Post 7**
- 113. **Journal 7 Reflection**
- 114. **Capstone Paper - Post 1 Due April 8**

PowerPoint:

- The Material Dimension of Religion

Read:

- “Devotional Cinema” Nathaniel Dorsky
- The Global Religious Landscape – Pew Research

Lesson 8

Apr. 8 - Apr.
15

Videos:

- 118. Baraka

Tasks:

- 119. **Quiz 8**
- 120. **Blog Post 8**
- 121. **Journal 8 Reflection**
- 122. **Capstone Paper - Final Draft - April 15**

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Module 3

Read:

Lesson 9
Apr. 15 - Apr.
27

- “Film Reviews”

Tasks:

- 124.
- 125.

Wiki Presentation Due April 22rd
Final Exam - Due April 27th

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