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Representing Religion in World Cinema

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**Summer Session 2 2016**

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**All course information posted on Camino**

**Course Description:**

**RSOC 121: Representing Religion in World Cinema**

A great deal of our information about our own and other religions is communicated in contemporary films from around the world.  This course will examine various films from various cultures and the ways religion is portrayed, stereotyped and represented in this powerful visual medium.  Investigating both sacred texts and traditions of specific religions and the ways film enhances, provokes or misrepresents various religious themes and motifs will foster a dialogue and insight around the diverse and common features of contemporary lived religion.

**Course Rationale:**

The following are the goals for the course that we will pursue as a foundation for an ongoing process of reflection on religion and world cinema:

1. This course seeks to employ film to study religion, as well as to use religion to study film.  We will examine the various aspects, characteristics and genres of film to assist in the investigation, study and discussion of religion as it is manifest in its myriad forms in our world.
2. A specific focus of our study will be the examination of how religion is represented in world cinema.  This will involve developing skills for discerning how representation operates in this visual medium and identifying how this affects the understanding of religion in general and in particular.
3. Films function like religion in three ways: in their content, form and reception.  Thus, we will explore film content and how it creates a worldview (myth) with its own moral code and rituals.  We will investigate film forms or genres and the ways that they cluster together a unique worldview, moral perspective and ritual enactment.  We will also examine the ways films are received by audiences and how they provoke new ways of living and connecting with others, as well as thresholds to the experience of the numinous.
4. For religions to persist throughout history they require being translated into new lived experiences, languages and cultures (“transmediated”). We will look closely at how this takes place in film and the effects and consequences of this translation.

**Course Objectives:**

Two core learning objectives are the focus of this RTC 3 course:

3.1 Students will be able to identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions, specifically those at the intersection of religion and film.

3.2 Students will be able to evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society, specifically how the representation of religion in film influences and frames those questions.

***Cinema Studies* Pathway:**

This course is associated with Pathway(s) in the Cinema Studies Pathway. If you declare a Pathway in this area you may use a representative piece of work from this course in the Pathway Portfolio you will complete during your senior year. Recommendation: Please keep electronic copies of your work.

**Required Texts:**

All readings will be posted on Camino.

Assigned films are required viewing.

**Assessment and Grading**

Because this is an online course there is both an individual role in participating and a group role.  For this reason, when it comes to assessment, there are basically two types of assignments: ***individual assignments*** and ***group assignments***.

Individual Assignments

There are two types of **individual assignments** - *individual assignments posted in each Module* (25%) based on the readings and film viewings and due in the designated drop box each Tuesday and Friday by midnight during the course.  The other individual assignment is the *individual final project*(25%).  The information on this final project is in the “Final Project” Module on Camino and will be accessible during the first week of the class so you can begin thinking about what you would like to do.  There are several options available for the individual final project and you can get information on them in the Final Project Module: “Guidelines for the final project.”

Group Assignments

There are also two types of ***group assignments***.  One of the group assignments is the *group discussions* (25%) that are part of Modules 1 through 10.  Each discussion has a prompt or project online and each student is required to make at least one contribution to the discussion and also to respond to one other student in a discussion thread.  This requirement is for each of the 10 discussions.  The other group assignment is the *Group Project* (25%).  Early in the course we will divide into groups and for the group project you are asked to work with your other group members to provide a online presentation introducing the basic elements and aspects of your group's assigned religion [Group Project Part 1 - 10%].  In the final week of class each group will present a film festival on the ways your assigned religion is represented in film [Group Project Part 2 - 15%]. There are guidelines for this group project in Module 10 folder and it will be available the first week of class.  All work on the group project and its presentation will take place online.

Thus, course credit is assessed in the following way:

              Individual Assignments (9)                     25%

              Group Discussions (10)                            25%

              Group Project                                             25%

              Individual Final Project                            25%

***Grading Scale***

94%-100%         A

90%-93%           A-

87%-89%           B+

83%-86%           B

80%-82%           B-

77%-79%           C+

73%-76%           C

70%-72%           C-

67%-69%           D+

63%-66%           D

60%-62%           D-

**Instructor feedback:**reaches students through comments and grading on individual assignments and projects, as well as on group discussions (I will be a part of these discussions but your grade for them will be privately posted).  I also invite you to chat with me anytime you would like via Skype or Zoom.

***Disability Accommodation Policy:***To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahmann Center in Benson, room 214, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

***Academic Integrity Policy:***The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of F for the course.  In addition, a student found guilty of a dishonest act may be subject to sanctions up to and including dismissal from the University as a result of the student judicial process as described in the Community Handbook.  A student who violates copyright laws, including those covering the copying of software programs, or who knowingly alters official academic records from this or any other institution is subject to similar disciplinary action.