
	<p>RSOC 121: (36086) Representing Religion in World Cinema MW 4:45-6:30 PM (AlumSci 120)  Winter 2015 Prof. Joe Morris, Ph.D.; Kenna 315; jamorris@scu.edu Office Hours: MW 3:30-4:30 PM, after class or by appointment</p>
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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:

Lyden, John C. *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*. New York: New York University Press, 2003. [ISBN: 0-8147-5181-4]

Lyden, John C. *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Various other articles posted on Camino website; Classroom viewing of required films

Assessment and Grading

Attendance and Participation: (30% of grade)

As a RTC 3 course, "Representing Religion in World Cinema" is designed to examine, study and discuss issues and problems generated by the explicit and implicit representations of religion in film. This course relies heavily on attendance and participation, reading and discussion of various cultural and religious texts, viewing and discussing specific films, as well as writing and creatively considering the various aspects of the interplay between religion, spirituality, world cinema and representation. There are three things included in participation: **attendance** and **contributing qualitatively and quantitatively** to discussions. Therefore, all students are expected to be present, on time, prepared and active participants at each class for presentations, film viewings and discussions which constitute the core of this course. Should an absence occur, it is necessary to inform the professor before or immediately after the specific missed class. Absences are excused only with written verification. For each unexcused absence there will be a drop in your final participation grade. It is also the student's responsibility to be on time for class. Texting and other computer-related distractions are not permitted. Texting during class merits an absence for that class. Please have the courtesy to have your phone turned off during class.

Also included in the participation grade are the **post-film viewing online film discussions** (FD) on Camino and the **reading assignments** that accompany each discussion class' readings (RA) which are to be submitted online in the Camino drop-box one half hour before that class begins. All course materials will be posted on the Camino course website. (30% of grade) [**3.1 learning objective:** multiple readings provide diverse perspectives on various issues on film and its representation of religion. The class discussion seeks to evaluate the ethical issues in readings and their implications accompanied by concrete illustration from world cinema. **3.2 learning objective:** John Lyden's text examines the three common elements shared by religion and film and essential to their core: myth or worldview, ritual and ethics. These three are used throughout the course to frame open ended questions facing contemporary society, specifically how the representation of religion in film influences and frames those questions.]

Projects: (45% of grade)

1] **Project 1:** Critical analysis of one film of your choosing employing John Lyden's categories in *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*. Length: 4-6 pages. [20%] [**3.1 and 3.2 learning objective:** this essay seeks to assist the students to examine a film through the three lenses (myths, morals, rituals) that it shares with religion and to compare and contrast how their selected film functions like religion under these categories. The assignment is crafted to attain familiarity and facility with this method and these categories as we move to examine specific religions as they are represented in film.]

2] **Group Project: Part 1:** After your group selects a religion, an in class presentation of the core elements of that religion is presented to the class before viewing the film that captures a representation of your selected religion. **Part 2:** Designing a Film Festival on the representation of your group's religion on film (In class presentation: 3/9 & 3/11) [25%] [**3.1 and 3.2 learning objective:** students focus on contemporary questions portrayed in film, identify diverse perspectives on those questions and evaluate the representation of their selected religion in film.]

Final Project: (25% of grade)

Choose a film that evokes your selected group religion and write a research paper that seeks to analyze the various ways this specific religion is represented in the film. You are free to use one of the films you presented in your group presentation and to probe it more deeply in your analysis. Use Lyden's texts and the sources examined in class as well as your own other sources to compare and contrast the representation of religion in the film you selected with the lived experience of that religion and the ethical issues raised in the film as they engage your selected religion. This would be classified as a "critical essay" as characterized by Timothy Corrigan in *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*. (6-8 pages) (25%)

[Both **learning objectives 3.1 and 3.2:** The topic of this assignment is to be contemporary. It is necessary to identify diverse perspectives on the topic. Also, the

student is required to evaluate the ethical positions on the question of the representation of their selected religion in the specific film.]

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-
59% & below	F

OTHER INFORMATION:

Disabilities Syllabus Statement

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, www.scu.edu/disabilities as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information, you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.

Title IX Syllabus Statement

Santa Clara University upholds a zero tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence or stalking, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to www.scu.edu/studentlife and click on the link for the University's [Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie at 408-554-3043 or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethicspoint: www.ethicspoint.com

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.