

## *SCTR 139: Biblical Transfigurations: The Bible in Fiction and Film*

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Santa Clara University – Winter 2016  
MW: 7:20-9:05 PM; AlumSci 120  
Instructor: Prof. Joe Morris, Ph.D.  
Kenna 315/jamorris@scu.edu

### **Course Description**

This course will examine representations of the Bible in contemporary fiction and film. The course aims to explore how contemporary literary and cinematic texts have used biblical sources, how these biblical sources have been adapted and what these intertextual adaptations reveal about the concerns and purposes of their authors and readers/viewers. [Prerequisite: Intermediate level course (SCTR 20-99, TESP 20-99, or RSOC 20-99) or another course approved as fulfilling the intermediate level Core requirement in Religious Studies and completion of 88 quarter units.]

### **Course Rationale and Objectives**

While the use of the Bible in literature was often quite explicit in the past, in our contemporary cultural moment the use, influence and significance of the Bible in fiction and film often goes unnoticed. This course seeks to assist students to recognize and understand the various uses of the Bible in contemporary fiction and film. Particular attention will be given to identifying and studying specific Biblical passages, stories, symbols and motifs as they are used today by novelists, short story writers and films. In addition, the course is designed to examine how these biblical sources have been adapted and what these intertextual adaptations reveal about the concerns and purposes of their authors and readers/viewers. 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 in the intertextual proclivities of the Bible as it is contextualized in contemporary fiction 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.

### **Required Texts**

The Bible. (online or recent edition of both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures)

Reinhartz, Adele. *Bible and Cinema: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Various postings on CAMINO course site.

### **Assessment and Grading**

#### ***Attendance and Participation:***

As a third level religious studies course, “Biblical Transfigurations: The Bible in Fiction and Film” is designed to examine and study the implicit and explicit adaptations of the Bible in fiction and film. With no formal tests, this course relies heavily on on-time attendance and participation, reading, viewing and discussing of various assigned cultural and religious texts, as well as writing and creatively considering the various aspects of the intertextual relationships between the Bible and contemporary literature and cinema. There are three things included in class 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 and discussions which constitute the core of this course. The **assignments** (other than the “projects”) that accompany each class’ readings are to be completed one half hour before the start of the specific class. **(30% of grade) [3.1 learning objective:** multiple readings provide diverse perspectives on various issues raised by the reimagining of biblical stories and motifs in fiction and film. The class discussions seek to evaluate the ethical issues emerging or suggested by their new context in fiction and film and to examine the intertextual consequences and transformations. **3.2 learning objective:** studying the section of the Bible in its original context and then as reimagined in contemporary fiction and film, students will evaluate the implications and issues raised by the new context and apply the key principles suggested by biblical literary criticism and contextual theology.]

**Projects: (45% of grade)**

1] Project 1: Analysis of a short story or fiction narrative for Biblical references, allusions or intertextual adaptation. With a method provided, students select two biblical references and write a 4 page (minimum) paper comparing the Biblical texts in their context with their use and meaning in the fiction under study. [10%] **[3.1 and 3.2 learning objective:** this essay seeks to identify the diverse perspectives of two texts – a selected short story or novel and a biblical story, image, character or symbol suggested or explicitly used by the selected fiction. Through a comparison of this intertextual arrangement, the student then evaluates the ethical and ideological issues raised by each context.]

2] Project 2: Analysis of a film for Biblical references, allusions or intertextual adaptations. With a method provided, students select two biblical references and write a 3-5 page paper comparing the Biblical texts in their context with their use and meaning in the film under study. [10%]

**[3.1 and 3.2 learning objective:** this essay seeks to identify the diverse perspectives of two texts – a selected film and a biblical story, image, character or symbol suggested or explicitly used by that film. Through a comparison of this intertextual arrangement, the student then evaluates the ethical and ideological issues raised by each context.]

3] Group Project: Student groups create an in-class presentation that illustrates the various uses of the Bible in fiction and film including their biblical context and the transformation of those texts in fiction and film. (March 7 and 9, 2016) [25%] **[3.1 and 3.2 learning objective:** students identify diverse perspectives yielded by the dual contexts of the use of the Bible which leads to an evaluation of the ethical positions of the Bible reimagined in this new context. Students apply the skills in biblical literary criticism and interpretation to the uses of the Bible.]

**Final Project: (25% of grade)**

This project offers options that examines an adaptation of a contemporary short story or novel that has been adapted to film that *both* have biblical references, symbols, images, narrative parallels or allusions. Once again, a method will be provided to assist in this analysis of adaptations. OR a project that demonstrates the intertextual uses of biblical texts, images, characters, themes or plots in both an example from fiction and one from film. [Both **learning objectives 3.1 and 3.2** are incorporated in the final project. Students identify the various perspectives of each text – Bible, fiction, film and their intertextual relationship. Each context presents ideological and ethical positions they will evaluate. The method provided for analysis and comparison is derived from Biblical literary criticism and contextual theology.]

**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](http://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](http://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](tel:408-554-3043) or by email at [bguthrie@scu.edu](mailto:bguthrie@scu.edu). Reports may be submitted online through [www.scu.edu/osl/report](http://www.scu.edu/osl/report) or anonymously through Ethicspoint: [www.ethicspoint.com](http://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.