

# Religion and Film



Term: Fall 2016  
Professor Babak Rahimi

**Course:** Religion 150  
Critical Religion Studies

**Section ID:** 873889

**Location:** CSB 004

**Day/Time:**  
11:00-11:50am  
**MWF**

**Office Hours:** Monday 9-11am and Wednesday 10-11am

## **Description of the Course**

This seminar offers an introduction to the study of film and religion. We do not seek to understand how film and religion simply intersect in the medium of visual aesthetics, but how film could perform a religious worldview with distinct set of practices. This class, therefore, serves as a way to understand cinema as representing a religiosity in its own right, and a way of being in the world.

## Objectives

The basic goals of the course are as follow:

1. To acquire basic themes in the relationship between cinematic experience and religiosity.
2. To foster an alternative understanding of religion as a distinct human practice.
3. Study of non-American cultures and histories.
4. To gain a familiarity with basic theoretical debates on religion, secularism and cinematic modernity.
5. To improve one's writing and critical skills, including creative writing.

## Prerequisites

This is an upper-division religion course. You are required to have background in essay writing. No religion course prerequisites for this class.

## Assignments and grades:

Class attendance and participation	20%
Film reviews	20%
Midterm Essay	20%
Synopsis	10%
Short Screenplay	30%

## Exams

Midterm paper: a 1000-word paper, answering one of the provided four questions. The paper will be due a week after the questions are handed out in class. Please note 1000 words is the maximum. Your paper should be analytical. You should provide a short bibliography at the end of your paper, number your pages and also create a thesis statement, articulated in the introduction of the paper. I will provide more instructions about the midterm paper a week before the due date. Submit your paper via: [religion101ucsd@gmail.com](mailto:religion101ucsd@gmail.com). Due date: Friday, October 28<sup>st</sup>, 11:59pm.

Final Exam: A 4000 to 5000-words screenplay due on **December 7**. Your screenplay is a creative exercise and it should be narrative (of any kind) that would involve "religion" as a theme. The pages should be numbered. Your screenplay is open to any historical or social settings, but religion has to be a main feature of the text. As for matter of presentation, it does not need to abide by any formal rules or writing format, although English standards such as grammar or spellings will apply. What I want you to do is to come up with a *cinematic story* that involves religion or a religious theme. Be creative. Be original. I will evaluate you based on creativity and also depth of understanding religion, whatever that maybe, through the cinematic writing. The films you will be watching, the lectures and

discussions should provide you with ideas and structure for your screenplay. [religion101ucsd@gmail.com](mailto:religion101ucsd@gmail.com)

\* You are expected to give a short presentation of your screenplay in class (please see the schedule)

Extra Credits: For attending special events, you can earn extra credits toward your grade in class. I will inform you about extra credit opportunities throughout the course.

### Film Reviews

You are required to write 300 to 500 words weekly film reviews. You can choose any film you like and write a review, as long as you discuss aspects of “religion” (i.e. representation, practice, experiences, etc...) in your film review. Your film reviews are due on Sunday nights at 11:59pm.

- The Internet Movie Database <http://us.imdb.com>
- Complete Film Listing <http://www.corona.bc.ca/films>

Class attendance and participation: your attendance and participation in class is a must! You are expected to attend each class and express your views, engage in discussions and show what you have learned based on the reading assignments. You can be excused from only two classes for the term. Any subsequent absences will effect your 20% attendance and participation grade.

## **Class Policy**

### *Late papers:*

Late papers will be penalized a half letter grade for each day that they are late. Please turn in your papers in class, *not* via email or fax.

### ● *Plagiarism*

A major part of your course assignments involves writing based on your assigned reading. So, make sure to cite your sources, either quoted directly or paraphrased, so to avoid plagiarism. See me if you have any questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism.

### ● *Assistance*

In case of disability that may require accommodation, please see me on the first day of class.

## **Readings**

It is important for each student to know that this upper-division course requires weekly reading. You will be expected to understand the readings and create thesis statements and make support of your claims with evidence in your writings.

## **Required Text**

Course Reader:

Cal Copy

3251 Holiday Ct La Jolla CA 92037

858-4529949

***WARNING: Some of the films viewed in the seminar contain scenes of explicit sexuality, violence, and offensive language. Our aim to watch these films is primarily for educational purposes.***

## **Schedule of Classes**

Instructions days: September 22-December 2

Final Week: December 3-10

Winter Quarter ends: December 10

49 Days of Instruction

### **Holidays:**

Veterans Day: November 11

Thanksgiving Holiday: November 24-25

President's Day (Monday, February 16)

## **Week 1, September**

### **September 23, Friday**

- Introduction to Class

## **Week 2**

### **September 26, Monday**

- Defining Film:

### **September 28, Wednesday**

- Defining Film: André Bazin

Film: *What is Cinema?*

Reading: Course Reader, 3-26.

### **September 30, Friday**

- Defining Film: André Bazin

Film: *What is Cinema?*

Reading: Course Reader, 3-26.

## **Week 3 October**

### **October 3, Monday**

- Defining Religion

Reading: Course Reader, 27-50

### **October 5, Wednesday**

- Defining Religion

Film: *Monty Python*

Reading: Course Reader, 27-50.

**October 7, Friday**

- Defining Religion

Film: *Five*

Reading: Course Reader, 27-50.

**Week 4**

**October 10, Monday**

- Meaning

Film: *The Taste of Cherry* (1997); Abbas Kiarostami

Reading: Course Reader, 51-90.

**October 12, Wednesday**

- Meaning

Film: *The Taste of Cherry* (1997)

Reading: Course Reader, 51-90.

**October 14, Friday**

- Meaning

Film: *The Taste of Cherry* (1997)

Reading: Course Reader, 51-90.

**PICK UP MIDTERM QUESTIONS**

## **Week 5**

### **October 17, Monday**

- Meaning

Film: *La Dolce Vita* (1960); Director, Federico Fellini

Reading: Course Reader, 92-126.

### **October 19, Wednesday**

- Meaning

Film: *La Dolce Vita* (1960)

Reading: Course Reader, 92-126.

### **October 21, Friday**

- Meaning

Film: *La Dolce Vita* (1960)

Reading: Course Reader, 92-126.

## **Week 6**

### **October 24, Monday**

- Meaning

Film: *La Dolce Vita* (1960); Director, Federico Fellini

Reading: Course Reader, 127-148.

**Your Synopsis is due (email it)!**

**October 26, Wednesday**

- Meaning

Film: *La Dolce Vita*

Reading: Course Reader, 127-148.

**October 28, Friday**

- Meaning

Film: *La Dolce Vita*

Reading: Course Reader, 127-148.

**EMAIL YOUR MIDTERMS (11:59pm)!**

**Week 7 November**

**October 31, Monday**

- Sacrifice

Film: *The Sacrifice* (1986); Andrei Tarkovsky

Reading: The Course Reader, 149-166.

**November 2, Wednesday**

- Sacrifice

Film: *The Sacrifice* (1986)

Reading: the Course Reader, 149-166.

**November 4, Friday**

- Sacrifice

Film: *The Sacrifice* (1986)

Reading: The Course Reader, 149-166.



## **Week 8**

### **November 7, Monday**

- Faith

Film: *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988); Martin Scorsese

Reading: The Course Reader, 167-236.

### **November 9, Wednesday**

- Faith

Film: *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)

Reading: The Course Reader,

Reading: The Course Reader, 167-236.

### **November 11, Friday**

- Faith

Film: *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)

Reading: The Course Reader, 167-236.

## **Week 9**

### **November 14, Monday**

- Death

Film: *The Seventh Seal* (1957); Ingmar Bergman

Reading: The Course Reader, 237 to the end.

### **November 16, Wednesday**

- Death

Film: *The Seventh Seal* (1957)

Reading: The Course Reader, 237 to the end.

**November 18, Friday**

- Death

Film: *The Seventh Seal* (1957)

Reading: The Course Reader, 237 to the end.

**Week 10**

**November 21, Monday**

- Death

Film: *The Seventh Seal* (1957); Ingmar Bergman

Reading: The Course Reader, 237 to the end.

**November 23, Wednesday**

Film: *The Seventh Seal* (1957); Ingmar Bergman

Reading: The Course Reader, 237 to the end.

**November 25, Wednesday**

Film: *The Seventh Seal* (1957); Ingmar Bergman

Reading: The Course Reader, 237 to the end.

**Week 11**

**November 28, Monday**

Presentations

**November 30, Wednesday**

Presentations

**December 2, Friday**

Presentations

**December 7, Wednesday**

**Submit your papers  
(via email)**