

WORLD FILMS, WORLD FAITHS

RELST 145 (Also has CMS credit) / Autumn 2018

Instructor: Prof. S. Brent Rodríguez Plate ("Prof Plate")

Time: MW 2.30-3.45. Required screenings: Sun 8-11pm, BEN 201

E-mail: splate@hamilton.edu

Phone: x4587

Office hours: 1.00 - 2.00pm Mon/Wed, or by appt. Room 108 Benedict Hall

Course Goals and Aims:

This course will introduce the mythical stories, ritual practices, communal activities, and intellectual beliefs of several major religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism) through the medium of film. The course aims to show how religious people around the world live and struggle and find joy in their lives. Film allows us a chance to see and hear people (even when fictional) and to think about the *lived lives* of people in their *religious worlds*.

This is a religious studies course, mixed with attention to film form. We'll spend time learning about aspects of film production (cinematography, editing, etc.), and use that to think again about religious traditions. We will learn about specific religious traditions, and also about broader religious topics like myths, rituals, symbols, beliefs, and texts.

Course Materials:

Students will need to purchase the following books:

-*Judaism: A Very Short Introduction*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press, 2014.

-*Christianity: A Very Short Introduction*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press, 2014.

-*Islam: A Very Short Introduction*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press, 2012.

-*Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press, 2016.

-*Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press, 2013.

-In addition, a number of readings are available at Blackboard, under the "Documents" folder (Noted as BB in the course schedule below).

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution:

There are 1,000 points possible in this class. The breakdown is like this:

50	-Attendance
300	-Weekly responses (15 in total)
150	-In class, small group responses
250	-Film Review Essay
250	-Final

Attendance:

Taken every day. Each student begins with 50 points for attendance. Absences will be subtracted as follows:

1 absence	0 points deducted
2 absences	5 points deducted
3 absences	15 points deducted Etc...

Late Arrivals: Each late arrival will count as ½ an absence. So, if you are late 4 times during the term, your grade will begin to go down.

Cell Phones/ electronic devices, etc: You are expected to treat this classroom as if you were on an airline flight: That is, all electronic devices must be turned off and safely stowed away for the duration of our flights. Cell phones will not be tolerated in this classroom, and laptops are not allowed. A ringing phone or texting during class will result in that student being marked absent for the day.

Weekly Responses (WR):

We will screen one film a week. Each film will require a printed response of 250 words in conjunction with the weekly readings. See the document at BB for further details on these assignments. These are due at every Wednesday's class where noted below (no late WRs will be accepted; if your printer is malfunctioning, be sure to send an emailed copy before class begins).

In addition: You are required to attend two outside lectures/screenings (events noted throughout the schedule below) and write a response on each of those: in one paragraph describe the main focus of the film/lecture, and in a second paragraph give your response/reaction in light of things learned in class. If you would like to attend other outside lectures/screenings, you can write a WR for extra credit (limit of two for the semester).

In Class Responses (CR):

You will be assigned to a small group to work with through the semester. Each Friday, Prof Plate will show 1 or 2 brief scenes from the week's film. You will then discuss one of the scenes with your group, and generate a collective response. Everyone should contribute to discussion, and each week a different student will write up collective notes and will be responsible to make a 3minute oral presentation to the rest of the class, noting the film clip's relevance for the week's topics. Each student will present two times during the semester. Your grade for this section of the class will be based on your two presentations, and at the end of the semester each of you will evaluate the fellow members of your group for their contributions to these small group discussions.

Film Review Essay:

This exercise will demonstrate your abilities to view film through "religious eyes." More about this in due time, but the basics are that students will take one film (not screened in class) and make an argument about one specific religious dimension of the film. The paper will be 1200-1400 words, and due before spring break.

Final:

The final is comprehensive and made up of short definitions and essay questions.

Course Outline

Introducing Religion
Introduction to class
<u>Religion and the Sacred:</u> Read Paden, pp. 47-49, + Read through the definitions of religion at Blackboard for today (BB). Think about what definitions of religion you agree with most, and disagree with most, and come to class prepared to discuss.
<u>Worlds:</u> Read Paden, "Worlds," pp. 51-65
<u>Worlds on Film:</u> Read Plate, "The Altar and the Screen" (BB)
<u>Evening Screening:</u> <i>Baraka</i> (US, et al; dir. Fricke, 96min)
WR #1 due: Using <i>Baraka</i> as an example, how can we see relations between films and religious worlds?
<u>Myth:</u> Read Paden, 69-92

<u>Ritual</u> : Read Paden, 93-109, 112-118
<u>Evening Screening</u> : <i>Eve and the Fire Horse</i> (Canada; dir. Kwan, 92min)
WR #2 due : How do myths and rituals operate in the lives of people? How does <i>Eve and the Fire Horse</i> demonstrate this influence?
Judaism
Readings for week: <i>Judaism</i> . from Book of Genesis: Creation story and Abraham cycle (BB)
Evening Screening: <i>Ushpizin</i> (Israel; dir. Dar, 92min)
WR #3 due : Prompt TBA
Readings: from <i>Judaism</i> .
Evening Screening: <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> (US; dir. Jewison, 180min)
WR #4 due : Prompt TBA
Christianity
Readings for week: <i>World Religions</i> , Christianity chapter
Evening Screening: <i>Son of Man</i> (South Africa; dir. Dornford-May, 86min)
WR #5 due : Prompt TBA
Readings: From the gospels, Nicene Creed (BB) Beginning today: Individual meetings with students about film review essay. Sign up in class for a 10min discussion with Prof Plate during this week. Bring in, at least, title of film to write about and a thesis statement. Counts as WR #6
Evening Screening: <i>The Life of Brian</i> (UK; dir. Gilliam, 94min)
WR #7 due : Prompt TBA
Reserved for discussion about the film review essay
Reserved for discussion about the film review essay
Film Review Essay Due today via email to Prof Plate
Spring Break

	Islam
1 Apr-Mon	Readings for week: <i>World Religions</i> , Islam chapter
3 Apr-Wed	Evening Screening: <i>Le Grand Voyage</i> (France/Morocco; dir. Ferroukhi, 108min)
5 Apr -Fri	<u>WR #8 due:</u> Prompt TBA
8 Apr- Mon	Readings for week: TBA
10 Apr- Wed	Evening Screening: <i>Matir Moina</i> ("The Clay Bird"; France/Pakistan/Bangladesh; dir. Masud, 94min)
11 Apr	WR option: Ron Grimes lecture, SCCT Kennedy Aud, 4-5.30
12 Apr -Fri	<u>WR #9 due:</u> Prompt TBA
	Hinduism
15 Apr-Mon	Readings for week: <i>World Religions</i> , Hinduism chapter
17 Apr-Wed	Evening Screening: <i>Lagaan</i> (India; dir. Gowariker, 224min)
19 Apr-Fri	<u>WR #10 due:</u> Prompt TBA
22 Apr-Mon	Readings for week: TBA
24 Apr-Wed	Evening Screening: <i>Water</i> (Canada/India; dir. Deepa Mehta, 117min)
26 Apr -Fri	<u>WR #11 due:</u> Prompt TBA
	Buddhism (and Shinto)
29 Apr-Mon	Readings for week: <i>World Religions</i> , chapter on Buddhism
1 May-Wed	Evening Screening: <i>Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter . . . and Spring</i> (South Korea; dir. Ki-Duk, 103min)
3 May-Fri	<u>WR #12 due:</u> Prompt TBA
6 May- Mon	Readings for week: <i>World Religions</i> , pp. 238-269
8 May- Wed	Evening Screening: <i>Princess Mononoke</i> (Japan; dir. Miyazaki, 134min)
10 May-Fri	<u>WR #13 due:</u> Prompt TBA
13 May-Mon	Final Review
17 May-Fri	Final Exam: 9-12