

Matthew J. Pereira, PhD. Cell Phone: (310) 483-0862 **Email:** matthew.j.pereira@okstate.edu

Days and Time: M, W, F 10:30 – 11:20 am

Location: CLB 319

Office Hours: SSH 160; T 1:00 – 3:00 PM; TH 10:00 – 11:30 AM

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Religion and religious themes are often embedded with and across film in explicit and more implicit ways which continue to participate in shaping culture and society. In this introductory course, we will begin by introducing the academic discipline of Film Studies and its relation to Religion, then we progress to some historical narrative around the development of the film making industry prior to transitioning to a thematic approach wherein we will focus on particular religious traditions and films therein exploring the ways by which religion and of film reflect and also shape culture and society. Furthermore, we will reflect upon the historical and geographical contexts in which the films were produced in order to evaluate any relevant connections between the location of the film and its narrative and intentions. We will also seek to employ and consider contemporary topics and theories pertaining to religious studies when evaluating religion and film.

CONTENT OF FILMS: The content of the films may varies but often could include explicit language along with scenes that are violent and/or sexual. In order to gain a critical understanding of the films in their entirety, we will not censure any of the content in the films viewed and discussed throughout the semester. We will not have alternative film viewing options, therefore, please do let me know if you have any concerns prior to committing to the course. All students must watch the required films – no exceptions. Many of the required films will include violence, sexual situations, drug or alcohol use and language that some may find offensive. Neither the instructor nor OSU are endorsing such behavior. If you are unsure what sort of explicit content the films may contain, IMDB has a useful Parent's Guide that describes these aspects of the films.

FILM VIEWING REQUIREMENTS: You are responsible for obtaining the majority of the required films. You may do so by buying, renting or streaming them in any way that does not violate copyright law (i.e., do not use free streaming services that are illegal or even questionable). Examples of students utilizing legitimate services are renting films from or subscribing to: Netflix, iTunes, Amazon, Filmstruck, Hulu, and of course video rental stores, if you can find them.

If you live in or near Stillwater, you may want to take advantage of the OSU Library's video rental system. That is, many relevant films may be found in the Library. For more information, please go to: <https://info.library.okstate.edu/screenstudies/video>

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

Jolyon Mitchell (Editor), S. Brent Plate (Editor) *The Religion and Film Reader*, 1 Edition (Routledge, 2007); ISBN 978-0415404952

John Lyden, ed. *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* (Routledge Religion Companions, 2009) 1st Edition ISBN 9780415601870 Additional

ADDITIONAL COURSE READINGS:

All other course readings, such as the primary source documents, will be made available on our Canvas homepage.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Upon successfully completing this course, the following objectives will have been met:

1. Students will learn “film literacy,” the ability to recognize and interpret a movie’s visual composition, aural elements, and narrative structures;
2. Students will learn to interpret, analyze and summarize the spiritual, religious and theological across a range of film genres
3. Students will develop an approach to interpreting film and religion that encourages them to question to challenge the portrayal of religion as static and insular traditions which stand in opposition to popular culture;
4. Ability to use film as evidence in thinking about the structure, practice, and world view of different religious traditions.

COURSE STRUCTURE: Course will be structured as around lectures and discussions throughout the semester.

ATTENDANCE (100 POINTS): We will be using I-clicker for taking attendance beginning the second week of the course. More details to come via an announcement on Canvas at the end of the first week of the semester.

DISCUSSION (300 POINTS TOTAL / 50 POINTS EACH): Throughout the course of the semester, there will be six discussion posts on Canvas. Students will be provided a set of questions on a given Saturday to respond to related to the course readings and assigned films. In addition to providing a response to these set of questions, students need to offer a responses to at least one other student’s discussion post during the week of the assigned discussion post by the following Saturday. The discussion post will be open for the assigned week. There will be not late work accepted for the discussion posts. The aim of this exercise is to promote an atmosphere of intellectual collegiality and to encourage students to articulate a scholarly perspective on the subject matter. With this in mind, students will be evaluated not only on their particular responses but also on their willingness to engage with and offer insight to the ideas suggested by their classmates.

FILM SCREENING REPORT AND REVIEW (300 POINTS TOTAL / 50 POINTS EACH): Students will submit six film screening reports throughout the semester (500-750 words) in order to summarize and analyze select film(s) by placing them in conversation with the course readings covered during the given time in the semester. The film screening reports and reviews are intended to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate they have completed the readings and then practice applying the reading to their interpretation of film and religion. Instructions and questions will be provided for each of these film screening reports. Due dates will be provided at least one week in advance from when the assignment is posted. Reports will be submitted on Canvas.

EXTENDED FINAL ESSAY (300 POINTS): In place of a final exam, students will be required to write an extended essay (10-12 pages, double-spaced) that employs material and approaches learned from the course readings to analyzing one or more films (assigned in the class). Guidelines and a rubric will be provided in the month of November. This assignment will be due by the date of our Final Exam (and will be submitted on Canvas).

LATE WORK POLICY: Work should be turned in on time. However, assignments will be received up to one week after the original due date with a possible deduction as a late penalty up to 25% of the entire grade prior to the grading of the assignment. If a student is having any difficulties, it is highly advisable to contact the instructor as soon as possible.

OSU PROTOCOLS FOR A POSITIVE CASE OF COVID IN CLASSROOM (FALL 2022)

During the fall semester, instructors will continue to have the same three options to temporarily shift the delivery mode should there be a positive case reported in class. Specifically, for up to **two weeks**, instructors must choose from among the following options:

- Move the course online.
- Teach in a hybrid format (part online/part in-class) to ensure social distancing and reduce further exposure. For students and instructors attending a face-to-face class, masks will be required for the duration of the two weeks.
- Continue the course face-to-face with masks required of all students and instructors attending.

If there is a new positive case in a class while the class is meeting fully in-person or in a hybrid format, the two-week period restarts if the person who tested positive has been attending in-person. If there is a new positive case while the class is meeting online, the two-week window will not restart since there were no additional potential exposures in class.

Here is the link to OSU's Fall 2022 COVID-19 Dashboard, which contains current statistics related to the number of cases of COVID, hospitalizations, deaths, etc.: <https://go.okstate.edu/coronavirus/statistics.html>

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Please place all of your electronic devices, including laptops, cell phones, away and out of sight once the class has started. If you need to make a phone call or send a text, please feel free to step out of class and return when ready to be present. Points could be deducted from the attendance grade if a student is disruptive or distracting due to the use of electronics in class (I do not anticipate any issues). Thank you in advance.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE GRADED POINTS (COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION):

Attendance	100 points
Discussion Questions	300 points (50 points each)
Film Screening Reports	300 points (50 points each)
Extended Essay	300 points

Academic Integrity: OSU is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and altering academic records) will result in an official academic sanction. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript, and being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal any charge: 101 Whitehurst Phone (405) 744-5627 | Website: <http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu>

Students with Physical or Learning Disabilities: If you need special accommodations the University will try to make appropriate arrangements. These arrangements will need to be made ahead of time through the Student Disability Services Office 315 Student Union | (405) 744-7116 | Website: <https://sds.okstate.edu/>.

Abbreviations for the two course textbooks are as follows throughout the calendar of readings:

RFR, pp. = Jolyon Mitchell (Editor), S. Brent Plate (Editor) ***The Religion and Film Reader***

RCRF, pp. = John Lyden, ed. ***The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film***

Additional Readings (outside of course textbooks) will be provided on Canvas = **[Canvas]**

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION AND FILM STUDIES

8/22 Introduction to the Class and Review of the Course Syllabus

8/24 Melanie J. Wright, "Religion and Film (2007)," ***RFR***, 438-444

John C. Lyden, "The Definition of Religion," *Film as Religion*, 15-36 **[Canvas]**

William L. Blizek, "Religion and the Movies," *Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, 19-28 **[Canvas]**

8/26 Gregory Watkins, "Religion, Film and Film Theory," *Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, 80-88 **[Canvas]**

S. Brent Plate, "Introduction: Worldmaking On-Screen and at the Altar," *Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World*, 1-18 **[Canvas]**

Michael Bird, "Religion in Film (1982)," *RFR*, 391–97

WEEK 2 HISTORY AND INTERACTION BETWEEN RELIGION & FILM (WESTERN CHRISTIANITY)

8/29 Terry Lindvall, "Silent Cinema and Religion: An Overview (1895–1930)," *RCRF*, 13–31

Andrew Quicke, "The Era of Censorship," *RCRF*, 32–51

Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, "Iconography," *RFCR*, 440–464

Herbert A. Jump, "The Religious Possibilities of the Motion Picture," *RFR*, 14–24

Percy Stickney Grant, "If Christ Went to the Movies," *RFR*, 27–31

8/31 Peter Malone, "The Roman Catholic Church and Cinema (1967 to the present)," *RCRF*, 52–71

R.G. Burnett and E.D. Martell, "The Devil's Camera (1920)," *RFR*, 32–34

Pope Pius XI, "Encyclical Letter Vigilanti Cura (1936)," *RFR*, 35–42

9/2 Bryan Stone, "Modern Protestant approaches to Film (1960 to the present)," *RCRF*, 72–88

Antonin Artaud, "Sorcery and Cinema (1927)," *RFR*, 54–56

Stan Brakhage, "Metaphors on Vision (1963)," *RFR*, 60–66

WEEK 3 WOODY ALLEN AND THE JEWISH TRADITION (MOVIE: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, 1989)

9/5 UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

9/7 **Movie: *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989)**

Woody Allen, with Stig Björkman, "Woody Allen on Woody Allen," *RFR*, 240–243

Melanie J. Wright, "Judaism," *RCRF*, 91–108

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, "Woody Allen: Meaning, Morality, Mortality," *Through a Lens Darkly: Tracing Redemption in Film*, 18–33 [Canvas]

9/9 Allison Smith, "Judaism and Jewishness in Film," *Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, 113–122 [Canvas]

Peter J. Bailey, "If You Want a Hollywood Ending: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*," *The Reluctant Film Art of Woody Allen*, 133–148 [Canvas]

WEEK 4 MYTHS, NARRATIVES, AND RITUALS IN FILMMAKING

(MOVIE: *Star Wars*, 1977)

9/12 **Movie: *Star Wars* (1977)**

George Lucas, with Bill Moyers, "Of Myth and Men: Excerpts of a Conversation between Bill Moyers and George Lucas on the Meaning of the Force and the True Theology of Star Wars," *RFR*, 261–66

Roy M. Anker, "Narrative," *RFCR*, 331–350

John C. Lyden, "Myths about Myth," *Film as Religion*, 37–59 [Canvas]

9/14 Jean Epstein, "On Certain Characteristics of *Photogénie* (1924)," *RFR*, 49–53

John C. Lyden, "Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals (2003)," *RFR*, 416–420

9/16 Erin Runions, "How Hysterical: Identification and Resistance in the Bible and Film (2003)," *RFR*, 378–84

William G. Doty, "Joseph Campbell's Myth 'And/Versus' Religion," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 79.3/4 (Fall/Winter, 1996): 421–445 [Canvas]

John C. Lyden, "Science-Fiction Films," *Film as Religion*, 197–216 [Canvas]

WEEK 5 THE STUDY OF RELIGION & FILM

Movie: *The Shawshank Redemption*, 1994)

9/19 **Movie: *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994)**

Julien R. Fielding, "Redemption and Film," *Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, 242–250 [Canvas]

Christopher Deacy, "Redemption," *RFCR*, 351–367

9/21 Clive Marsh, "Audience Reception," *RCFR*, 255–274

Gordon Lynch, "Cultural Theory and Cultural Studies," *RCFR*, 275–291

9/23 Robert Johnston, "Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue (2000)," *RFR*, 312–322

Roy Anker, "Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies (2004)," *RFR*, 303–305

WEEK 6 CATEGORIES APPLICABLE TO RELIGION AND FILM STUDIES (Movie: *Gran Torino*, 2009)

9/26 Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, "Clint Eastwood: Violence and Resolution," *Through a Lens Darkly: Tracing Redemption in Film*, 1–17 [Canvas]

9/28 Jon Pahl, "Sacrifice," *RFCR*, 465–481

John C. Lyden, "Gangster Films," *Film as Religion*, 137–150 [Canvas]

9/30 John C. Lyden, "Westerns and Action and Superhero Films," *Film as Religion*, 119–136 [Canvas]

Conrad Ostwalt, "Apocalyptic," *RFCR*, 368–383

WEEK 7 DEPICTING JESUS ON THE SCREEN (Movie: *The Last Temptation of Christ*, 1988)

10/03 **Movie: *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)**

Craig Detwiler, "Christianity," *RCRF*, 109–131

Adele Reinhartz, "Jesus and Christ-figures," *RFCR*, 420–439

10/05 Robert K. Johnston, "Theological Approaches," *RFCR*, 310–328

Adele Reinhartz, "Scripture on the Silver Screen (2003)," *RFR*, 374–377

10/07 Jolyon Mitchell and S. Brent Plate, "Viewing and Writing on the *Passion of Christ*," *RFR*, 343–347

Eric Christianson, "Cinéma Divinité: Religion, Theology and the Bible in Film (2005)," *RFR* 353–357

Robert Jewett, "St Paul at the Movies: The Apostle's Dialogue with American Culture (1993)," *RFR*, 358–360

WEEK 8 THE BUDDHIST AND HINDU TRADITIONS IN FILMMAKING (Movie: *Spring*, 2003)

10/10 **Movie: *Spring* (2003)**

Francisca Cho, "Buddhism," *RCRF*, 162–177

Francisca Cho, "Imagining Nothing and Imagining Otherness in Buddhist Film (1999)," *RFR*, 398–406

10/12 Paul Thomas, "New Religious Movements," *RCRF* 214–234

Michele Marie Desmarais, "Buddhism and Film," *Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, 148–156 [Canvas]

10/14 Rachel Dwyer, "Hinduism," *RCRF*, 141–161

WEEK 9 (Movie: *Traitor*, 2008)

10/17 **Movie: *Traitor* (2008)**

Amir Hussain, "Islam," *RCRF*, 131–140

10/19 Melanie J. Wright, "Religion, Film and Cultural Studies," *Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, 101–112 [Canvas]

10/21 Jolyon Mitchell, "Ethics," *RFCR*, 482–500

WEEK 10 (Movie: *The Shape of Water*, 2017)

10/24 **Movie: *The Shape of Water* (2017)**

Douglas E. Cowan, "Horror and Demonic," *RFCR*, 403–419

10/26 John C. Lyden, "Horror Films," *Film as Religion*, 217–230 [Canvas]

Nathaniel Dorsky, "Devotional Cinema (2003)," *RFR*, 407–415

10/28 Kent L. Brintnall, "Psychoanalysis," *RCFR*, 292–309

WEEK 11 (Movie: *Do the Right Thing*, 1989)

10/31 **Movie: *Do the Right Thing* (1989)**

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, "Spike Lee: Do The Right Thing," *Through a Lens Darkly: Tracing Redemption in Film*, 34–51 [Canvas]

11/2 TBD

11/4 TBD

WEEK 12 THE COHEN BROTHERS AND FILM THEORY (Movie: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, 2000)

11/7 **Movie: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000)**

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, "Joel and Ethan Cohen: Tragedy, Comedy, Absurdity," *Through a Lens Darkly: Tracing Redemption in Film*, 52–71 [Canvas]

11/9 Clive Marsh, "Cinema and Sentiment," *RFR*, 323–326

Theresa Sanders, "Celluloid Saints: Images of Sanctity in Film," *RFR*, 348–350

11/11 Larry J. Kreitzer, "The New Testament in Fiction and Film: On Reversing the Hermeneutical Flow (1993)," *RFR*, 370–373

WEEK 13 (Movie: *Life of Pi*, 2012)

11/14 **Movie: *Life of Pi* (2012)**

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, "Ang Lee: Beauty and the Beasts," *Through a Lens Darkly: Tracing Redemption in Film*, 90–107 [Canvas]

John R. May, "Contemporary Theories Regarding the Interpretation of Religious Film," *RFR*, 327–336

Christopher Deacy, "Faith in Film (2005)," *RFR*, 306–311

11/16 TBD

11/18 Martin Scorsese, "On Reappreciating Kazantzakis," *RFR*, 267–68

Antonio D. Sison, "Postcolonial Religious Syncretism: Focus on the Philippines, Peru, and Mexico," *RCRF*, 178–93

WEEK 14

NO CLASSES

11/21 STUDENT'S FALL BREAK

11/23 STUDENT'S FALL BREAK

11/25 UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

WEEK 15

(MOVIE: *JUNEBUG*, 2005)

11/28 **Movie: *Junebug* (2005)**

Gaye Williams Ortiz, "Feminism," *RCRF*, 237–254

11/30 Irena S.M. Makarushka, "Women, Religion, and Film," *Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, 113–122 [Canvas]

J. Cheryl Exum, "Plotted, Shot, and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women (1996)," *RFR*, 361–369

12/2 Jolyon Baraka Thomas, "Religion in Japanese Film: Focus on *Anime*," *RCRF*, 194–213

WEEK 16

PRE-FINALS WEEK Movie: *Love Actually* (2003)

12/5 **Movie: *Love Actually* (2003)**

John C. Lyden, "Romantic Comedies," *Film as Religion*, 165–181 [Canvas]

12/7 Joel W. Martin, "Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film (1995)," *RFR*, 421–426

12/9 S. Brent Plate, "The Footprints of Film: After Images of Religion in American Space and Time (2006)," *RFR*, 427–437

WEEK 17

FINALS WEEK

12/16 10:00-11:50 AM CLB 319

Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, "Heroes and Superheroes," *RFCR*, 384–402