

Cincinnati Christian University

Foster School of Biblical Studies, Arts & Sciences

ENGL 231 01 THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN FILM

Semester Credit Hours: 3

Meeting Time: TH 1:30 – 2:45

Location: PH 251

Semester: Fall 2019

Instructor: Paul Friskney

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Course Description:

An introduction to film study through selected works from various periods, concentrating on the past twenty years. Focus is on understanding and applying such themes as the existence and nature of God, Jesus, prayer, salvation, heaven and hell, and angels. Prerequisites: ENGL 110, ENGL 111 or their equivalents.

Course Overview:

This course will examine themes related to understanding God and His dealings with mankind presented in specific examples of film. The word *theological* is used in a broad sense, and various concepts will be considered. Students will be required to view films outside of class and read related chapters from the assigned text. Obviously, many of the views observed will be contrary to Biblical views, and language and actions in some of the films will be outside of what would constitute a Christian lifestyle. Emphasis will be placed on analyzing film to determine specific aspects of the views presented in order to understand our culture and consider how to lead people to Christ. Films will be considered from three categories: ones that can be used as positive examples, ones that represent ideas that need to be refuted, and ones that simply raise questions to be considered. In some cases, the categories overlap within a film. Class sessions will involve individual and group analysis, with discussion being the primary format. Response quizzes will be given approximately once a week relating to the assigned films. Each student will present a final project to the class.

Course Rationale:

People have many views of God and how He deals with the world. The views of any particular society are reflected in the literature produced by that culture. Often the changes in the presentation of such themes are important indicators of the direction of a society. In our own culture, film has, for many people, taken the place formerly occupied by literature, making it a significant aspect of liberal arts education. Therefore, understanding the presentation of God and His world and work in film is very important for Christians so that they can understand cultural views and respond to them with the true message of Christ. The connection of the message to the current context is an important part of the Christian worldview expressed in CCU's mission statement.

CCU's Mission:

CCU is committed to providing a Christ-centered, liberal arts education taught with a Christian worldview in students' chosen fields of study.

Arts & Sciences Departmental Outcomes

CCU's Arts & Sciences program is designed to prepare students to

1. communicate effectively in both oral and written forms in a variety of rhetorical contexts, including Standard English,
2. adeptly utilize modern research and writing tools,
3. identify decisive events and ideas in the human experience and assess their influences on modern culture and thought,
4. employ critical and creative thinking and mathematic and scientific principles for problem solving, literary and socio-cultural analysis, intercultural understanding, and research in the sciences and humanities,
5. demonstrate the integration of academic insights and experiences by constructing and employing a personal framework in which ethical decisions can be made in light of societal values and a Christian worldview.

Course Objectives:

Students who satisfactorily complete this class should be able to

1. understand elements of film and literature that reveal themes (connected to A&S Outcome #4),
2. respond to quizzes that ask for analysis of film (A&S #4),
3. synthesize information and analysis in examinations (A&S #3 & 4),
4. consider what different theological views tell us about our culture (A&S #3),
5. understand the differences between popular views and Biblical views (A&S #4 & 5),
6. respond to current views with the true message of Christ (A&S #5).

Course Text:

Faith and Film: Theological Themes at the Cinema by Bryan P. Stone

Grading Breakdown:

Class Participation	20%
Weekly Response Quizzes	30%
Two Tests	20%
Final Project: Class Presentation	10%
Final Project: Written Form	20%

Assignments:

1. Viewing Assignments: Typically, the viewing of two films per week will be assigned. These films will be on reserve in the CCU library. Most of the films will also be available in video stores and local libraries. (All are also available through Netflix although not all are available for instant viewing.) A specific list of these assignments will be distributed the first day of class.
2. Response Quizzes: Typically, each Thursday session will begin with a quiz that calls for the student to respond to specific aspects of the assigned viewing/reading for the week. These quizzes will become more complex as the semester continues and may require students to use material given in previous class sessions in their responses.
3. Textbook Reading: For most class sessions, textbook-reading assignments will be made that correspond with the themes and/or films viewed. These readings may be included in the response quizzes and tests.
4. Tests: Two separate tests will be given over the class discussions of films and themes. These examinations will call for the application of principles and the synthesis of information about themes. They may involve only films previously discussed or involve new viewing.
5. Final Project: Each student will do a comparison of two works and prepare a paper on that comparison. The two works should fit one of two descriptions: (a) a film and the literature from which it was taken or (b) two films that deal with the same basic theological theme. This project will be presented in class as well as being submitted in writing. A separate sheet will be distributed mid-semester about this assignment.

Course Policies:

1. Due to the discussion format of the class, attendance is extremely important. Therefore, each absence will result in a reduction in the class participation grade. Students who believe they have reasons for exemption from this policy should discuss their reasons with the professor as soon as possible (preferably before the absence). Missing more than six hours of class will result in dismissal from the class. Students who are late are responsible to indicate their attendance to the teacher after class. Being late three times equals an absence. Missing more than half of a class session equals an absence.
2. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the class.
3. Students must take the initiative for making up missed tests and quizzes. A valid reason for absence is required for a makeup test to be allowed.
4. Students are responsible for making their own arrangements for viewing assigned films. Plan ahead to avoid problems with finding copies.
5. To receive a passing grade, the final assignment must be presented and submitted on the assigned dates. Exceptions to this policy will be made only for unusual circumstances. (The professor will make such decisions on an individual basis.)

6. Cell phones should be turned off during class. Laptop computers may be used for taking notes and tests. However, students who use them for inappropriate purposes may forfeit the right to bring them to class.
7. Students should be prepared to take the initiative in clearing up any confusion they have about class discussion or assignments.
8. **Accommodations:** Students who require academic accommodations due to a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability may request assistance from the Student Services Department. Students are encouraged to complete this process within the first two weeks of the semester. The Student Services Department is located on the upper level of Presidents Hall. You may also contact the office by phone at 244-8150. Tutoring services in various subjects are also available.
9. The professor reserves the right to amend or alter this course plan as he deems necessary.

Theme Agenda:

(Special circumstances may require changes in the agenda. Viewing and reading agenda will be distributed during the first class session.)

August 20 & 22

Course Introduction/How to Watch Films for This Class

August 27 & 29

Faith

September 3 & 5

God's Nature

September 10 & 12

God's Relationship to Humans

September 17 & 19

The Person & Work of Christ

September 24 & 26

Forgiveness & Salvation

October 1

TEST #1

October 3

Fall Break – No Class

October 8 & 10

Heaven & Hell

October 15 & 17

Our Place in God's Plan

October 22 & 24

The Holy Spirit & Miracles

October 29 & 31

The Mission of the Church

November 5 & 7

Adapting Bible Stories

November 12 & 14

Review, Synthesis Activity, & Discussion of Projects

November 19

TEST #2

November 21

Preparation for Presentations

November 26 & 28

Thanksgiving Break (No Class)

December 3, 5, & Exam Period

Presentation of Projects

Written Portion of Final Project Due on **December 5**