

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

Rels 399.05 L20 – Spring 2008

Religion and Popular Culture: The Bible and Film

COURSE OUTLINE
updated May 9, 2008

Logistics	Time:	Monday / Wednesday, 11:00am – 1:45 pm
	Location:	ST 131
	Instructor:	Dr. David A. Bergen
	Office Hours:	SS 1304, by appointment
	Telephone:	220-5612
	Email:	dabergen@ucalgary.ca
	Website:	http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dabergen/
	Textbooks:	PDF and HTML materials posted on the course website

**Course
Description**

Why does Jules, the hitman in *Pulp Fiction*, quote an ominous sounding diatribe by the biblical prophet Ezekiel? Why are humans enamoured with the virtual realities generated by Hollywood? Why is the Bible so frequently cast in the arenas of criminality, prison, and legal courts? Through the analysis of films and biblical texts students will critically compare ancient biblical writings and modern cinematography for intertextual appropriations geared towards socio-rhetorical purposes. The course will utilize a variety of methods—basic film theory, textual hermeneutics, possible worlds theory, dialogic, and cognitive science—to understand the process of creating and recreating meaning when engaged with humanly-constructed representations. Of particular importance are themes of interest to the academic study of religion: mythology, scripturality, suspension of disbelief, iconography, and ideology. As the course unfolds, students will explore the propensity of humans to scripturalize by transforming virtual constructs into cognitive maps that facilitate psychological survival in an environment often confused and hostile.

**Learning
Assessment**

Four film critiques of ascending grade value:	
First critique	5 marks
Second critique	10 marks
Third critique	15 marks
Fourth critique	20 marks
TOTAL	50 marks
Six Comprehension Tests (see course schedule online for dates)	50%
	Total: 100%

PLEASE NOTE:

- *Film Critiques*: students will choose four of the six films presented in the course and write a critical one-page, double-spaced assessment of the use or role of the Bible in the selected film. These critiques should also reflect relevant discussions, readings, and lectures. Each successive submission will be worth an increasing mark value, the total comprising 50% of the course grade.

General Comments

- *Comprehension Tests*: the tests are designed to assess the students' basic comprehension of the materials (film, Bible, lectures, and readings) discussed and presented. These tests are not directly cumulative, though an increasing level of understanding is expected as we proceed through the course.
- given the nature of the subject and the approaches adopted, it is vital that students attend the first week of class to gain an understanding of the nature and methodology involved.
- this course takes a critical, academic approach to film and therefore, relegates all extratextual realities (e.g., developments in "Hollywood" or the lifestyles of actors/actresses) as largely secondary to the productions of text and film.
- tests must be written on the dates scheduled. No exceptions will be made, except for death, significant illness, or domestic affliction (corroborated by a valid note from a physician or counselor). The instructor must be contacted within twenty-four hours of a missed exam or deadline.
- students anticipating a class absence should find a classmate willing to loan his/her notes; no lecture notes will be available from the instructor.
- recording of lectures is not permitted, except by special permission.
- late submissions will be penalized 5% per day.
- students must maintain "back up" copies of all submissions; no concessions will be made for "lost" materials.
- students are encouraged to discuss the course materials with the instructor. An appointment can be set up for this purpose, either verbally or through email. When arranging to see the instructor, students are asked to be specific in terms of the issues or topics they wish to discuss.
- students are also encouraged to preview the films prior to the scheduled class presentations. When viewing through the ComMedia services, an appointment must be made to book any film.