

PHIL 113 God
University of California, Riverside – Summer II 2007
TR 1:10-4:00pm in ENGR2 139

INSTRUCTOR:

John McAteer, filmphilosopher@gmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is a study of the possibility of knowing God. We will examine Immanuel Kant's argument for the impossibility of rational knowledge of God and Rudolf Otto's attempt to find a place within Kantian philosophy for a non-rational or "mystical" knowledge of God. Then we will compare and contrast an ontological version of this sort of mysticism in Martin Heidegger with the more relational view in Martin Buber, and we will explore the artistic expression of these themes in "transcendental" cinema.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. (Free Press, 1971) – ISBN: 0684717255

Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter. (Harper Perennial, 2001) – ISBN: 0060937289

Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. (Cambridge, 1999) – ISBN: 0521657296

Otto, Rudolf. *Idea of the Holy*, 2nd ed., trans. John W. Harvey. (Oxford, 1958) – ISBN: 0195002105

Schrader, Paul. *Transcendental Style in Film*, New ed. (Da Capo Press, 1988) – ISBN: 0306803356

REQUIRED VIEWING:

Days of Heaven (Malick, 1978)

Diary of a Country Priest (Bresson, 1951)

The Passion of Joan of Arc (Dreyer, 1928)

Red (Kieslowski, 1994)

Winter Light (Bergman, 1963)

OTHER RECOMMENDED FILMS:

The Addiction (Ferrara, 1995)

Andrei Rublev (Tarkovsky, 1969)

Au Hasard Balthazar (Bresson, 1966)

Babette's Feast (Axel, 1987)

Bad Lieutenant (Ferrara, 1992)

Breaking the Waves (von Trier, 1996)

The Double Life of Veronique (Kieslowski, 1991)

A Man Escaped (Bresson, 1956)

The New World (Malick, 2005)

Ordet (Dreyer, 1955)

The Thin Red Line (Malick, 1998)

Through a Glass Darkly (Bergman, 1961)

Tokyo Story (Ozu, 1954)

The Virgin Spring (Bergman, 1960)

Wings of Desire (Wenders, 1987)

GRADES:

Attendance/participation = 40%

4 weekly papers = 10 % each, 40% total

Term Paper = 20%

WEEKLY PAPERS:

Each Tuesday, students must turn in a 5 page paper (no less than 4 pages and no more than 6 pages) analyzing the previous Thursday's movie according to the previous Tuesday's lecture. So, for example, on 8/7 you should turn in an essay on how Bergman's *Winter Light* relates to Kant's ideas about the knowledge of God and on 8/14 you should turn in an essay on how Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* relates to Otto's theory about knowledge of God, etc. *Note that you do not need to write a "weekly paper" about Kieslowski's Red since your term paper will be on that film.* Note also that the language of "relates to" is intentionally vague to allow for creativity.

There is no one right way of writing this paper, but there are at least five wrong ways: (1) There are many ways of relating the readings to the films, but since this is a class on the possibility of knowing and experiencing God, your essays should focus in some way on that theme. (2) Don't simply rely on the lecture to tell you what the assigned readings say; rather cite specific passages to support your interpretations of the philosopher and to defend your claims about how these readings relate to the films. (3) Don't waste a lot of time summarizing the movie, but *do* cite specific scenes, shots, lines of dialogue, etc. to support your interpretive claims (just like you would in a literature class). (4) You should not do any outside research. The point of the assignment is for you to think *for yourself* about the questions raised by the reading. But if you *do* refer to any outside sources, make sure to cite them in your paper. **Plagiarism is unacceptable and will result in an F for the entire course.** It is okay if you don't entirely understand the readings and/or films. But if you do have trouble understanding things, please take advantage of the class discussion time to ask questions! (5) Just repeating back what was said in class discussion will merit at most a C grade. To receive an A, papers must demonstrate original thinking along with a deep and insightful analysis. **Late papers will be reduced 1/3 of a letter grade for each class period late.**

TERM PAPER:

For your term paper, you will write a 10-12 page paper (no more than 15 pages, please!) discussing the way the optimism of Kieslowski's *Red* presents a philosophical response to the pessimism of Bergman's *Winter Light*. Be sure to discuss the way Kieslowski's use of Buber's concept of dialogical encounter might help us overcome both Kant's skepticism about knowledge of God and Bergman's skepticism about faith in God in light of human suffering. In other words, your paper should have at least five parts: (1) an explanation of why Kant thinks we can't have knowledge of God, but why we need faith in God anyway, (2) an explanation of why Bergman thinks human suffering undermines faith, (3) an explanation of Buber's theory of how we can overcome Kant's skepticism through dialogical encounter, (4) an explanation of how Kieslowski's film makes use of Buber's philosophy and (5) an explanation of how Kieslowski uses Buber's philosophy to respond to Bergman's doubts about human suffering. The most important parts of this paper are the last two, so don't spend too much time on the earlier parts. So, for example, if parts (1)-(3) of your paper are about 1-2 pages each, then parts (4)-(5) should be about 3-4 pages each. Your term papers are due by 12:00 noon on 9/1/07 via email at filmphilosopher@gmail.com. **Late papers will be reduced 1/3 of a letter grade for each 8 hours late.**

SCHEDULE:

- 7/31 Kant (Read p. 99-124 and 672-690; Optional: p. 551-589)
8/2 Bergman (*Winter Light*, 1963)
- 8/7 Otto (Read p. 1-71 and 112-116; Optional: p. 72-111 and 117-178.)
8/9 Dreyer (*The Passion of Joan of Arc*, 1928)
- 8/14 Schrader (Read p. 3-13, 38-53, and 59-108; Optional: p. 111-169)
8/16 Bresson (*Diary of a Country Priest*, 1951)
- 8/21 Heidegger (Read p. 17-76; Optional: 211-227, 163-184, 143-159, 77-86)
8/23 Malick (*Days of Heaven*, 1978)
- 8/28 Buber (Read p. 53-85 and 123-168; Optional 86-122, 171-182)
8/30 Kieslowski (*Red*, 1994)
- 9/1 No Final Exam. Term Paper due by 12:00 Noon.