

World Religions and World Cinema
Fuller Theological Seminary

Instructor: John McAteer, filmphilosopher@gmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Movies (and other narrative artworks) function as modern mythology which constructs both our own religious identities and the way we understand the identities of others. This course introduces Christian theologians to the other major world religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam via a comparative study of religion in world cinema. In addition, the course will survey the historical development, belief systems, and contemporary practices of each religion and will provide students with the opportunity to engage at least one of these religions in a place of worship and/or a local community.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: (1) Students will understand the way pop-cultural narrative artworks construct religious, personal, cultural, and national identities. (2) Students will be able to articulate an informed understanding of the historical development and belief system of several major world religions. (3) Students will be able to critically evaluate the representations of religions in Hollywood movies. (4) Students will express critical appreciation for the beliefs and spirituality of the major religions and increased commitment to interact with peoples of other faiths. (5) Students will be able to develop appropriate ways to embody and articulate the truth of the Gospel in the context of other faiths.

RELEVANCE FOR MINISTRY: By studying the religions themselves and the way these religions are (mis)represented in our narratives, students will be able to see through (and teach others to see through) the ways popular culture encourages misunderstanding and intolerance. As a result, students will be prepared to enter into genuine and fruitful dialogue with people of other faiths, thereby advancing the cause of the Gospel.

COURSE FORMAT: TBD

REQUIRED READING

Kearney, Richard. *On Stories* (Routledge, 2001): ISBN 0415247985

Plate, S. Brent, ed. *Representing Religion in World Cinema: Filmmaking,*

Mythmaking, Culture Making (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): ISBN 1403960518

Sharma, Arvind, ed. *Our Religions* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994): ISBN 0060677007

CHOOSE ONE text on Evangelicalism and Interfaith Dialogue

- Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* (IVP, 2003): ISBN 083082572X
- McDermott, Gerald R. *Can Evangelicals Learn From World Religions?* (IVP, 2000): ISBN 0830822747
- Tennet, Timothy C. *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam* (Baker, 2002): ISBN 0801026024

RECOMMENDED READING

Lyden, John. *Film As Religion: Myths, Morals, Rituals* (NYU, 2003): ISBN 0814751814

Novak, Philip, ed. *The World's Wisdom: Sacred Texts of the World's Religions* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1995): ISBN 0060663421

Plate, S. Brent and David Jasper, eds. *Imag(in)ing Otherness: Filmic Visions of Living Together* (Oxford, 2001): ISBN 0788505939

Plate, S. Brent, ed. *Religion, Art, and Visual Culture: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002): ISBN 0312240295

ASSIGNMENTS: TBD

PREREQUISITES: None.

RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM: Meets MA Cultural Literacy Requirement

FINAL EXAMINATION: TBD