

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

**RELS 399.05 L02 *Religion and Popular Culture:  
The Bible and Film***

**WINTER 2013**

**Place and Time:** MS 211, Thursday evening - 6:00-8:45pm

**Instructor:** Dr. David A. Bergen, SS 1308, 403-220-7063, dabergen@ucalgary.ca

**Office hours:** Monday @ 2:00-3:00pm (or by appointment)

**Textbook:** *HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV)*; additional readings posted in Blackboard, Course Documents.

**Content and Objectives:**

Truman and Adam share a great escape while trapped renegade priests battle the 18<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic Church. Audiences gasp as placid heroes unsheathe swords, then laugh as gun-toting thugs debate divine miracles. Magicians stage prestigious resurrections, the Logos slips into a computer, and DiCaprio plumbs the depths of Plato's Cave. Students of this course will academically engage multiple adventures in(to) cinematic and biblical worlds and in doing so, will come to understand the human ability to transform experiences of the unreal into fresh perceptions of the real. In comparing modern films and ancient (biblical) texts, students will also develop an academic understanding of the impact that mental assumptions have on one's perception of reality, a postmodern retake of Isaiah's "*he sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear*" (42:20).

This course will adopt as its primary objective and mode the following statement:

*When one permits those whom one studies to define the terms in which they will be understood, suspends one's interest in the temporal and contingent, or fails to distinguish between 'truths,' 'truth-claims,' and 'regimes of truth,' one has ceased to function as a historian or scholar. In that moment, a variety of roles are available: some perfectly capable (amanuensis, collector, friend and advocate) and some less appealing (cheerleader, voyeur, retailer of import goods). None however should be confused with scholarship. (Bruce Lincoln "Theses on Method," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8, 225-7; 1996)*

### **Assessments:**

#### *Five Tests - 50%*

Non-cumulative and equally-weighted, using a variety of assessment styles from multiple choice to short-answer. These tests will be written in the first hour of class, on the following dates: Jan 31, Feb 14, Mar 7, Mar 21, and Apr 4.

#### *Analytical Viewer Journal - 50%*

Every two weeks, students will record in an *Analytical Viewer Journal* their experiences of the six hermeneutical lenses used in this course. Each entry will focus on three levels of experience: 1) classroom viewing of the films; 2) reading of assigned Bible passages; and 3) engagement with real life. These journal records will be brief, concise, and analytical, with approximately 150 words devoted to each of the three experiential levels (maximum length for each journal entry: 500 words total). The completed journals must be submitted electronically into Blackboard's Digital Dropbox by noon on April 15.

#### *Participation Bonus - 10% per test*

A reward for good viewing protocol--see first item of "Details" (below).

*\*There will be no Registrar scheduled Final Exam for this course.*

### **Student Responsibilities:**

To ensure a successful learning experience in this course, students are advised to:

- *read* the assigned readings (see schedule posted in Blackboard, Course Information) prior to the week's lecture;
- *ask* questions of clarification related to the assigned readings (in class [if time] or via email);
- *attend* the lectures and record detailed notes;
- *engage* the film viewings, mindful of: 1) the filmic presentation, 2) the prescribed hermeneutical lens (presented in the preceding week's lecture), and 3) the collective "mood" of the viewing audience (the latter is important for the *Analytical Viewing Journal* assignment);
- *review* and *reflect* on lecture notes. Obtain information from a classmate where records are inadequate; confirm or gain understanding of difficult concepts from the instructor;
- *study* hard and smart, allotting sufficient time prior to each test for rereading of textbook and notes.

### **Details:**

Please note these important information details:

- students who arrive to a film viewing late or who wish to access computers, cell-phones etc. during the viewing must take a seat at the back of the class where they will not disturb other viewers. Those who adopt an "ideal viewer" position will remain near the front; these students will receive a bonus mark of 10% on the following test.
- no remedial assignments are available in this course.
- lecture notes will not be available from the instructor.
- a passing grade on any of the graded components is not essential for passing the course.
- exams must be written on the dates scheduled. No exceptions will be made, except for death, significant illness, or domestic affliction (corroborated by a valid, original note

from a physician or counselor). You must contact the instructor within twenty-four hours of a missed exam or deadline. The University Calendar states:

“It is the responsibility of students who have prolonged absences from class because of physical and/or emotional health problems to present to the faculty of- fice offering the course a statement from a physician/counselor attesting to the physical or emotional health of the student.”

- no external aids are permitted during the written tests.
- please note that the University of Calgary regulations strictly prohibit the following during written examinations (the penalty for which is suspension or expulsion or such other penalty as may be determined):
  - speaking to other candidates or communicating with them under any circum- stances whatsoever;
  - bringing into the examination room any textbook, notebook, or document not authorized by the examiner;
  - leaving answer papers exposed to view
  - attempting to read other student’s examination work.

### **Grading Scale:**

A+ 100-96	B+ 84.9-80	C+ 69.9-65	D+ 54.9-53
A 95.9-90	B 79.9-75	C 64.9-60	D 52.9-50
A- 89.9-85	B- 74.9-70	C- 59.9-55	F under 50

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your es- says/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar. If you have ques- tions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor.

### **Academic Accommodation**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a document- ed disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Re- source Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disa- bility Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to dis- cuss your needs with your instructor no later than **fourteen (14) days** after the start of the course.

### **Blackboard Help**

Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/computersupport/onlineservices/blackboard> for Student Help and FAQ’s about Blackboard. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are available at <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/blackboard/students>. Instructions for using the Digital Drop Box are available here: [http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6\\_1/student/bbbs\\_r6\\_1\\_student/digital\\_drop\\_box.htm](http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6_1/student/bbbs_r6_1_student/digital_drop_box.htm).

### **Gnosis**

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: [gno- sis@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gno- sis@ucalgary.ca) or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

### **Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources**

- Have a question, but not sure where to start? The Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS110, call us at 403-220-

3580 or email us at [artsads@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

- For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre at (403) 220-5881 or visit them on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

#### **Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative**

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See [www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds](http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds) for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at [arts1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@ucalgary.ca).

#### **Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point**

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at [www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints](http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints). Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

#### **Safewalk**

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors 24 hrs/day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.