



# TYNDALE

• SEMINARY •

## Course Syllabus Fall 2013

### THEO 0670 FAITH AND FILM: THE CANADIAN VOICE

THURSDAYS, 6:30 – 9:20 PM  
SEPT. 12 – DEC. 5, 2013

**INSTRUCTOR: PAUL BURFORD**

Telephone and fax number: 416 425 7222

Email: [pburford@tyndale.ca](mailto:pburford@tyndale.ca)

Office Hours: Thursday 4:00 – 6:00 pm, by appointment

To access your course materials, go to your Tyndale email account: <http://mytyndale.ca>.

Please note that all official Tyndale correspondence will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account. For information how to access and forward Tyndale e-mails to your personal account, see <http://www.tyndale.ca/it/live-at-edu>.

## I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a film survey course, designed to educate students regarding the evolution and relevance of faith perspectives specific to Canadian film and filmmakers. Culturally significant films will be presented and discussed. These films represent both theological exploration and artistic achievement derived in a Canadian context. The course will also engage the student in the task of exploring the use of this medium in telling their own stories.

## II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

**At the end of this course students will be able to:**

- examine and articulate the role of film storytelling as an engaging cultural activity, capable of illuminating theological precepts.
- analyze and evaluate the interaction of culture and theology evoked through the language of film imagery.
- identify and appreciate the significant role of Canadian film history in respect to spiritual cognition.
- identify, understand and assess Canadian film artists who have contributed to indigenous cultural expression.
- use some practical skills in the application of film narrative technique.
- appreciate and be able to articulate the missional value of theological expression in film narrative.

### III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### A. REQUIRED TEXTS

Deacy, Christopher and Gaye Williams Ortiz. *Theology and Film: Challenging the Sacred/Secular Divide*. Malden: Blackwell, 2008.

Leach, Jim. *Film In Canada*. Oxford: New York, 2006.

Johnston, Robert K. *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film In Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

#### B. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

##### 1. **Class Participation** 10% of final grade

Student participation will be graded on a scale of 1 to 4: 1: present, not disruptive; responds when called on but does not offer much; infrequent involvement; 2: adequate preparation, but no evidence of interpretation of analysis; offers straightforward information; contributes moderately when called upon; 3: good preparation, offers interpretation and analysis, contributes well to discussion in on-going fashion; 4: excellent preparation, offers analysis, synthesis and evaluation of material; contributes significantly to ongoing discussion.

##### 2. **First essay (2-3 pages)** 15% of Final Grade

Due week #3 (Sept. 26)

Designed to elicit comparisons of learnings relevant to film storytelling technique in a Canadian cultural context and a theological perspective.

Assignment details will be given in class.

##### 3. **Small Group Film project 1 (1-2 minutes)** 20% of Final Grade

Due week #6 (Oct. 17)

The film project will be a group experience exploring the production of a short film.

Each group will produce a 1-2 minute film designed to activate collaborative skills and participatory knowledge relevant to creative discussion and course content. Further details will be given in class.

**4. Small Group Film project 2 (2-3 minutes) 25% of Final Grade**

Due week #10 (Nov. 21)

The film project will again be a group experience, further developing understanding and participation in the production of a short film. This second project will be designed to express learned narrative style and articulate a relationship with an identified social issue impacting culture. Further details will be given in class.

**5. Second essay (7-8 pages) 30% of Final Grade**

Due week #12 (Dec. 5)

Designed to elicit comparisons of learnings relevant to the integration of theological precepts and film narrative linked to Canadian culture and art. Details will be given in class.

**6. There will be no final exam in this course.**

**C. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK**

Students are expected to appear punctually and to attend all classes.

**Students are responsible to keep a backup print copy of written assignments.**

For proper citation style, consult the [Chicago-Style Quick Guide](#) (Tyndale e-resource) or the full edition of the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), especially [ch. 14](#). For citing scripture texts, refer to sections [10.46 to 10.51](#) and [14.253 to 14.254](#).

**Academic Integrity**

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism. Tyndale University College & Seminary takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty.

Students should consult the current Academic Calendar for academic policies on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System. The Academic Calendar is posted at <http://tyndale.ca/registrar>. An excerpt is attached with this syllabus for easy reference.

**D. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Class Participation	10%
First Essay	15%
Small Group Film Project #1	20%
Small Group Film Project #2	25%
Second Essay	30%

Total Grade 100%

#### IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

Week 1 (Sept 12) *Introduction to the course: goals, expectations, course overview.*

Discuss the Greco-Roman culture and its relationship to early Christianity.

- The language of film literature and the substance of film narrative.
- Approaching film from a faith perspective.
- The evolution of film form and film as an artistic process in North America.
- The Canadian film pioneers, and the landscape of their visions.
- Marketing culture: the advent and influence of TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival).
- Case study and screening: **Black Robe**.
- The transformation of Brian Moore's novel into a panoramic study of Jesuit missionaries in 17<sup>th</sup> century Quebec.
- World premiere at TIFF in 1991; the first official Australia-Canada co-production.

Week 2 (Sept. 19) *Morality as a cultural imperative.*

- Discuss the fundamentals of dramatic structure in film storytelling.
- The influence of European art and artists in cinema.
- Considering Canadian cultural factions and distinctions.
- The career and work of Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan.
- **The Sweet Hereafter**: adaptation from Russell Banks novel, multiple awards at Cannes and TIFF (1997). Nominated for Academy Awards for writing and directing. 7 Genie Awards (Canadian Film Awards).
- Assign: Essay #1.

Week 3 (Sept. 26) *From stage play to screenplay: adapting theatre to film.*

- The role of theatre in Canadian culture.
- Distinguish between the similarities and differences of theatre and film.
- The process of adaptation between mediums; changing the landscapes.
- The career and work of Canadian filmmaker Norman Jewison.
- **Agnes Of God**. Adaptation by John Pielmeier from his own play, premiere at TIFF (1985), nominated for 3 Academy Awards: Best Actress (Anne Bancroft), Supporting Actress (Meg Tilly), and original score.
- Assign: Group Film Project #1.
- Due: Essay #1.

Week 4 (Oct. 3) *The artist as conduit for spiritual cognition.*

- The historical power of Catholicism as a force in world cinema.
- Quebec's distinct perspective as a cultural repository.
- The autonomous francophone film industry which is provincially interdependent.
- The career and work of Canadian filmmaker Denys Arcand.
- **Jesus Of Montreal:** inventive story of actors performing the passion play in Montreal.
- Awards at Cannes and TIFF (1989). Nominated for Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Genie Award for Best Film.

Week 5 (Oct. 10) *The gospel as musical theatre.*

- The cultural responsibility for creating accessibility to the gospel outside the church.
- The unique form of the stage musical as a theatrical experience.
- The most challenging adaptation process: stage musical to screen musical.
- The career and work of Canadian filmmaker David Greene.
- **Godspell:** stylish musical presentation of Matthew's gospel with hit parade music and imaginative choreography, featuring Jesus and disciples as street-wise troubadours. Premiered at Cannes (1973), features Canadian Victor Garber as Jesus, and the acclaimed score of Messianic Jew Stephen Schwartz (3 time Oscar winner).

Week 6 (Oct. 17) *Film culture and political ideology.*

- The ethos of Canadian politics and its effect on faith values.
- The role of culture in reflecting contemporary political expression.
- Considering the psychological tension of intersecting faith and ideological convictions.
- The career and work of Canadian filmmaker Paul Almond.
- **Act Of The Heart:** set against "The Quiet Revolution" in 1960's Quebec, the story of interfaith love between a choir singer and an Augustine monk. Winner of 7 Genie Awards (1970), including Best Direction.
- Classroom Guest: Director Paul Almond.
- Due: Group Film Project #1

Week 7 (Oct. 24) *Landscapes and morality: coming of age amidst small town attitudes.*

- The setting and lifestyle of rural Canada.
- The role of farm producers in the economy and how Western Canada informs our cultural heritage.
- Growing through the innocence of childhood into cognitive awareness and cultural intelligence.
- The career and work of Canadian filmmaker Allan King.
- **Who Has Seen The Wind:** adaptation of W.O. Mitchell's classic novel telling the story of a prairie boy's initiation into the mysteries of life, death, God and the force that moves through everything: the wind. Winner of the Golden Reel Award (1978).
- Assign: Group Film Project #2.

READING WEEK (Oct. 31) – NO CLASS

Week 8 (Nov. 7) *The documentary film and the eloquence of emotional honesty.*

- Comparing dramatic narrative to documented reality.
- The historic importance of the documentary relative to Canadian film history.
- The role of the National Film Board of Canada in asserting a cultural imprint.
- Understanding factual film and its value for evincing our spiritual state.
- The career and work of Christian filmmaker Bill Mason, an award-winning naturalist, whose focus was documenting the unique beauty of indigenous Canadian settings and pioneering stewardship of the environment.
- **Waterwalker:** Feature-length documentary exploring the grandeur of Lake Superior and the frenetic convergence of its tributaries. Bill Mason uses the film as a commentary on the link between God and nature's evocative power as an artistic canvas.

Assign: Essay #2.

Week 9 (Nov. 14) *Impacting the world stage: an iconic cultural imprint.*

- Understanding the role of the Producer in the film industry and film history.
- The Producer/Director relationship: collaborators designing to make art and money.
- Independent production as a commercial enterprise.
- The career and work of Canadian Producer Jake Eberts.
- **Chariots Of Fire:** The Olympic Games of 1924 is the centrepiece for this true life story of two British athletes competing in track. One runs to outdistance the prejudice against his Jewish lineage, the other to embolden his Christian faith.
- Galvanized by winning the People's Choice Award at TIFF (1981), the film went on to garner 7 Academy Award nominations, winning 4, including Best Picture of the Year.

Week 10 (Nov. 21) *Social justice and shaping the winds of change.*

- Canada's historical role as a progenitor of civil liberties.
- The theological rationale for embracing human rights issues.
- The challenge of film story telling with a social agenda and cultural context.
- The career and work of Canadian filmmaker Christopher Bessette.
- **Trade Of Innocents:** Modern day Bangkok is the setting for this story of a couple, who grieving the loss of their daughter, become embattled with human trafficking and the overlords of the sex trade (2012).
- Classroom guest: Director Christopher Bessette
- Due: Group Film Project #2.

Week 11 (Nov. 28) *The methodology of manufacturing Christian cinema.*

- Understanding the international market place, the world of *cinema*.
- The challenge of gospel messaging world wide.
- The influence of Canadian artists of international stature.
- The career and work of Canadian filmmaker Eric Till (Projected: classroom guest).
- **Luther:** Award-winning dramatization of the life of 16<sup>th</sup> century German monk Martin Luther, whose published work revolutionized church history (2003).

Week 12 (Dec. 5) *Canadian shorts and course reflection.*

- Review and discuss the course content.
- Consideration of Canadian cultural milestones.
- **A Place To Stand:** ground breaking short film produced by filmmaker Christopher Chapman (1967). Stylishly inventive, this 16 minute short, created to celebrate EXPO 67 in Montreal, introduced split-screen technology to the language of world cinema, winning the Academy Award for Best Short Subject.
- Screening of class-assigned short films.
- Screening of recent examples of dramatic short films produced by Canadian Christian filmmakers.
- Discuss the current examples of faith-based films and the future prospects for advancement of spiritual integration in the cultural context of film.
- Due: Essay #2.

## VI. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Austin-Smith, Brenda and George Melnyk. *The Gendered Screen*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2010.

Berton, Pierre. *Hollywood's Canada*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995.

Brownlow, Kevin. *The Parade's Gone By*. New York: Ballantine, 1968.

Dickinson, Peter. *Screening Gender, Framing Gender*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

Drabinsky, Garth. *Closer To The Sun*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995.

Jewison, Norman. *This Terrible Business Has Been Good To Me*. Toronto: Key Porter, 2004.

Johnson, Brian D. *Brave Films, Wild Nights: 25 Years of Festival Fever*. Toronto: Random House, 2000.

Laporte, Nicole. *The Men Who Would Be King*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.

Loiselle, Andre. *Stage-Bound: Feature Film Adaptations of Canadian and Quebecois Drama*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.

Marshall, Bill. *Film Festive Confidential*. Toronto: McArthur & Company, 2005.

Martz, Fraidie and Andrew Wilson. *A Fiery Soul: The Life and Theatrical Times of John Hirsch*. Montreal: Vehicule Press, 2011.

McNicholl, Susan. *The Opening Act: Canadian Theatre History 1945-1953*. Vancouver: Ronsdale, 2012.

Medavoy, Mike. *You're Only As Good As Your Next One*. New York: Atria, 2002.

Melnyk, George. *Great Canadian Film Directors*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2007.

Posner, Michael. *Canadian Dreams: The Making And Marketing Of Independent Films*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993.

Pratley, Gerald. *A Century of Canadian Cinema: Gerald Pratley's Feature Film Guide*. St. John's: Lynx Images, 2003.

Turman, Lawrence. *So You Want To Be A Producer*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005.

Wise, Wyndam. *Take One's Essential Guide to Canadian Film*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

White, Jerry. *The Cinema of Canada*. London: Wallflower, 2006.