JESUS: REAL TO REEL

Course Syllabus

Institute of Pastoral Studies, Loyola University Chicago.

June 28 – July 2, 1999, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Instructors

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Course Description

The story of Jesus is told and retold in every age and culture. From the earliest oral traditions, to the written Gospels, both canonical and apocryphal, from medieval mystery/morality plays, to the contemporary cinematic presentations of Jesus’ life, the world continues to be fascinated with the Jesus story.

This course will undertake an investigation of celluloid stories of Jesus. Four films about Jesus and numerous film clips will be viewed together and discussed in class. Both socio-rhetorical reading of the Gospels arising from current biblical scholarship and readings of the films arising from narrative theology will be emphasized. The various dimensions of each film’s presentation, what it tells us about Jesus, what it tells us about those who made the film, and about those who watch the film will be explored. Participants will consider their own stories of Jesus and various stories from other cultures in light of these cinematic presentations.

Course participants will become familiar with emerging Christologies from contemporary cinema, will learn how contemporary biblical scholarship enhances or diminished these current stories of Jesus, and will appreciate narrative as a unique language of truth. Additionally, course participants will be introduced both to cinematic resources and to approaches helpful in a variety of ministerial settings, from parish adult education groups to formal school settings.

Required Readings (before the week of classes)


Kevin Brandt, Story as a Way of Knowing (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1997)

Recommended Readings (before the week of classes)


Films Recommended for Pre-viewing (before the week of classes)

- *King of Kings* Nicholas Ray, 1961; 170 min.
- *Greatest Story Ever Told* George Stevens, 1965; 199 min.
- *Godspell* David Greene, 1973; 103 min.
- *Jesus of Nazareth* Franco Zeffirelli, 1977; 382 min.
- *Last Temptation of Christ* Martin Scorsese, 1988; 163 min.

Films To Be Viewed Together in Class

- *Jesus Christ, Superstar* Norman Jewison, 1973; 108 min.
- *Monty Python's Life of Brian* Terry Jones, 1979; 94 min.
- *Jesus of Montreal* Denys Arcand, 1989; 119 min.

Requirements and Evaluation

Write a paper of 10 – 12 pages, double-spaced, on one of the following topics:

Using the theme established in the class, "on reversing the hermeneutical flow," select one of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew; Mark; Luke) and read it in its entirety, preferably in one sitting. Using the various films from the course as a lens through which to view this Gospel, how has you reading of the text changed, expanded, altered, deepened, etc.

Select a specific ministerial situation and create a learning program built around Jesus in film. Describe the program, identify your audience, state your learning objectives for the participants, select the films to be used, the rationale for your choices and how you will specifically proceed with each film, i.e., input from teacher (yourself), follow up activities, other appropriate strategies.

The paper is due no later than July 28, 1999.

Supplementary Bibliography

For a comprehensive bibliography and some interesting internet links see our [Jesus: Real to Reel](#)
Resource page.

**Jesus in Film**


**Film Analysis**


**Narrative Theology**


revised: April 22, 1999