



University of Waterloo

Winter 2013

COURSE NUMBER: Religious Studies 271R / Fine Arts 253

Course Name: Themes in Religion and Film:
“Revival Preachers on Film: Sin, Redemption, and the Religious Fake”

Instructor: Denis J. Bekkering

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Class Times/Location: Mondays, 18:30-21:20, Renison 2106

Office Hours: TBA

Course Description:

Revival preachers are perhaps America’s most controversial religious leaders, attracting criticism, derision, and praise. While adherents hold that such preachers are genuine vessels of the Holy Spirit, bringing God’s restorative power to those in need, detractors charge that their saintly appearances are deceiving, meant to mask less than holy motivations. The persistent suspicions surrounding revival preachers have made them powerful symbols of the religious fake, and therefore valuable tools for understanding what counts as authentic Christianity in America.

In this course we will examine a variety of films – dramas, comedies, and documentaries – featuring American revival preachers as central characters. The tools of film analysis, insights from Religious Studies, and historical and sociocultural information will help us unpack these films, with a particular eye to how each film approaches the “revival preacher as religious fake” formula.

Course Objectives:

- a) To expose students to a selection of films focused on American revival preachers.
- b) To help students develop an analytical toolkit for interpreting films with religious themes.
- c) To aid and encourage students in their academic writing.
- d) To provide a public forum in which intersections between religion and film can be discussed and debated in a respectful and productive manner.

Required Texts:

- Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan, *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film* (4th edition, 2012)
- Sinclair Lewis, *Elmer Gantry* (1927)

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (10%):

Significant portions of class time will involve directed discussions, during which I will moderate as you work together to explore topics and questions raised by the films and readings. Obviously, your attendance and participation are crucial to this pedagogical model. Additionally, films will be screened during class time, and I expect you to be present.

Written Assignments:

All papers must feature the following elements:

- a) Paper Title
- b) Course Number
- c) Your Name
- d) Your Student ID#
- e) Word Count
- f) Page Numbers
- g) Double Spacing
- h) One-Inch Margins
- i) Black Text
- j) 12 Pt. Times New Roman Font
- k) Works Cited Page (if applicable)
- l) Staple (not a folded corner, paper clip, or bobby pin)

Papers missing **any** of these elements will not be accepted. Late papers will only be accepted in the case of medical or family emergencies, accompanied by proper documentation.

Film and Reading Response Papers (30%: Three Papers at 10% Each):

The purpose of these papers is to encourage your active engagement with the films screened in class and Barsam and Monahan's *Looking at Movies*, as well as to help prepare you for class discussions. You are to critically discuss the films in light of the concepts provided by Barsam and Monahan, class material, other films screened in class, and the overall theme of the course. Note that these papers are not intended to be film reviews, summaries, or personal response essays. The key here is **critical** engagement with the course concepts and films. You are to submit response papers for three of the following five films: *The Miracle Woman*, *There Will Be Blood*, *Marjoe*, *Lakeland: The Movie*, and *The Apostle*.

The response papers are to be from 1000 to 1500 words long, and are due at the beginning of the class following that during which the movie discussed is shown. I suggest that you read the relevant chapters from Barsam and Monahan prior to the screening of each film, as it will help you write more useful notes as you watch.

***Elmer Gantry* Analysis Paper (30%):**

In his novel *Elmer Gantry* (1927), Sinclair Lewis crafted a persistent cultural symbol in the form of the titular character, a manipulative and hypocritical revival preacher who spreads both the gospel and discord. In 1960, director Richard Brooks brought Lewis' novel to the silver screen, with actor Burt Lancaster bringing the holy huckster to life in an Academy Award-winning performance. The purpose of this paper is to analyze Brooks' adaptation, drawing on its source material, the concepts outlined and discussed throughout the course, and the other films screened in class, all of which are indebted to Lewis' landmark work.

This assignment requires a detailed reading of *Elmer Gantry*, which can be paced over the semester. I suggest that you **avoid** online summaries and study aids; these resources may skew your analysis, and possibly encourage inadvertent plagiarism. I also recommend that you begin reading early, as Lewis' novel may help spark useful thoughts for other class assignments. The paper is to be from 2500 to 3500 words long, and you are to hand it in at the Renison office by April 8.

Film Clip Tests (30%: Two Tests at 15% Each):

There will be two in-class tests this semester. For each test you will write a critical essay on two short clips taken from the films screened in class up to that point. You are expected to demonstrate an understanding of how the clips relate to the films that they are selected from, to discuss the clips using the analytical tools, concepts, and information derived from class and your readings, and to compare and contrast the pair of clips. These tests will take place on February 11 and April 1.

Grading:

Participation	10%
Film and Reading Response Papers (x3)	30%
<i>Elmer Gantry</i> Paper	30%
Clip Tests (x2)	30%

Communication of Grades:

It is your responsibility to track your grades throughout the term. I will only discuss grades in person, not through email. Final grades will be posted on the University of Waterloo's Quest service.

Classroom Etiquette:

- a) Religion can be a touchy subject to discuss, please be respectful of your classmates.
- b) When movies are screened, please limit the amount of noise that you make (avoid loud talking, constant whispering, crunchy snacks, etc.).
- c) Please turn off cellphones and other electronic communication devices before class starts. Should a student be observed using one of these devices during class time, they will be asked to leave for the evening.
- d) Likewise, please turn off laptop computers before class starts. Laptops have become a distracting presence in the classroom, largely due to the availability of wireless Internet. Therefore, unless you have made special arrangements with me, laptops are prohibited during class time.

Class Schedule:

WEEK 1 (Jan. 7):	Course Introduction Film: <i>Leap of Faith</i> (dir. Richard Pearce, 1992) Readings: Chapter One: “Looking at Movies”; Chapter Two: “Principles of Film Form”
WEEK 2 (Jan. 14):	Lecture/Discussion
WEEK 3 (Jan. 21):	Film: <i>The Miracle Woman</i> (dir. Frank Capra, 1931) Readings: Chapter Four: “Elements of Narrative”; Chapter Seven: “Acting”
WEEK 4 (Jan. 28):	Lecture/Discussion
WEEK 5 (Feb. 4):	Film: <i>There Will Be Blood</i> (dir. Paul Thomas Anderson, 2007) Readings: Chapter Five: “Mise-en-Scène”; Chapter Six: “Cinematography”
WEEK 6 (Feb. 11):	Lecture/Discussion Clip Test #1
WEEK 7 (Feb. 18):	NO CLASS, READING WEEK
WEEK 8 (Feb. 25):	Films: <i>Marjoe</i> (dir. Howard Smith and Sarah Kernochan, 1972); <i>Lakeland: The Movie</i> (dir. Roy Petersen, 2010) Readings: Chapter Three: “Types of Movies”; Chapter Eight: “Editing”

- WEEK 9 (Mar. 4): **Lecture/Discussion**
- WEEK 10 (Mar. 11): **Film:** *The Apostle* (dir. Robert Duvall, 1997)
- Readings:** Chapter Nine: “Sound”
- WEEK 11 (Mar. 18): **Lecture/Discussion**
- WEEK 12 (Mar. 25): **Film:** *Elmer Gantry* (dir. Richard Brooks, 1960)
- Readings:** Chapter Ten: “Film History”; *Elmer Gantry* (Lewis, 1927)
- WEEK 13 (Apr. 1): **Lecture/Discussion**
- Clip Test #2**

Cross-listed course:

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Final Examination Policy

For Winter 2013, the established examination period is April 11-25, 2013. The schedule will be available in February. Students should be aware that student travel plans are not acceptable grounds for granting an alternative final examination time (see: <http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/finalexams.html>).

Accommodation for Illness or Unforeseen Circumstances:

The instructor follows the practices of the University of Waterloo in accommodating students who have documented reasons for missing quizzes or exams. See http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/students/accom_illness.html

Academic Integrity:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70>. In addition, consult <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-arts-processes> for the Faculty of Arts' grievance processes.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72>.

Academic Integrity website (Arts):

http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo): <http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Note for students with disabilities: The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.

Note: This syllabus is subject to be changed by the instructor.