

Syllabus - RELG 491B
The Bible in Contemporary Fiction and Film (1992 - 2002)
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Course Texts

1. The Bible. You may use any translation of the Bible you wish to use. If you do not have one, please purchase the Oxford Annotated version.
2. King, Stephen. *Desperation*, 1997.
3. Grisham, John. *The Testament*, 1999.
4. Sparks, Nicholas. *A Walk to Remember*, .
4. Two current best selling novels to be selected.
5. Articles to be posted on Blackboard.

Course Description

Contemporary authors, such as Stephen King, Danielle Steele, Mary Higgins Clark, Pat Conroy, John Grisham, Judith Krantz, David Baldacci, Toni Morrison, Jo Ann Ross, Alan Folsom, Tom Clancy, Sidney Sheldon, Nicholas Sparks, Alice Sebold, and Patricia Cornwell have more in common than being best selling authors - they all use religious themes in their works, some making extensive use of Biblical stories, themes, images, symbols, and phrases. Contemporary films are also filled with religious and Biblical references. Although these Biblical motifs have been used in literature since the Middle Ages, and in film since the beginning of the motion picture industry, in today's world of modernity, Biblical references often go unnoticed.

This course is designed to assist the student in recognizing and understanding the use of religion and the Bible in contemporary fiction and film. This will be accomplished by doing a study of selected Biblical passages and by becoming acquainted with the prevalence of religious and Biblical motifs being used today by best selling novelist and in popular movies. The first part of the course will focus on the work of several novelists and films; the second part of the course will be to look at specific Biblical references and see how they are being used by novelists and filmmakers.

For the purposes of this course, "contemporary" is considered to be any work published or produced after 1992 (1992-2002).

Requirements

1. You are expected to attend class and to be prepared for each session by having completed the assignment. Because we meet only once a week, it is important that you do not miss class. Excessive absences, 3, will affect your final grade by one letter; 4 absences will result in your final grade being dropped by 2 letters; 5 absences will result in a D for the course; 6 absences will result in a F for the course.

2. Each student will write two response papers (2 to 3 pages, typed, double spaced). One of the papers will be on the student's choice of one of the novels we will be reading and one will be on one of the movies we will view. Help for writing these papers will be posted on Blackboard.

3. Class Project:

Each student will select a biblical story to research. As part of your research, you will prepare an annotated bibliography on the story you have selected, locate the story in a current work of fiction or film, and write a 5 to 8 page paper discussing the author's/filmmaker's use of the story.

OR

If you are an aspiring writer, you may create a short story using the story you have researched. This will require using a method to be provided by the Instructor.

OR

If you have a strong background in the Bible, you may choose to read 5 novels (to be provided by the Instructor). You would then mark any Biblical references you find in the novels and find the appropriate Biblical text.

Your project must be selected and approved by the Instructor by March 19th. The annotated bibliography is due April 23rd, the completed project is due April 30th.

4. You are required to make use of Blackboard at least once weekly (this would be an average use of Blackboard and warrant a C for that part of your grade; twice weekly would result in a B; three or more times weekly would be an A). You must obtain an email account if you do not have one already.

5. All written work should be typed, double-spaced, paginated, and titled. Scholastic dishonesty is a serious offense, and will result in an "F" for the entire course.

6. Graduate students will be expected to do extra work. In consultation with the Instructor, you will select work to do that can relate this class to your major emphasis.

Grading

Your grade will consist of class and blackboard participation, one novel response paper, one movie, the annotated bibliography, and your class project. Each will consist of 20% of your final grade.

Possible extra credit: You can receive 5 pts. toward your final grade for every novel (published after 2000) you read, or movie you view (produced after 2000) IF you can recognize at least 3 Biblical references in the work.

COURSE OUTLINE

January 15th

Course Introduction

1. Housekeeping chores
2. Introductions
3. Syllabus
4. Practical information about the Bible
5. Cultural considerations as a basis for the course.
6. *The Bodyguard*
7. Introduction to Stephen King and *Desperation*
8. Computer lab for Blackboard instruction, if needed.

Assignment for next class session

1. Read "Understanding the Bible: Figures of Speech, Bible Literature" (posted on Blackboard).
2. Read from the Bible: John 1:1-16 (the Logos); and, Exodus 20:1-17 (The Ten Commandments); Moses.
3. Read King's *Desperation*, pages 1-125 and note any Biblical references you recognize.
4. If you read another contemporary novel, or watch a movie, before our next class, watch for Biblical motifs. If you recognize any, please email, and/or post on Blackboard under Discussion: extra novels and movies.
5. Familiarize yourself with Blackboard, post comments or questions on your reading.

January 22nd

The Bible and Stephen King's *Desperation*

1. Discussion of King's use of the Bible in *Desperation*.
2. Discussion of the Biblical References King has used thus far.
3. The Nature of God in *Desperation*

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible: Luke 4:1-13 (Temptations of Jesus); Exodus 12:1-32; Proverbs 4:11-13; Daniel 6:1-14.
2. Read *Desperation*, pages 126-289.
3. Consider the following: Do you think King has done an adequate job using the Biblical motifs he has used thus far? Did reading the Biblical story make a difference in your understanding the novel?
4. Blackboard (discussion, Stephen King's *Desperation*) and share your thoughts before the next class).

January 29th

The Bible and Stephen King's Desperation

1. Discussion of Biblical References
2. The Nature of God
3. Prayer

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible: (multiplication of loaves and fish); John (doubting Thomas); Revelation 22:8-21; Daniel 6:1-14; Isaiah 11:1-11
2. Read *Desperation*, pages 270-403.
3. Blackboard

February 5th

The Bible in King's *Desperation*

1. Discussion of Biblical References
2. The Nature of God

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible: Mark 6:30-44; Mark 8:1-10; John 20:19-20; Saul on Damascus Rd.;
2. Read *Desperation*, pages 403-547.
3. Blackboard

February 12th

The Bible and *Desperation*

1. Discussion of Biblical References
2. Nature of God

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible: Joseph, Paul's murdering Christians; and, prayer
2. Read John Grisham's *The Testament*

February 19th

1. Discussion of Biblical References in *The Testament*
2. The Bible in other Grisham works
3. Grisham's use of prayer
4. Compare/contrast King and Grisham's nature of God

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible:
2. Read the first half of
3. Blackboard

February 26th

1. Discussion of Biblical references in
2. The nature of God

Assignment for the next class session

1. Read the remainder of the novel
2. Blackboard

MARCH 2nd – SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

- Remember extra credit possibilities during your break -

March 19th

1. Discussion of Biblical References
2. View the movie
3. Discussion of differences in use of Biblical references between the novel and the movie.

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible:
2. Read first half of
3. Blackboard

March 26th

1. Discussion of Biblical References

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible:
2. Read remainder of

April 2nd

1. Discussion of Biblical references in
- 2.

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible:
2. View one movie from the following list:

April 9th

Biblical Stories in Contemporary Fiction and Film

1. Discussion of Biblical References from movies viewed.

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible: Prodigal Son
- 2.

April 16th

Biblical Stories - The Prodigal Son

1. Discussion of biblical References
2. A reading of "The Prodigal" by Dr. Ed Madden

Assignment for next class session

1. Read from the Bible: Genesis (Adam and Eve); Jacob and Esau; and, (temptation of Jesus)
2. Annotated Bibliography due

April 23rd

Biblical Stories - Selling Your Soul to the Devil

1. Discussion
2. View Stephen King's *Needful Things*

Assignment for next class session

1. Final Projects Due

April 30th

1. Turn in final projects and describe to class
2. Course Evaluation
3. Class Analysis
4. Movie?
5. Discussion