

## **RELS5335 Understanding Religion through Film 從電影看宗教**

### ***Course Outline***

**Teacher:** Professor Neki Cheung 張德貞教授

**Lecture:** Thursday, 1900 - 2130

**E-mail:** nekychung@gmail.com

**Venue:** HYS G05

#### **Course description:**

This course is designed to assist students in recognizing religious concepts, east and west, through analysing movies that seem to have little to do with “religion” per se. The course will help students explore how religion may be treated as an integral human phenomena and how religion involves the fullness of the human world through film watching. In addition, the course provides students with opportunities to think critically about a wide range of meanings concerning the existence of human beings through particular films. A religious notion of interpretation will be taken to examine how the meanings are constructed and transmitted to viewers through various visual narrative forms and symbols. It also encourages students to appreciate the form of cinematic aesthetics and symbols from the interdisciplinary perspectives.

#### **Learning outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of the course, students are expected to:

1. discuss the components of religious worldviews common to most religions;
2. move beyond viewing films as mere entertainment to understanding them as multi-layered texts;
3. understand how religion and film intersect;
4. critically evaluate particular cinematic works in their various forms through the lenses of Religious Studies.

#### **Course syllabus, Contents, and Class schedule:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Contents/ fundamental concepts</b>
<b>1</b>	2025/01/09	Introduction	The relationship between religion and film.
<b>2</b>	2025/01/16	Religious Films, Secular Films	Interpretation of Religious Films
<b>3</b>	2025/01/23	Cosmogony (I)	The Creator and creation dynamics
<b>4</b>	2025/01/30	public holiday	

5	2025/02/06	Cosmogony (II)	Human needs, wants, desire and the plea for personal actualization
6	2025/02/13	Savior Figures (I)	The Sacred and the Holy
7	2025/02/20	Savior Figures (II)	Messianic figures
8	2025/02/27	East Asian religious thinking (I)	"Reality" vs "Illusion"
9	2025/03/06	Reading week	
10	2025/03/13	East Asian religious thinking (II)	Issues on Life and Death
11	2025/03/20	Ritual theory	Introduction to Ritual Theory
12	2025/03/27	Morality	Good Vs Evil
13	2025/04/03	Presentations	
14	2025/04/10	Presentations	
15	2025/04/17	Presentations	

### **Teaching modes and Assessments:**

		Percentage
<b>Teaching Mode</b>	<b>Lecture</b> On-site face-to-face	100%
<b>Assessments</b>	<b>Attendance</b> (lectures 13% +presentations 7%)	20%
	<b>Presentation (20%) &amp; Outline (10%)</b> To Identify and discuss the religious themes/elements in one or a number of movies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 2-3 students in a group; 30 minutes for each presentation, followed by 15 minutes discussion;</li> <li>✓ A copy of the presentation outline and the ppt. to be sent to: <a href="mailto:nekycheung@gmail.com">nekycheung@gmail.com</a> at least 24 hours before the presentation date.</li> <li>✓ Dates and schedule: to be finalized.</li> </ul>	30%
	<b>Final paper</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ each student is required to write a paper of about 4,000 to 5,000 words, to identify, interpret and analyze the religious perceptions/themes/values in one or a number of films.</li> <li>✓ to be sent to: <a href="mailto:nekycheung@gmail.com">nekycheung@gmail.com</a> on or before 17:00, April 30, 2025</li> </ul>	50%

**Required and recommended readings:**

\*\* Mandatory

\* Highly recommended

**(I) On Religion**

\*\* Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religious Myth, Symbolism, and Ritual within Life and Culture*. New York: A Harvest/HBJ Book, 1957. (中譯本 – 伊利亞德著，楊素娥譯：《聖與俗—宗教的本質》。台北：桂冠圖書，2001。)

\* Turner, Victor, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969.

\* Wolf, Arthur P, "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors," in *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*, ed. Arthur P. Wolf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 131-182.

\* Geertz, Clifford, "Religion as a Cultural System," *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

\* Claude Levi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978.  
(中譯本：李維斯陀，楊德睿譯：《神話與意義》(台北：麥田出版社，2001。))

CHEUNG, Neki Tak-ching, *Women's Ritual in China: Jiezhu (Receiving Buddhist Prayer Beads) performed by Menopausal Women in Ninghua, Western Fujian* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press), 2008.

Durkheim, Emile, *Elementary Form of Religious Life*, translated by Karen E. Fields, Book III, pp.303-448, New York: The Free Press, 1995.

(中譯本：涂爾幹著，芮傳明、趙學元譯：《宗教生活的基本形式》，台北：桂冠圖書股份有限公司。第三篇，頁339-507。)

Ricoeur, Paul, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, part II, 161-358.

[中譯本(1) 保羅·里克爾著、翁紹軍譯：《惡的象徵》下篇：〈起源的神話和終結的神話〉，頁167-386。台北：桂冠圖書：1992。或中譯本(2) 保羅·里克爾著、公車譯：《惡的象徵》下篇〈起源的神話和終結的神話〉，頁163-371。上海：上海人民出版社，2003。]

**(II) On Film**

\*\* Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1996.

\* Corrigan, Timothy, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, 2nd ed, San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1994.

Giannetti, Louis, *Understanding Movies*, New Jersey: Person Prentice Hall, 2008.

大衛·博維爾著，何慧玲譯，李焯桃編：香港電影王國。香港：洪葉書店，2001。

**(III) On Religion and Film**

Bandy, Mary Lea and Antonio Monda, editors, *The Hidden God: Film and Faith*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2003.

Flesher, Paul V. M. and Robert Torry, *Film and Religion: An Introduction*, Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007.

Gabler, Neal, *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

Holloway, Richard. *Beyond the Image: Approaches to the Religious Dimension in the Cinema*. Geneva: WCC, 1977.

Hoover, Stewart and Knut Lundby, eds. *Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture*. London: Sage, 1997.

\*\* Lyden, John C., *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*, New York and London: New York University Press, 2003.

\* Plate, S. Brent, editor, *Representing Religion in World Cinema: Filmmaking, Mythmaking, Culture Making*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Warren, Michael, *Seeing Through Media: A Religious View of Communications and Cultural Analysis*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997.

侯軍：《基督教與西方電影》。北京：文化藝術出版社，2006。

Lebeau, Vicky, 陳儒修、鄭玉菁譯。《佛洛伊德看電影》。台北：書林出版有限公司，2004。

鄭泰丞：《電影觀賞：現世的宗教意含》。台北市：桂冠圖書股份有限公司，2001。

### **Academic honesty and plagiarism:**

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.
- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.
- Students are fully aware that their work may be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.
- Students are fully aware of the AI approach(es) adopted in the course. In the case where some AI tools are allowed, students have made proper acknowledgment and citations as suggested by the course teacher.

Assignments without a properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

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**Use of generative AI tools:**

All use of AI tools is prohibited in assignments and assessment tasks

In assessing the level of achievement of learning outcomes and students' performance, students are expected to produce their own work independently without any collaboration with the use of AI tools.

For assignments and assessment tasks that count towards the final course grades, students are not allowed to submit work which is produced with the collaboration of or supported by the use of any generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT)\*.

Any breach of the regulations will be considered an act of academic dishonesty and will be handled according to the University's *Procedures for Handling Cases of Academic Dishonesty*.

In case of queries, students should seek advice from the course teacher.