

**TC530: THEOLOGY AND FILM (4 units). Robert K. Johnston, Professor of Theology and Culture;
Online Facilitation by Catherine Barsotti, Adjunct Instructor in Theology and Culture**

DESCRIPTION:

This course will consider one particular aspect of a theology of culture: theology and film. The course will (1) view and discuss selected films, (2) provide the student critical skills helpful for film interpretation, and (3) explore possible theological and biblical approaches to film criticism.

Preparation for ministry too often assumes students possess skills in cultural analysis and interaction. This course will help students to see Western "culture" by providing a critical and theological framework for viewing cinema. While such cultural engagement is not sufficient for effective ministry, it is supportive of, if not necessary for, all aspects of ministry.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Through this course students will:

- Develop skills in cultural analysis and interaction by providing a critical framework for viewing cinema
- Provide a theological framework for engaging culture
- Understand the necessity of cultural engagement for effective ministry

COURSE FORMAT:

The class will be conducted on the Internet using a 10-week lesson program aligned with Fuller's academic calendar. The class will have weekly lectures, readings, viewing and written assignments and online discussions. One or two films will be assigned prior to each lesson along with supporting reading. During each lesson, students will typically (1) discuss the movies, (2) consider aspects of the nature of film and/or theology, (3) use a selected critical approach to film, and (4) enter into theological criticism with the film.

REQUIRED VIEWING AND READING:

1. View sixteen films: *Decalogue I*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*; *Training Day*; *Moulin Rouge*; *Signs*; *Smoke Signals*; *The Year of Living Dangerously*; *American Beauty*; *Run Lola Run*; *The Princess and the Warrior*; *About Schmidt*; *Election*; *Magnolia*; *Punch Drunk Love*; and two films of the student's choice to be viewed in conjunction with the City of Angles Film Festival held October 20-22 in Hollywood, and with their final ten-page paper.
2. Read the following texts:
 - *Ecclesiastes*.
 - Barsotti, Catherine & Robert Johnston. *Finding God in the Movies: 33 Films of Reel Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004.
 - Boorstin, Jon. *Making Movies Work: Thinking Like a Filmmaker*. Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 1995.
 - Johnston, Robert. *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000.
 - _____. *Useless Beauty: Ecclesiastes Through the Lens of Contemporary Film*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004.
 - Marsh, Clive. *Cinema and Sentiment: Film's Challenge to Theology*. Milton Keynes, UK and Wanyesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004.
 - Murphy, Roland, E. Huwiler, and O. Carm. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*. NIBC 12. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Viewing and journaling on all assigned movies (10%).
2. Weekly online discussion regarding assigned readings and questions (10%).
3. Quiz on Boorstin, *Making Movies Work* (5%).
4. Two three-page critical reviews and questions on Johnston, *Reel Spirituality* and Marsh, *Cinema and Sentiment* (20%).
5. Ministry project using film and two-page report (use *Finding God in the Movies*) (15%).
6. Ten-page paper on a film(s) (approved by the instructor) bringing the movie(s) into dialogue with *Ecclesiastes*, whether letting the film shed light on the biblical text, using the biblical text to critique the movie, or otherwise engaging in dialogue (40%).

PREREQUISITES: None. NOTE: Pasadena students are required to enroll in the on-campus TC530 course, however should extenuating circumstances exist that prevent a student from studying on campus, special approval from the professor is required before registration for the online class can be considered. Write to: johnston@fuller.edu.

RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM: M.Div. and M.A. in Theology elective; meets the MACL in Integrative Studies requirement for an interdisciplinary course (IDPL); MA in Global Leadership degree Ministry Focus Elective.

FINAL EXAMINATION: None.