

REL Goes to the Movies

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 310-001 • Fall 2022

Prof. Russell McCutcheon
Office: Presidents Hall 211

Email: russell.mccutcheon@ua.edu
Office Hour: by appointment

Prof. Oleg Kyselov
Office: Presidents Hall 315

Email: okyselov@ua.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Tues 6:00-9:00 pm • Gordon Palmer 208

Aug 23, Sept 13, Oct 11, Nov 1, Nov 29

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-310-320-rel-goes-to-the-movies-7/>

DESCRIPTION

This is a 1 credit course (offered each semester, with different films) with monthly films and discussions, in which students learn to apply the skills necessary to understand the analysis of wider cultural practices and issues that can be carried out by a scholar of religion using social theory. The films selected are possibly known to students but likely old enough that they have not been seen or studied in any detail. Students will consider them as each works of their time, asking whether their themes and cinematic styles stand up to a contemporary viewing or if they cannot be seen today as anything but historical artifacts.

OBJECTIVES

Among this course's many objectives are the following goals:

1. Introduce a new generation to once well-known and influential films
2. Learn to apply social theory to analyze cultural productions, such as films
3. Develop skills of public discussion and debate

BOOKS

There are no required or recommended books to purchase in this course; any readings will be distributed as PDFs prior to each film.

FILMS

- North by Northwest (Alfred Hitchcock dir., 1959)
- Dr. Strangelove (Stanley Kubrick dir., 1964)
- Guess Who's Coming To Dinner (Stanley Kramer dir., 1967)
- Mulholland Drive (David Lynch dir., 2001)
- 2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick dir., 1968)

Visit the Course page on the Department's website to see trailers for each film.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

As a monthly 1 credit hour course, students are expected to be in class for each meeting; notify the Instructor well in advance of, or immediately after, class if you are unable to attend and alternate methods for viewing the film will be arranged.

QUIZZES, TESTS & EXAMS

There are no quizzes, tests, or final exam in this course; assessment will be based on students writing and submitting two brief (approx. 500 words [double spaced, 12 pt, Times Roman font, with one inch margins]) commentaries on the movies, due via email. See Requirements for more details.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Regular attendance and adequate participation in the discussion following each film, demonstrating sufficient preparation. This is worth **30%** of the course (i.e., 5% for attending each monthly film viewing + 5% for overall preparation).
2. As part of their preparation, and prior to viewing each film, all students will find online and read at least 2 substantial reviews of the movie to be shown that evening (ideally, but not necessarily, reviews that were contemporary to when the film was first released), to acquaint themselves with how the movie was received or is now viewed today. Students will come to class with their own hardcopies of these reviews, prepared to draw upon them in the post-film discussion.
3. After viewing each film, students will write an approx. 500 word commentary of their own on it, drawing on the reviews that they have read and the post-film class discussion; students will submit it via email to the Instructor **no later than one week after seeing the film in class**. The commentary is the student's opportunity to review the film, paying special attention to whether each movie's themes and cinematic style stand up to a contemporary viewing or if they cannot be seen today as anything but historical artifacts. Each well-written commentary is worth 10% of the course, for a total of **50%**.
4. After viewing each of the first 4 films, and before the course's next film is shown, students must identify an additional/supplemental film by that movie's director which they will see on their own time (either using a DVD, streaming service, or Kanopy via Gorgas Library), also submitting a well-written approx. 500 word commentary/review of that film to the Instructor **prior to the class's viewing of the next movie** in the course. Each of these supplemental reviews is worth 5% of the course, for a total of **20%**.

GRADING SCALE

A+	95-100%	C	70-74
A	90-94	D+	65-69
B+	85-89	D	60-64
B	80-84	D-	50-59
C+	75-79	F	below 50

GENERAL COMMENTS

REL 310 is designed to be informative but also fun, introducing students to a variety of once notable movies with which they may not now be familiar. But there are still a few serious items to keep in mind:

1. Plagiarism is a serious scholarly offence and amounts to using the intellectual labor of another author as if it is one's own, doing so without proper quotation, citation, and acknowledgment. If the instructor suspects that a student has copied the work of another author (whether that author is a friend, classmate, or published author), the case will be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

2. No grades of "I" (Incomplete) will be assigned in this course. In my experience, when awarded at the 100-level a grade of "I" rarely leads to the completion of course requirements. So please speak with me well in advance if you are having difficulties satisfactorily completing the course's requirements on time or if you anticipate your absence from class becoming routine and thus a problem. Although I cannot guarantee that accommodations can be made for all occasions that may arise, speaking with your professors before a problem arises will greatly enhance their ability to address the situation in a way that is both fair to your classmates and beneficial to you.
3. Students with documented physical and/or learning disabilities are advised to contact the Instructor outside of class time (i.e., make an appointment to see me at my office), as soon as possible, to provide copies of their documentation and to discuss the reasonable accommodation(s) that can be made to meet their needs. However, prior to contacting the professor, ensure that you first contact the Office of Disability Services (visit their web site: <http://ods.ua.edu/> or visit Houser Hall 1000).

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

- Tues Aug 23 North by Northwest (Alfred Hitchcock dir., 1959); review due within a week
View/submit a review of another film directed by Hitchcock before Sept 13
- Tues Sept 13 Dr. Strangelove (Stanley Kubrick dir., 1964); review due within a week
View/submit a review of another film directed by Kubrick before Oct 11
- Tues Oct 11 Guess Who's Coming To Dinner (Stanley Kramer dir., 1967) review due within a week
View/submit a review of another film directed by Kramer before Nov 1
- Tues Nov 1 Mulholland Drive (David Lynch dir., 2001); review due within a week
View/submit a review of another film directed by Lynch before Nov 29
- Tues Nov 29 2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick dir., 1968); review due within a week
No additional movie/review for the last film

There is no Final Exam

