

REL 590.001

Grad Seminar: Representing Religion in Culture

Spring 2023 • Thursday 1:30-3:20 • PRH 210

Prof. Russell T. McCutcheon

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Description

Despite how scholars of religion often comment on various cultural artifacts—as if they are but sites where the sacred is manifested or meaning is expressed—this course uses a new book, *Representing Religion in Film* (2022), to examine 6 recent films as analyzed by scholars of religion who approach the topic rather differently. This alternative approach sets the stage for a discussion on how scholars of religion who employ social theory can comment on other artifacts, such as the novel on which the final writing assignment in the course is based.

Readings

Students are expected to obtain a copy of *Representing Religion in Film* (2022). Any additional readings (such as the novel, on which the final writing assignment is based) will be distributed in advance of class.

Films

Religulous (2008)

A Wrinkle in Time (2018)

The Darjeeling Limited (2007)

Cloud Atlas (2012)

Terminator 2 (1991)

The Last Jedi (2017)

Requirements

1. Weekly attendance and informed participation based on adequate preparation are both expected.
2. In turn, each student will take the lead weekly on summarizing and then discussing and applying/analyzing the main reading that examines each film, for a 30-minute seminar (see schedule); students will therefore each lead two seminars. Presenters must incorporate new information while also ensuring that the argument of the reading in question is understood by their peers and that the seminar sheds light on the course as a whole. (40% of the final grade)
3. For the final assignment students must write an approx. 2,000-word essay, using the course's approach to better understand the novel, *American Gods* (a copy of which will be distributed to each student on the first day of class). Throughout the course students will therefore be reading the novel on their own and using it as a point of reference when experimenting with the approaches to film that are modeled each week in the course. This piece of writing (double-spaced, 12 pt Times Roman font, 1 inch margins, etc.) is due on the Monday of exam week (May 1) by noon in the main office. (60% of the final grade)

Tentative Schedule

Jan 12	Tenzan Eaghil's Introduction to <i>Representing Religion in Film</i> (sign-up for seminar presentations)
Jan 19	Religulous
Jan 26	Teemu Taira, chpt. 1 _____
Feb 2	A Wrinkle in Time
Feb 9	Leslie Dorrough Smith, chpt. 3 _____
Feb 16	The Darjeeling Limited
Feb 23	Mike Altman, chpt. 5 _____
Mar 2	Cloud Atlas
Mar 9	Ting Guo, chpt. 6 _____
Mar 16	Spring Break – no class
Mar 23	Terminator 2
Mar 30	Beth Singler, chpt. 11 _____
Apr 6	The Last Jedi
Apr 13	Richard Newton, chpt. 12 _____
Apr 20	Tenzan Eaghil, Conclusion to <i>Representing Religion in Film</i> ; discussion of Neil Gaiman's <i>American Gods</i> (finish reading the novel before class)
Apr 27	Work on final essay on Neil Gaiman's <i>American Gods</i>
May 1	Final Essays Due by Noon in Main Office