

Movie Essays

Why am I doing this assignment?

People probably learn more about religion from the movies and television than they do from books and lectures. In order to be an educated consumer of popular culture, you need to know what is “happening” when you watch movies. You need to think seriously about what movie makers are “creating” so that you can become more sophisticated in your response to “entertainment.” Why do movie makers want to represent religion in certain ways?

How do I do this assignment if I am contracting for a B?

Students who contract for a “B” are asked to write one three page reflection paper on one movie and its chapter from *Catholics in the Movies*.

First, decide on a movie/chapter based on either your preference or your schedule. You must watch the movie, even if you have seen it before. Do not rely on memory. Better still, pick a movie you have not already seen, so it will be fresh. You can read about the films on the internet movie data base: <http://www.us.imdb.com/> General caveat: the older the film, the fewer curse words and naughty bits.

These movies are all available on DVD, through Netflix, and are at most video rental stores. Some are at our library. Act now because who knows who all will want your film.

Watch the movie. Take notes. Pay particular attention to how it *looks* and how it *sounds*. Think about when it was made. Think about what was going on in the world when it was made.

Read the chapter.

Think about what the author said about your movie. Reflect about what *you* think is the most interesting thing *about religion* in the movie. Discuss the chapter and movie in light of your ideas about the film. Do you agree/disagree with a point the author made? What did the author miss? How does the history discussed in the chapter come alive in this movie?

Key idea: How is Hollywood representing religion?

When do I turn my essay in?

On the date we will discuss the movie. You—and those who also wrote on those movie--will be the discussion leaders. We will turn to you to describe the film and the arguments in the chapter.

- 5/19** *Song of Bernadette* (1943)
Angels with Dirty Faces (1938)
Going My Way (1944)
- 5/21** *Santitos* (1999)
Seven Cities of Gold (1955)
Lilies of the Field (1963)
The Godfather (any from trilogy)
- 6/2** *Dogma* (1999)
Exorcist (1973)
True Confessions (1981)
The Passion of the Christ (2004)

And what do I do if I want an “A”?

Students who contract for an “A” are asked to write a minimum five pages in a comparative reflection paper on *two* movies. **One** move will be from *Catholics in the Movies* and the other **one** will be from a list of selected movies that deal with Catholic characters. You will write an essay on the general topic we will be discussing that day based on the movies, my lectures, and the chapter in *Catholics in the Movies*.

Your essay should be a reflection on the days theme. Imagine this theme as the title of your paper.

Due on

- 5/19 Theme:** Catholic Communities and Religious Identity: Laity, Nuns, Priests.
Song of Bernadette (1943) or
Angels with Dirty Faces (1938) or
Going My Way (1944) **and**
The Cardinal (1963) or
The Bells of St. Mary’s (1945) or
Nacho Libre (2006)
- 5/21 Theme:** Movie Catholicism Constructing Race **OR** Ethnicity **OR** Gender (pick one)
Going My Way (1944)
Santitos (1999) or
Seven Cities of Gold (1955) or
Lilies of the Field (1963) or
The Godfather (any from trilogy) **and**
Keys of the Kingdom (1944)
Change of Habit (1969)

Black Robe (1991)

- 6/2 Theme:** What Happened to Peace and Love? Catholicism, Violence and Horror
Dogma (1999) or
Exorcist (1973) or
True Confessions (1981) or
The Passion of the Christ (2004) and
The Nun's Story (1959)
Agnes of God (1985)
Dead Man Walking (1996)
Boondock Saints (1999)
Stigmata (1999)

In general, how should I approach the essay?

Do not summarize the movie. Describe themes, music, characters, plots only to illustrate your point. The essay should integrate ideas from the lectures and readings. It should demonstrate that you understand the materials we have discussed in class. Make sure that the essay has your analysis (not unsubstantiated opinion) in it.

Is There a Particular Style That You Want?

Yes. Make sure it is: 1) the proper length, don't cheat! 2) double spaced 3) left margin of one inch and right margin of 1 ½ inches, one inch top and bottom 4) pages numbered 5) **Stapled** in upper left hand corner. I will turn the essay back to you to fix if you do not follow this style, I'm strict about this.

Does Spelling Count?

Absolutely. In fact, essays that are poorly written (weak organization, typos, awkward prose, simplistic language) will be returned to be re-written. I take writing seriously. College students should be able to write a clear, well-argued prose. See the "Ten Commandments of Writing" handout.

When is it Due and What if the Dog Eats It?

On the date stated above. If your dog looks hungry--if you have any problems--notify me by phone **before** the essay is due.