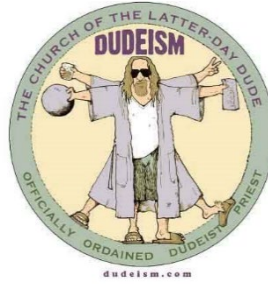
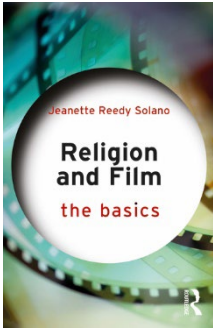


# RLST 311: Religion and Film



**CPRL 311**

**SPRING 2023**

**Dr. Jeanette Reedy Solano**

**Online Office Hours:** Monday mornings 10am-12pm; Tuesdays: 10:00-11:00 am [jsolano@fullerton.edu](mailto:jsolano@fullerton.edu)  
**Office:** UH 311 (University Hall-but I am 100% online for Spring 2023) **Office Phone:** 657-278-7554  
**Email:** [jsolano@fullerton.edu](mailto:jsolano@fullerton.edu) The best way to reach me is by email M-F. M-Th emails will be answered in 24 hrs.  
Please do not email me over the weekend-it may get buried-wait till Monday morning and I will respond quickly.

## Course Description:

Both religion and film are significant elements of human life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This seminar will explore religion and film from the early years of Hollywood until today. The semester's study is divided into five units. After a history of the interactions of religion and film in the early years and an introduction to the field of Religion and Film Studies, we will consider diverse academic approaches to religion and film: reception and cultural studies, theological and biblical approaches, and auteur theory. Next, we will explore religion through the genres of Sci-Fi, Comedy, Horror, and Documentary Film. After this we will analyze international films to better understand the lived experience and heart of three world religions (Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism). Our final sections turn to Tropes/Themes related to Religion and Film: Evil (supernatural and human), Religion, Race, & Women, & Gender & Religion.

## Why Study Religion and Film?

Human beings are visual creatures and we long for images and filmic stories to help make sense of our world and our place within it. I argue for a natural affinity between religion and film. The relationship between cinema and religion/spirituality has drawn the interest of film theorists since the early days of cinema. Film and religion should be studied together in the academy, especially within the Humanities. Films are our new myths, stories that grapple with the most fundamental of human dilemmas and attempt to answer big existential questions such as where did we come from?, how ought we live?, how did the world begin?, and what happens after we die? The portrayal of religion *in* film can be traced back to the dawn of cinema itself as religious stories and figures (especially Jesus and Hebrew prophets) were often the fodder for some of the earliest films made by the Lumiere brothers, Thomas Edison, D.W. Griffith, and Cecil B. De Mille who created many early biblical epics. The academic area of Religion and Film Studies has been around for almost 50 years now and is poised to grow as it opens itself up to new venues and conversation partners.

**Who should Take this Class?** YOU! You needn't have a formal background in film or Religious Studies to do this well in 311! You should *love* movies and be ready to explore. You will expand your film canon. Let's heed the words of director Steven Spielberg who said: "The older I get, the more I look at movies as a moving miracle." It's time to dim the lights and dive into these moving miracles....

## Learning Outcomes i.e. *by the end of the term you should ...*

- ✚ Have a foundational understanding of the field of religion and film, how it has grown, where it is going.
- ✚ Be able to differentiate and apply diverse methodological approaches to religion and film.
- ✚ Be able to recognize and analyze religious and spiritual themes in film.
- ✚ Have a broad, historical appreciation for the social, historical, and cultural significance of filmic works of human imagination and how these have contributed to human civilization.
- ✚ Have a basic grasp of auteur theory and several different film genres.
- ✚ Be able to articulate your views in a positive and effective way in both writing and orally via video..
- ✚ Have improved your formal academic writing skills by completing two formal research papers.
- ✚ Have greatly expanded your film canon and familiarity with international and independent film.

### **CPRL 311 Textbook**

Jeanette Reedy Solano: *Religion and Film: The Basics* (Oxford: Routledge Press, 2022).  
ISBN: 978-0-367-13520

There are also many **readings posted on Canvas** to augment this introductory text.

### **Learning Assessment (A Breakdown of your Grade):**

**3%: Intro Discussion Post**

**21%: Cineaste Chat-Written discussion (7 @ 3 pts each)**

**21%: Critics Corner-Voicethread Video (7 @ 3 pts each)**

**20%: Paper on Genre or Auteur (1,400-1,500 words-5 pages)**

**30%: Final Research Paper (2,000-2,300 words, 7-8 pages)**

**5%: Exit Survey**

---

**100% / 100 pts.**

### **COMMUNICATING & ENGAGING in 311 (55% of your Grade)**

- **Intro Discussion Post: 3%** (1 written discussion post)
- **Cineaste Chat-Written discussion: 21%** (7 @ 3 pts each)
- **Critics Corner-VoiceThread Video: 21%** (7 @ 3 pts each)
- **Exit Survey: 3%** (complete Canvas survey)

### **WRITING in 311 (50% of your grade)**

- **Genre or Auteur Research Paper: 20%**
- **Final Research Paper: 30%**

### **COMMUNICATING & ENGAGING in 311 (55% of your Grade)**

#### **Intro Discussion Post: 3%** (1 written discussion post)

Follow prompts and write a detailed response in this traditional discussion post and thread.  
Respond to at least 2 peers, discuss common interests in film, etc.

**Cineaste Chats:** (21 pts/% of your grade: each post=2 pts & 1 pt for responding to your peers-3 pts total x 7)

**Theses posts are every-other-week: 7 times throughout the term,** you will contribute approximately 2 paragraphs reflecting on the material assigned for that week's class. Each week I will post some basic prompts based on the films and the readings. This will be posted at least 1 week ahead. Your responses should include specifics from both the films and reference ideas from the readings by including specific ideas or a quote, mentioning how this idea applied to the film (or didn't) or helped you view the film differently. I will divide you into 2 groups at the end of week : **GROUP 1** will be even-week Cineaste Chat Posters & will post responses the following weeks: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and **GROUP 2** will be Odd-week Posters will post their responses weeks: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15. **To be clear-you do not do this every week-only 7 times throughout the term.** Your responses to Cineaste Chat discussion prompts are due no later than **11 am on Mondays**. VIP-I will check the time of your posts-you will be marked down if you do not post your responses by then as your groupmates need time to read your ideas and respond to them. By Monday at 11:00 pm you must post thoughtful **responses** to 2 different peers' posts. Sample response posted.

**Critics Corner-VoiceThread Video: 21%** (7 @ 3 pts each)

Weeks you are not doing Cineaste Chats you will be sharing your ideas about 1 film as a film critic. These video posts will address the same 4 areas each time. There will be guidelines posted and a sample video by the end of the first week.

**Exit Survey: 3%** (complete Canvas survey)

## **WRITING in 311 (45% of your grade)**

### **Genre or Auteur Research Paper : 20%**

5 page paper due week 10, 4/3 (due after Spring Break).

This paper is designed to demonstrate your familiarity with either a genre or a chosen auteur. By this point in the class we will have studied both auteur theory and genres. You can choose one of two options: 1.) Genre: 1 genre/1 film OR 2.) Auteur: 1 director/1 film. This paper also asks you to become familiar with critical film reviews and peer-reviewed articles as well as encourage you to hone your own film analysis skills. Please see handout for details.

### **Final Research Paper: 30%**

This final term paper will demonstrate not only your ability to critically examine a topic in religion and film, but also your mastery of written expression. This formal academic paper should be formatted according to the standards of the Chicago Manual of Style. Each paper will have a formal outline, bibliography, and footnotes. Outline and Thesis are due Week 13 to Dr. Solano. **This paper takes the place of your final exam** and is due Monday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm via a TurnItIn link on Canvas. You may turn in your final paper anytime between 5/8-5/15. Papers will be graded by May 25<sup>th</sup> and all comments will be on TurnItIn. See handout for details and a step-by-step guide.

**A Word about Workload:** You should love watching movies and be poised to expand your film canon this term! As an upper-division course you should expect to spend 5-10 hours per week on this class. 311 should average about **6-8 hours per week:** 2-4 hours spent watching

two films or one film and some clips; 1-1.5 hours doing the readings and 1 hour reflecting on the readings and the films in either the Cineaste Chat or Critics Corner and responding to peers. The weeks you do your Critics Corner Film Review will be a bit easier since you only have to reflect on **1 film** even if that week had 2 films-you choose the 1 film you wish to review. If 8 hours seems like a lot, remember that there is no commuting and in-person class time involved (usually at least 3-4 hrs per week). We will screen 22 films over the course of the semester. Consider Week 1 if 311 fits into your schedule this term. Please read over the “A Word about Workload” statement in first module labelled “Course Docs” for details.

### **Explanation of Assessment and Grading:**

- A:** 93-100 Outstanding (participation and work consistently distinguished itself)
- A-:** 90-92 Excellent work across the board (participation and written work were superb)
- B+:** 87-89 Distinguished work
- B:** 83-86 Above average (high quality work in most areas)
- B-:** 80-82 Solid performance, above average
- C+:** 77-79 Good work, but may have performed poorly in one area
- C:** 73-76 Adequately completed all work
- C-:** 70-72 Still a passing grade, you may have performed poorly in several areas
- D+:** 67-69 Still a passing grade but not for majors in this course
- D:** 63-66 Below-average performance in many areas; may have failed to complete some work
- D-:** 60-62 Student did some work but probably did not complete a major assignment
- F:** below 60...well you don't want to go there! This score results in failure of the course.

**This scale is firm. A few points can make a big difference. Final grades use the plus/minus system.**

**Note:** If you are within 1 point at the end of the term I will consider all of your scores and effort in the course and may bump you up to a higher grade.

### **Academic Dishonesty, Using AI & Personal Integrity**

You are expected to be honest in your pursuit of learning. For a further explanation of what constitutes academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, please see UPS 300.021. <http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/documents/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf>. The new emergence of **ChatGPT** is revolutionizing critical reflection and writing. While we can't stop AI from transforming our world, we can refuse to present **Chat GPT** work as our own. There are only two papers in 311 and the steps and stages required will make it difficult to use AI. This tool will improve quickly, but right now **ChatGPT** is not sufficient. For example, I just asked it to generate an analysis of Bad Bunny using Derrida and the results were not that impressive: it lacked a clear thesis and authorial voice despite the detail. The bottom line is this: What I really care about in this class is your growth as a *cineaste*, not the most brilliant paper ever. I want you to develop **YOUR** voice and opinion-no AI can produce that. The penalty for academic dishonesty will include a 0 on that assignment and possible failure of the course. All incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students Office, Judicial Affairs. I care more about your creative reading of a film, your effort and honesty, than perfection!

### **Learning Special Needs...If You Need Assistance...**

Many students have special challenges when it comes to learning. I want you to know I understand and will try to help you with your needs, but you must get it cleared through the Office of Disability Support Services: **University Hall 101, Phone: (657) 278-3117**  
**web:** [Fullerton.edu/DSS](http://Fullerton.edu/DSS)

Our campus policy is to document the need and then the instructor can work to accommodate your need, whatever that may be: taking the exam in a quiet place with more time, taping lectures, etc. **Do not be afraid to seek the help you need to do your best in college!**

# Spring 2023 311 Course Reading & Screening Schedule

**“CPD” stands for Canvas Posted Docs.** *RFTB= Religion and Film: The Basics*

Each week (after the 1<sup>st</sup>) you will have either a **Cineaste Chat** (written discussion) or **Critic’s Corner** Video Post-these are not listed in this schedule-only on Canvas, please note this, for details see above.

## **I. Introduction to Course, Each Other, and Religion and Film**

### **Week 1 (1/23): Introduction to Course, Each Other, and Religion and Film**

Purchase book. Familiarize yourself with our Canvas site, our schedule, and assignments.

**To read: Solano (RFTB): 1: *Discovering the Divine in the Dark: An Introduction to Religion & Film* (begin)**

Your "Intro Post" discussion is due by the end of Week 1: Friday 1/27/23 at 11:50 pm. Don’t forget!

**To Screen:** nothing, easing you in!

### **Week 2 (1/30): An Introduction to Religion and Film & Silent Film**

**To read: Solano: Chpt. 1: *Discovering the Divine in the Dark: An Introduction to Religion and Film* (finish)**

**CPD: Nathaniel Dorsky: *Devotional Cinema* (8)**

**To Screen: *The Hypocrites* (Lois Weber, 1919-TRT 49 min) linked- Kanopy**

Ending clip from *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (dir. by Theodore Dreier-6 min) (1928)

## **II. APPROACHES TO RELIGION AND FILM**

### **Week 3 (2/6): Biblical-Theological and Religious Studies Approaches**

**To read: Solano: Chapter 2 in *RFTB* (p 21-28)**

**CPD: Solano, *Blessed Broken Bodies* (11 p)**

**CPD: Vogel: *Central Station and Cinema Novo* (4p)**

**CPD: S. Brent Plate: Selections from *Religion & Film: Cinema and the Recreation of the World* (p. 1-22) optional reading**

**To Screen: *Central Station***

### **Week 4 (2/13): Reception Studies and Cultural Studies Approaches**

**To read: Solano: Chapter 2 in *RFTB* (32-39) (7p)**

**CPD: Lyden, John C. “Whose Film Is It, Anyway? Canonicity and Authority in *Star Wars* Fandom.” (9p)**

**CPD: Davidson: *Jediism* (13p)**

**CPD: Lavelle: *Real Life Jedi Knights* (5p)**

**To screen :** nothing beyond a few clips from *Star Wars*

### **Week 5 (2/20) Film Studies, Auteur Approaches: Andrei Tarkovsky**

**To Read: CPD: Andrei Tarkovsky: excerpts from *Sculpting in Time***

**CPD: Joseph G. Kickasola: *Indispensable Doubts, Embodied Hopes: Tarkovsky's Andrei Rublev* (12 p)**

**CPD: D’Sa: *Andrei Rublev: Epiphany in Art* (10p)**

**To Screen: *Andrei Rublev***

## **III. Exploring Religion through Film Genres**

### **Week 6: (2/27) SCI-FI**

**To read: Solano: *RFTB*, p. 96-102**

**CPD: Lyden: excerpt from Sci-Fi chapter in *Film as Religion* (5p)**

**CPD: Derry: review of *Arrival* (6p)**

**To screen: *Arrival* ([Villeneuve](#), USA, 2016) and *Ex-Machina* OR *Minari* (if attending 3/2 event)**



**\*3/2 (Thursday eve) in-person Religion and Film event-see Canvas for details.**

### **Week 7: (3/6) COMEDY**

**To read: Solano:** *RFTB*, p. 103-109 (6p)

**CPD: Lippard:** *Peripherality and Humor in Iranian Art Film* (22)

**CPD:** Various short articles related to *The Lizard*

**To screen:** *The Pilgrim* (Chaplin, USA, 1923)

*The Lizard* (Kamal Tbrizi, Iran, 2004)

### **Week 8 (3/13): HORROR**

**To read: Solano:** *RFTB* p. 109-113 (Horror); pp. 114-126 (Drama and Road Trip)

**CPD:** TBD-will be posted

**To screen:** *The Wicker Man*

*Let the Right One In*

### **Week 9 (3/20): DOCUMENTARY FILM**

**To Read: Solano:** *RFTB* 126-134 (8p)

**CPD: Jeanette Reedy Solano:** *From The Divine Flame to Kids on Fire: Documentary Filmic Explorations of Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (20)

**CPD:** Reviews, short article on *5 Broken Cameras* (4p)

**To Screen:** *5 Broken Cameras* (Burnat & Davidi, Israel, 2011)

*Jesus Camp* (Grady & Ewing, USA 2006)

**Spring Break!!!!** March 24-31.

## **IV. Exploring World Religions through World Cinema**

### **Week 10 (4/3): Hinduism**

**To read: Solano.** "Hinduism" in *RFB* (54-60) (6p)

**CPD:** Philip Lutgendorf: *Jai Santoshi Ma Revisited: On Seeing a Hindu "Mythological" Film* (7)

**To screen:** *Jai Santoshi Maa* (India, 1973, RT: 2:25)

*OMG!* (Oh My God)

**\*\*\* Paper # 1 Genre or Auteur due 4/3-see Canvas for details**

### **Week 11 (4/10): Judaism**

**To read:** Solano: "Judaism" in *RFB* (p.60-69) (9 p)

**CPD:** Gabriel Levy: *Hermeneutics in A Serious Man* (16 p)

**To Screen:** *A Serious Man* (USA, 2009, RT: 1:46)

*Mountain* (Israel, 2016, RT 1:16)

### **Week 12: (4/17): Buddhism**

**To Read: Solano:** "Buddhism" in *RFTB* (69-78) (9p)

**CPD:** Bridges and Glassman: Selections from *The Dude and the Zen Master*

**CPD:** Sharon A Suh-Silver Screen Buddha-excerpts on *Departures* and *The Big Lebowski*

**To Screen:** *Departures* (Japan, 2009, RT: 130)

*The Big Lebowski* (USA, 1998, Coen Brothers, RT: 117)

## V. Tropes and Themes in Religion and Film

### Week 13 (4/24): EVIL AND SUFFERING

**\*\* DUE DATE:** Final Research Paper Thesis, CMS Outline (1 pg) and CMS Bibliography (1 pg) due.

**To read:** Solano, *RFTB* 136-143 (7p)

**CPD:** To be posted on Canvas

**To screen:** *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (Derrickson)

*Get Out!* (Peele)

### Week 14: (5/1) RELIGION AND RACE

**To read:** Solano: "Religion and Race" in *RFTB* (149-156) (7 p)

**CPD:** 2 interviews with director of *The Other Conquest*; 1 interview with director of *Burden*

**CPD:** *Variety* review of *The Other Conquest*

**To screen:** *The Other Conquest* (Mexico, 2000, RT: 1:45)

*Burden* (USA, 2019, RT: 1:57)

### Week 15 (5/8): SEX, GENDER, RELIGION

**To Read:** Solano: *RFTB*, 143-147 (5p)

**CPD:** Solano: festival paper on *Water*

**CPD:** Salzman: Excerpts from *Shooting Water*

**To Screen:** *Water*

### Final Exam Week (5/15)

Term Paper due **Monday, May 15th**, by **7 pm** via TurnItIn link on Canvas

Congrats! You have made it to the end of the term!

### **Important Deadlines and Events in 311**

**Week 6 (3/2): Religion and Film: The Basics-Minari Event** with Dr. Solano at St. Edmund's Church in San Marino (6:30pm reception-7:00-8:30 Talk and Discussion) 1<sup>st</sup> option for Religion and Film Interface.

**Week 10 (4/3): Genre/or Auteur Paper Due**

**Mid April or late March:** 2<sup>nd</sup> option for Religion and Film interface-Screening with classmates and Dr. Solano at her home or a public screening/discussion-details will be announced before 3/2 option. You can do both and earn 3 points extra credit. Attending 1 is fine. Date to be determined.

**Week 13 (4/23): Thesis, Outline, and Bibliography for Final Research Paper: due (2 pgs total).**

**Finals Week (5/15):** Final Research Paper due 5/15 via TurnItIn link on Titanium. You may turn it in early-starting on 5-8-23.