

ST. MARY'S ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Summer 2019

Saturdays, May 18; June 1, 8, 15, 29

8:30 am – 3:00 pm

ST649 America's God in American Films

Dr. David Greiser

Prerequisites: None, but a course in American Religious History would be an asset.

Course Description: A multi-disciplinary course examining classic and recent American movies, with a view toward engaging the question, "What do American movies tell us about the unique nature of Americans' views of God, faith, and theology?"

Course Requirements:

- Students should expect to read *at most* 800 pages.
 - Students should expect to write *at most* 22 pages.
1. Students will complete the required reading and movie watching assignments on time and come prepared to engage in class discussion. (In addition to the required texts, students will also be exposed to the critical reviews of excellent film critics)
 2. A 2-page assignment (early in the class) on your life experience with movies. How have movies made an impact on you? How do you think they have influenced your view of God and your faith?
 3. Two 5-page critical reviews of films that will not be assigned for class—films which engage uniquely American and religious themes. Reviews can be modeled after reviews read for the course.
 4. A longer paper (7 pages) that offers a theological analysis of one film.
 5. A 2-page summary paper, due at the end of the class, that responds succinctly to the question in the course description: What do American movies tell about the unique nature of Americans' views of God, faith, and spirituality?

Required Texts:

1. Froese, Paul, and Bader, Christopher. *America's Four Gods: What We Say About God, and What that Says About Us*. Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-19-534147-8.
2. Johnston, Robert K. *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006, 2nd ed. ISBN 978-0-8010-3187-8.
3. Marsh, Clive. *Theology Goes to the Movies: An Introduction to Critical Christian Thinking*. London: Routledge, 2007. ISBN 0 415 38012 X

Recommended Text:

Anker, Roy K. *Catching Light: Looking for God at the Movies*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. ISBN 0-8028-2795-0.