



G490 Faith and Film

3 credits. Prerequisites: *None*.

 Online Video



January 11 – April 16, 2027
Winter 2027

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Please note: This course will have 3 optional virtual Saturday discussions (time TBD).

Course Goals

Course Description

Christianity has been represented on film since the advent of cinema. This course surveys the history, representation, and misrepresentation of faith in media from the early days of the 20th century through modern YouTube. Understanding how Christianity has been displayed on screen, students watch, research, write, and create media about how faith and values have been – and could be – portrayed through film.

Relationship to Horizon and MCS's Missions

Film is a form of entertainment, communication, witness, and worship that incorporates audiovisuals and relies on foundational principles of story. Film is a cathartic opportunity to encounter the spirit of Creation and human experience. Learning to interpret meaningful messages helps us demonstrate God's love and the redemptive message of Christ.

Core Competencies and Learning Outcomes



To demonstrate competency in **Contextual Awareness and Skilled Communication**, students will

1. Critically assess ways Christianity is represented in film and social media.
 - *Assessment:* Weekly Assignments; Video Essay / Paper #1 and #2; Final Project
2. Engage in conversations, write about, and create media about the representation of faith on screen.
 - *Assessment:* Weekly Assignments; Video Essay / Paper #1 and #2; Final Project
3. Develop an approach to how fictional stories engage Christian theology and the biblical narrative as metaphor for the Gospel.
 - *Assessment:* Weekly Assignments; Video Essay / Paper #1 and #2; Final Project
4. Create original media that reflects on modern media and Christian traditions.
 - *Assessment:* Video Essay / Paper #1 and #2; Final Project

Course Work

Required Readings

Weekly videos lectures, supplementary material, readings, movies, and weekly activities will be provided by the instructor on Populi.

Students are asked to subscribe to Kanopy (a free online streaming service) with a local library membership. (*Kanopy is only available through libraries, so you need to be a member of a participating library to start watching Kanopy. If you are a member of a participating public library, you can start watching by signing up with a valid public library card number and PIN/password.*)

Course Assignments and Activities

1. *Weekly Assignments* (10 responses x 4% = 40%)

Each week, students will be asked to respond to questions or activities based on video lectures, readings, and films. Exercises will vary to include summaries, critical reflections, research and comparisons, and cinematic exegesis through questions designed to get students to think about meaning behind films. Detailed instructions will be available at the start of each week on Populi.

- Related learning outcome(s): #1, 2, 3.
- **Assignment length:** 2-3 pages each (~20-30 pages total).
- **Due date:** *Weekly* Saturdays at 8pm SK (see Course Outline below for due dates)

2. *Video Essay 1 / Paper 1* (10%)

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to think critically, reflecting on the cultural and spiritual value of representation and message in films, as they learn to speak thoughtfully and creatively to a topic or theme. Ideas and detailed guidance will be given through Populi.

In consultation with the professor, students will either make a video essay or write a traditional essay. In either case, students will hand in the following:

- a detailed outline with a thesis statement or question, and reference to film and three additional sources
- a five-minute / 400-word narrated video essay and script or traditional 1,000-word essay.

For students who choose the video essay:

- Upload your video to OneDrive (instructions [here](#)) and then submit the link to your professor on Populi. Do not upload a video file directly on Populi.
- A “How to Make a Video Essay” video and checklist will be available for students who want to learn how to create a video essay. Three optional Saturday morning virtual video sessions will be scheduled for students to receive supervision from the professor.
- Related learning outcome(s): #1, 2, 3, 4.
- **Assignment length:** five-minute video + script + outline or 1,000-word essay + outline
- **Due date:** Saturday, February 20, 8pm SK

3. *Video Essay 2 / Paper 2* (20%)

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to think critically, reflecting on the cultural and spiritual value of representation and message in films, as they learn to speak thoughtfully and creatively to a topic or theme. Ideas and detailed guidance will be given through Populi.

In consultation with the professor, students will either make a video essay or write a traditional essay. In either case, students will hand in the following:

- a detailed outline with thesis statement or question, and reference to film and six additional sources,
- a ten-minute / 800-word narrated video essay and script based on a theme covered in the class or a 2,000-word essay on a similar topic.

For students who choose the video essay:

- Upload your video to OneDrive (instructions [here](#)) and then submit the link to your professor on Populi. Do not upload a video file directly on Populi.
- A “How to Make a Video Essay” video and checklist will be available for students who want to learn how to create a video essay. Three optional Saturday morning virtual video session will be scheduled for students to receive supervision from the professor.
- Related learning outcome(s): #1, 2, 3, 4.
- **Assignment length:** ten-minute video + script + outline or 2,000-word essay + outline
- **Due date:** Saturday, March 20, 8pm SK.

4. *Final Project* (30%)

The purpose of the final project is to encourage reflection about the artistic representation of faith in film that celebrates, criticizes, encourages, and combats cultural assumptions and spiritual values. This project will provide students with the opportunity to stretch their creative communication approach.

Detailed information about the project will be available during the semester. A virtual discussion with the professor will be scheduled at the end of March to guide students as they work through their ideas and decide on the format of the project.

Based on content covered in the course, students will watch one of two final films, *First Reformed* (Paul Schrader) or *Silence* (Martin Scorsese). Students will then be given options to create a media project or write a series of articles about the movie that will require research and thoughtful articulation.

The topic will center around the question, “If a film is a mirror to our experience, how does this film make you think about your faith, calling, and spiritual journey?”

For students who choose the video essay:

- Upload your video to OneDrive (instructions [here](#)) and then submit the link to your professor on Populi. Do not upload a video file directly on Populi.
- A “How to Make a Video Essay” video and checklist will be available for students who want to learn how to create a video essay. Three optional Saturday morning virtual video sessions will be scheduled for students to receive supervision from the professor.
- Related learning outcome(s): #1, 2, 3, 4.
- **Assignment length:** Dependent on format, the final project would be equivalent to a ten-minute video or 2,000-word essay with equivalent research.
- **Due date:** April 7, 8pm SK.

Estimate of Time Investment (individual time investments may vary)

1. Weekly Assignments	52 hrs	Weekly	10 x 4% = 40%
2. Video Essay / Paper #1	10 hr	Feb 20	10%
3. Video Essay / Paper #2	20 hr	Mar 20	20%
4. Final Project	20 hr	April 7	30%
Total	102 hours		100%

All assignments are due at 8pm SK unless otherwise stated.

Assessment Rubrics

Assignment rubrics will be found by clicking on the assignment in Populi.

Course Outline

Disclaimer: Weekly content does not necessarily reflect the beliefs or assumptions of the professor. They are chosen to encourage critical thought and reflections.

Week:	Topics/Movies:	Reading & Question:	Due:
1 Jan 11-17	History of Christianity on Screen / <i>TBD</i>	How has Christianity been a source of storytelling inspiration in cinema?	
2 Jan 18-24	<i>Watching the Bible</i> ; Movies about the Bible. / <i>Noah</i>	How do we assess the content of a movie that represents the faith?	Response 1: (4%) Due Jan 23
3 Jan 25-31	Christianity as Period-Piece / <i>Elmer Gantry</i> , <i>Leap of Faith</i>	What is an honest depiction of Christian history on screen?	Response 2: (4%) Due Jan 30
4 Feb 1-7	Documentaries About Christian Faith / <i>Bad Faith 2026</i>	How do we think about real stories that critique Christians?	Response 3: (4%) Due Feb 6
5 Feb 8-14	Film as Narrative Metaphor / <i>The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i>	How do we understand the nature of narrative film and metaphor?	Response 4: (4%) Due Feb 13
6 Feb 15-21	Apocalyptic Cinema & Faith / <i>The Road</i>	Why are we so drawn to stories about the end—and how do we represent them in film?	Vid. Essay / Paper 1 (10%) Due Feb 20 Response 5: (4%) Due Feb 20
<i>Week 7 Reading Week (Feb 22-28) and Week 8 Module Week (Mar 1-Mar 7)</i>			
9 Mar 8-14	The Problem of Screen-Sentimentalism / <i>God is Not Dead</i> / <i>The Shack</i> <i>YouTube: Christians, Stoop Forcing the Gospel into Every Movie</i>	How do we judge what represents our faith?	Response 6: (4%) Due Mar 13
10 Mar 15-21	Film as Theology + Philosophy / <i>The Seventh Seal</i>	How do we think about art and the history of ideas to enhance our theology by wrestling with philosophical questions?	Vid Essay / Paper 2 Due Mar 20 Response 7: (4%) Due Mar 20
11 Mar 22-28	Narratives about Christians and the (Mis)representation of Faith / <i>Nailin' It to the Church</i> / <i>Searching for the Wrong Eyed Jesus</i>	How do we discerningly and charitably respond to depictions of Christian hypocrisy?	Response 8: (4%) Due Mar 27
12 Mar 29-Apr 4	Lament, Suffering, Service, and Love of Christ / <i>Calvary</i>	How can art help us to think more deeply about the role of suffering and lament in faith?	Response 9: (4%) Due April 3

13 Apr 5-11	Movies, Faith, and Genre; Comedy and Horror / <i>The Promised Land</i>	How can humour be used to make us think more deeply about the life of faith and/ or to entertain?	Final Project Due April 7 Response 10: (4%) Due April 10
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- Revision week is April 12 – 16, 2027. Students are encouraged to submit revised assignments soon after they receive their marked assignments.
- No assignments will be accepted after the course end date: *April 16, 2027*.

Academic Policies

General Assignment Guidelines

Please see the [Horizon](#) & [MCS](#) Format Guide for assignment submission, grammar, and formatting guidelines. The length of papers should fall within +/- 10% of the stated length. Papers that fall outside the length guidelines may not be graded. Assignments should be submitted via Populi under *Submissions* (not *Comments*). The resource at this [link](#) explains how to submit assignments on Populi.

Extensions

To submit extension requests, students must submit the *Request Extension Form* on the [MCS](#) or [Horizon](#) website and *before the due date*. Professors reserve the right to deny extensions. Generally, the sooner that a student asks for an extension, the more willing faculty tend to be in granting extensions. Furthermore, no extensions will be granted beyond the final day of a term or semester unless approval is granted by the Associate Academic Dean (MCS) or Assistant Academic Dean (Horizon).

Late Assignments

Students are expected to submit work by the assigned or extended due dates, as part of their development of the Leadership and Administration competency. A late penalty will be assessed for all overdue assignments: 1-3 calendar days late, penalty of 10%; 4-6 calendar days late, penalty of 20%; after 6 calendar days late, an assignment receives a grade of 0 and no opportunity for revision. Any late penalty incurred on a first submission will be applied regardless of if the student chooses to continue learning through the revision process.

Assignment Completion

Professors usually will not accept assignments that have not been completed according to the instructions given in the syllabus. If a professor informs a student that a submitted assignment is incomplete, the student will be given the opportunity to complete and resubmit the assignment quickly. If this is not possible, the assignment will be regarded as submitted late.

Competency Assignment Revisions

After each assignment has been marked, students have the opportunity to continue learning in response to feedback they receive on assignments. Students can submit one revision for each assignment, although a professor may accept more revisions if the professor determines the

student is addressing all of the professor's instructions and making significant progress toward demonstrating competency. Revised assignments may be submitted up to the course end date, although students are encouraged to submit them soon after they receive their marked assignments. Assignments submitted later than one week before the course end date are ineligible for revisions.

Horizon and MCS's College Assessment of Student Work

The goal of courses is to help students develop their competency, rather than solely earn letter grades. Assignments are the means by which instructors evaluate development of competency by assessing learning outcomes as outlined in the syllabus and each assignment. Once a student's assignment has met all assignment completion requirements, the professor will assign a grade for that assignment. The opportunity for revisions exists according to the "Assignment Revisions" policy.

Horizon and MCS Competency Scale		Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point	U of S Equivalency
E	Exceeding expectations	Student demonstrated exceptional achievement of the learning outcomes.	A+	4.0	90-100
		Student demonstrated excellent achievement of the learning outcomes.	A	4.0	85-89
			A-	3.7	80-84
M	Meeting expectations	Student demonstrated good achievement of the learning outcomes.	B+	3.3	77-79
			B	3.0	73-76
			B-	2.7	70-72
BTM	Beginning to meet expectations	Student demonstrated satisfactory progress in achieving the learning outcomes.	C+	2.3	67-69
			C	2.0	63-66
			C-	1.7	60-62
		Student demonstrated minimal progress in achieving the learning outcomes.	D+	1.3	57-59
			D	1.0	53-56
			D-	0.7	50-52
NYM	Not yet meeting expectations	Student made insufficient progress toward meeting learning outcomes.	F	0.0	0-49

Academic Integrity

Students learn best when practicing academic integrity. A lack of integrity is displayed in acts such as deception, abuse of confidentiality, cheating, inappropriate collaboration, or plagiarism.

Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the words or ideas of another person or an artificial intelligence (AI) tool in such a way as to give others the impression that it is their own words or ideas. In academic writing, there should be no doubt which words or ideas are the student's and which are drawn from other sources or AI. Students are expected to submit their own original work and give due recognition to sources from which all substantial phrases, sentences, or even ideas are drawn. Note also that you may not submit work done in one course to satisfy the requirements of another course (unless both instructors agree beforehand to accept such work). See [here](#) for examples of plagiarism and further guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Horizon and MCS have a subscription to software that ensures the originality of academic writing, verifies the proper citation of all sources, and detects AI-generated content. When you submit an assignment, you will automatically receive a summary on Populi that includes your submitted files along with an originality score (a high originality score is positive).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage

In keeping with the Academic Integrity policy above, students must disclose on the title page of all assignments whether or not they have used AI and how they have used it. If the assignment has no title page, the student must disclose this to the instructor by some other means, such as in a comment on Populi. Students are expected to follow the policy for acceptable use of AI that is published in the [Horizon](#) and [MCS](#) Student Handbooks.

Accessible Learning Services Information

Horizon and MCS are committed to provide safe and inclusive learning environments which equalize the opportunity for students with disabilities to meet the requirements of the institutions, programs, and courses. The application for Academic Accommodations begins with a student disclosing a medical diagnosis or professionally documented learning disability during the application process. Enrolled students may contact Accessibility services personnel (at MCS, the Director of Academic Success, Wendy Holmes at wendy.holmes@mcs.edu; at Horizon, the Academic Accommodations Coordinator, Richelle Bekkattla at rbekkattla@horizon.edu). All Academic Accommodations will adhere to the Guiding Principles listed in the Student Handbooks. Students with documented accommodations on file pertaining to accessing course readings in alternate formats are encouraged to contact the librarian for assistance with as much advanced notice as possible.

Class Attendance

Students should attend all classes in order to facilitate competency development. Students are expected to be present through the delivery method that they registered for. Students registered to attend on-campus or via livestream must be present for the full duration of a class period to be marked as present for the class. Students registered to attend by VOD must submit their VOD reports on time to be marked as present for class. In the case of illness or other unforeseen circumstances, students may miss up to twenty percent of the total class time (e.g., one day of a module course, two 3-hour classes, etc.) without academic penalty. Students who are absent for more than this will automatically fail the course. Students wishing to be exempted from this policy due to extenuating circumstances may make an academic appeal, where they will need to

document and verify those circumstances. Students who miss a class are responsible to get missed notes or handouts from another student, rather than from the professor.

Livestreaming Etiquette

Students taking the course through livestreaming are required to indicate this during their course registration. While livestreaming access is available for on-campus students who are unable to attend class due to illness, on-campus students are expected to attend class in person following the class attendance policy.

If attending class online via livestream, in order to be marked present for class, you must keep your camera on and stay present and attentive throughout the class session, extending the gift of engagement. Access your class with a computer (preferably) or tablet, not a cell phone. Arrive to class on time, and dress as you would if you were attending class on campus. Join the class from a quiet space with minimal background noise and mute your microphone until you wish to speak to the class.

Use of Technology

Horizon and MCS encourage the use of electronic devices in the classroom to enhance learning. Careful consideration must be given to privacy issues, copyrighted materials, and the general care and concern for others. Please respect the following classroom policies:

- Please use online access for course learning only. This is a matter of respect for the instructor's teaching, your own learning, and fellow students who may be distracted by other uses.
- Students should secure permission from the instructor to record any teaching material. This includes PowerPoint slides, white board illustrations, notes, and any form of audio or video.
- Student feedback is a valuable input for course improvements. Please resolve any classroom grievance about the instructor or course with the instructor personally, through the grievance procedures, or the Populi-based course evaluations. It is inappropriate to air classroom grievances on a social media platform.
- When instructors use recording mechanisms in the classroom, recorded materials will be used for the sole purpose of instruction (potentially including future online video courses) and cannot be released to any social media outlet without the written consent of the students whose images have been recorded.
- In general, it is not acceptable to share photographs or videos of students in the classroom setting without permission from those whose images appear in such media.

Library Support and Research Assistance

Library staff are available to meet with students (online or in person) who need assistance with

- citing sources and identifying credible resources;
- developing research and information literacy skills;
- searching DTL and other library resources.

Bibliography

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