Faith and Media Creation

Class times: M&W 3 PM to 4:15 PM – Foley Annex 170
Professor: Fr. Luis Proença / e-mail: Luis.Proenca@lmu.edu
Office: Xavier, Room 327, (310) 338-3764
Office Hrs: M & W from 1:30 PM to 3 PM and by appointment
Writing Prof: Celeste Amos / e-mail: Celeste.Amos@lmu.edu

Goals

The Faith and Media Creation course is strongly linked to LMU’s mission and identity. The Faith and Media course component offers a chance for students to explore faith issues and the role that media images play in shaping, reflecting, encountering, and articulating faith issues to a larger audience. The Faith and Media Creation First Year Seminar course allows students to explore critically and reflectively, their own faith experience as well as LMU’s identity as a Catholic and Jesuit institution. At the same time they will be exploring their own faith concerns and commitments and express them through oral, visual and writing presentations.

Learning Outcomes

Following a successful completion of this course, students will:
• be able to respond critically to a wide variety of media (film, TV, web, etc.)
• be able to engage in scholarly discourse on a wide variety of media styles and genres (fiction, non-fiction, reality TV, narrative games, etc.)
• have an understanding of basic faith elements and historical/sociological contexts to allow for critical analyses of different faith backgrounds.
• be able to critically read and evaluate primary and secondary sources for pertinence and quality
• be able to effectively utilize library resources (catalog, media and print databases, and other online sources) for the completion of writing assignments, visual presentations and oral presentations.
• be able to present their findings in written, acting and oral form.
• be introduced to the creation of small media and execute digital media projects in an organized and creative manner.
• know how to research, develop, and write a research paper, demonstrating critical thinking skills in the synthesis of course materials.

Description and Purpose

In the lecture section, students will watch and analyze films, fiction and nonfiction, dealing with faith issues from a wide range of perspectives, including international films. They will apply their
knowledge by writing several short response papers. During the semester they will not only learn how filmmakers have addressed faith issues but also how they, as potential media makers, can engage the world in their own filmmaking practice and also how they, as consumers of films, can demand films that engage these issues in a thoughtful way.

In the **writing sections**, students will put in writing what they’re learning from reading, watching films, and discussing during the play role game “Constantine and the Council of Nicaea”.

In the **creative section**, students will integrate what they’ve experienced in the lecture section by making/creating two to three short films. They will use small digital cameras or cell phone cameras to explore faith issues and/or create their own visual stories of faith. Students will learn the basics of how to shoot and edit a film and how to distribute it via the Internet. Students will be able to put their films on a class-linked web site, school tube, and through the University’s I-Tunes site.

In the **game section**, students will be engaged in a role play game called “Constantine and the Council of Nicaea”. This classroom game plunges students into the theological debates confronting early Christian Church leaders as they actively act on it. Emperor Constantine has just declared Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire, but now discovers that Christians do not agree on the most fundamental aspects of their beliefs. Some Christians have resorted to violence, battling over which group has the correct theology. Constantine is outraged that he has to settle what he regards as petty disputes between factions. Hoping to settle these problems at a great Church Council to be held in Nicaea, Constantine has invited all of the Bishops of the Church to attend. The outcome of this conference will shape the future of Christianity for millennia. The first order of business is to agree on a Creed which states the core theology of the Church and to which all future Christians will have to subscribe if they are to be regarded as holding to the “true faith.” Those who will reject the Nicaean Creed will be deemed heretical and subject to discipline or even exclusion from the Church. The basic questions to be decided include: Who or what was Jesus and what was his relationship to God? How should the Church be organized? What should be the rules of behavior for its leaders? What is the role of women in the Church? Some will attempt to use this creed to continue their battles and to exclude their enemies from the Church. If they succeed, Constantine may fail to achieve his goal of unity in both empire and Church. He will do everything in his power to assure that agreement is reached, but, given the animosity between the factions, he will need all of the skills which allowed him to become sole Emperor. The debate over theology is informed by reading about the various theological positions of the time using Bart Ehrman’s *Lost Christianities* and readings from a range of non-canonical Christian texts including the Gospel of Thomas.

**Required and suggestive Texts**

Robert Johnston, *Reel Spirituality- Theology and Film in Dialogue*, Baker Academy, 2000


Hoover, Stewart, *Religion in the Media Age*, Routledge, 2006


Constantine and the Council of Nicaea: Defining Orthodoxy and Heresy in Christianity, 325 CE (online game text) / myLMU Connect

**School of Film and Television**  
FYS – Faith and Media Creation  
lproenca@lmu.edu
WRITING ASSIGNMENTS – 500 points (50%)

For all the writing assignments, students should expect to spend time working one-on-one and online with the writing instructor for the course. For at least two of the following assignments, students should set up appointments with the writing instructor to discuss drafts prior to turning in the final paper; when the final paper is turned in, the student should also include a digital copy with the track changes.

The writing assignments are as follows:

1. Film analysis and critique of at least 4 films (two pages each paper) 200 pts
2. Final paper, which requires an appointment with the writing instructor (5 to 10 pages) – 300 points

INFORMATION LITERACY – tutorials by LMU Librarians – 100 points (10%)

Students are required to attend tutorials by LMU librarians on research techniques and processes.

ORAL ASSIGNMENTS – 150 points (15%)

In addition to active daily participation in class, students also will participate in at least two oral assignments:

1. Oral debate on the game “Constantine and the Council of Nicaea” plus at least one formal argumentation/debate during the game. (50 points)
2. Final oral presentation of their Faith & Media Creation project (100 points)

CREATIVE PROJECTS ASSIGNMENTS – 250 points (25%)

Project #1 Faith spot (100 pts.)

The students need to create a short creative visual response for the game debate “Constantine and the Council of Nicaea”. The spot should be no more than 3 or 4 minutes. The student should apply the technical skills learned until that point in the semester.

The project will be graded on:

1) the technical competence of the production (50 pts.)
2) creativity and effective communication (50 pts.).

Project #2 – Final Creative Faith Project (150 pts.)

Students should create an original faith media project, which should be related with the final presentation. This final creative project should have the duration of 3 to 4 minutes. The instructor should approve all the pre-production notes (outline, treatment...) before the beginning of the production process.

The project will be graded on:

1) the technical competence of the production (50 pts.)
2) creativity and effective communication (100 pts.)
Final Presentation/Assignment - Faith & Media Creation project (500 points)

The final assignment is the capstone of this class. Students will research and develop a theme of their choice within the framework of Faith and Media. It will be a unique research project that develops the themes addressed during the entire semester of the course.

This final assignment includes the following presentations:
1. An oral presentation of the student’s Media project (100 p.)
2. A written research paper on a chosen subject (5 to 10 pages paper / 300 p.)
3. A final creative faith project, which relates to the research paper (100 p.)

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in this course. Students are expected to attend every lecture and lab. each week. Likewise, participation in field trips is required. This course is taught in building blocks and thus missing one lecture or one lab can severely impact a student's ability to complete assignments or grasp concepts in future weeks of the semester. Final grade will be severely affected by a lack of attendance.

Attendance and tardiness will be closely monitored and can have a significant impact on your grade. Each tardy will result in a 5 point deduction. Each unexcused absence will be a 25 point deduction. An excused absence will count as a 5 point deduction. Remember, one 25 point deduction can drop your final grade a half step! (e.g., A- to B+). Don't miss class. Be here, be on time. If for any reason you must miss a class, call the instructor ahead of time at (310) 338-3764 and leave a message.

Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Project I</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Reflection Papers</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game debate</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Presentation w/ Creative Project 2</td>
<td>50%</td>
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TOTAL = 100% (Based on a maximum total of 1000 points for the entire semester)

PLAGIARISM WILL RESULT IN FAILURE ON THE PAPER, EXAM OR PROJECT AND VERY POSSIBLY FAILURE IN THE COURSE.

Students that fail to comply with the SFTV Safety, Risk, and Management Policies will have their violations considered violations of the Academic Honor Code. Disciplinary measures will be taken in accordance to the standards published in the school Bulletin and range from warnings, failure of the course, and up to expulsion from the University.

Any film or TV footage acquired or produced during the commission of a violation of these policies will not be accepted for, and is ineligible for, a grade.
Grade system

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94% - 100%</td>
<td>superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90% - 93%</td>
<td>outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87% - 89%</td>
<td>very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83% - 86%</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80% - 82%</td>
<td>better than average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77% - 79%</td>
<td>above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73% - 76%</td>
<td>average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70% - 72%</td>
<td>below average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 69%</td>
<td>poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60%</td>
<td>failure</td>
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Americans with Disabilities Act: Students with special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act who need reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office (Daum Hall Room 224, 310-338-4535) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit [http://www.lmu.edu/dss](http://www.lmu.edu/dss) for additional information.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty will be treated as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that can range from receiving no credit for assignments/tests to expulsion. It is never permissible to turn in any work that has been copied from another student or copied from a source (including Internet) without properly acknowledging the source. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the “LMU Honor Code and Process” which appears in the LMU Bulletin 2010-2011 (see [http://www.lmu.edu/about/services/Registrar/Bulletin/Bulletins_in_PDF_Format.htm](http://www.lmu.edu/about/services/Registrar/Bulletin/Bulletins_in_PDF_Format.htm)). Also, you might include a more specific statement about plagiarism if students will write papers in your class. Suggestions for preventing plagiarism are found at [http://library.lmu.edu/Services_for_Faculty/Preventing_Plagiarism__links_for_faculty.htm](http://library.lmu.edu/Services_for_Faculty/Preventing_Plagiarism__links_for_faculty.htm).

Tentative Nature of the Syllabus: If necessary, this syllabus and its contents are subject to revision; students are responsible for any changes or modifications distributed in class or posted on LMU’s course management system MYLMU Connect (if you are using that technology). Important note to faculty Students should be notified of any syllabus revisions in the same manner(s) that the original syllabus was distributed (for example, distributed in writing in class and/or posting on MYLMU Connect).

Safety:
Since the School of Film and Television is fully committed to safety and sensible risk management, every student will be required to adhere to all safety and risk management policies. The School considers violation of the Safety and Risk Management policies infractions of the LMU Student Honor Code (Cf. current Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin). Any footage that violates safety policies will be disallowed from final projects and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

Any film or TV footage acquired or produced during the commission of a violation of these policies will not be accepted for, and is ineligible for, a grade.

The instructor may choose to revise this syllabus during the course of the semester.
SEMESTER SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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| 1    | Introduction.  
*The Labyrinth - Documentary*  
Home Work - *Gandhi (DVD0139)*.  
Theories about Media, Culture and Religion (Chap. 2) |
| 2    | Media and Faith in transition (Chap. 3)  
Discuss Film Reflections - *Gandhi (DVD0139)*  
Home Work (paper reflection) - *God grew tired of us (DVD2325)*. |
| 3    | Articulation: Life and faith in the media age (Chap. 4)  
Discuss Film Reflections - *Doc- God grew tired of us*  
Home Work (paper reflection) - *Romero (DVD2847)* |
| 4    | Reception of Media and Religion (Chap. 5)  
Discuss Film Reflections - *Romero*  
Home Work (paper reflection) - *Jesus of Montreal (DVD3439)* |
| 5    | Media and religion post 9/11 (Chap. 9)  
Discuss Film Reflections – *Jesus of Montreal*  
Home Work - *Into Great Silence DVD2346*  
Home Work – *Readings for Constantine and the Council of Nicaea* |
| 6    | Conclusion: possible directions of Media & Faith (Chap. 10)  
Discuss Film Reflections – *Into Great Silence*  
Home Work – *Readings for Constantine and the Council of Nicaea* |
| 7    | Introduction to the play role game  
*Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (Part I)* |
| 8    | Continuation to the play role game  
*Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (Part II)* |
| 9    | Continuation to the play role game  
*Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (Part III)* |
| 10   | Continuation to the play role game  
*Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (Part VI)* |
| 11   | Continuation to the play role game  
*Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (Part V)* |
12 week  Conclusion to the play role game
   Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (Part VI)

13 week  Individual meetings for the Final Presentation

14 week  Final Presentation/Assignment –
   Faith & Media Creation project (Part 1)

15 week  Final Presentation/Assignment –
   Faith & Media Creation project (Part 2)

16 week  Final Presentation/Assignment –
   Faith & Media Creation project (Part 3)

Expectations for Classroom Behavior:

1. The LMU Student Affairs brochure Disruptive and Threatening Student Behavior (Fall 2010), which states “Disruptive behavior which is persistent or significantly interferes with classroom activities may be subject to disciplinary action. A student may be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs if their behavior constitutes a violation of the conduct code.”


3. LMU’s Community Standards
   (see http://www.lmu.edu/studentlife/Judicial_Affairs/Standards_Publication.htm
   for the Student Conduct Code, Section IV. D.).

RESPECT FOR SELF AND OTHERS: As an LMU Lion, by the Lion’s Code, you are pledged to join the discourse of the academy with honesty of voice and integrity of scholarship and to show respect for staff, professors, and other students.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Please turn off and put out of sight all electronic devices (other than a calculator or computer, if/when allowed) during class-time. The interruptions and/or distractions they cause disrupt class and interfere with the learning process.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION: At times I will communicate with the entire class using campus email systems, so it is essential that you regularly check your lion.lmu.edu email address or forward your lion account email to your preferred email address.