Films of Moral Struggle  
FITV 4570  
Fall, 2016

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Course Introduction

This course fulfills the Senior Values/EP 4 requirement in Fordham’s core curriculum. In the first half of the semester, we will explore the particular ethical/moral issues raised by each of the assigned films. Next, we will explore how adaptation—the process of making a novel into a film—may influence the presentation of ethical issues. Finally, we will compare sets or pairs of films to examine how film writers and directors have approached similar moral struggles from different value systems or ethical stances.

As an Eloquentia Perfecta seminar, this course will have a special focus on student writing, speaking and where applicable, on media use. I expect that skill development in writing and speaking will be continuous throughout the semester. In part, grades will be based on the clarity and grace of expression, the force and eloquence of arguments, as well as the improvement in communication skills throughout the semester. (See sections on course structure, methods and grading for more detail.)

Text and Readings:

Film Reviews  
http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews  
www.nytimes.com/movies/critics/Vincent-Canby

Last Exit to Brooklyn by Hubert Selby, Jr. Orig. published by Grove Press, 1964 (For adaptation assignment).

Ambrose Bierce, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” in Tales of Soldiers and Civilians, 1891

Additional readings, book chapters and questions will be assigned on a weekly basis.

Suggested Text:  

Required Films: (See notes on film availability on the bottom of page 3.)

Citizen Kane, 1940. Directed by Orson Welles  
Goodfellas, 1990. Directed by Martin Scorsese  
Network. 1976. Directed by Sidney Lumet  
Reds, 1981. Directed by Warren Beatty  
Seven Beauties. 1975. Directed by Lina Wertmuller  
Unforgiven. 1992. Directed by Clint Eastwood

Films to be assigned selectively:

Bonnie and Clyde. 1967. Arthur Penn  
Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb. 1964. Stanley Kubrick  
A Face in the Crowd. 1957. Elia Kazan

Failsafe. 1964. Sidney Lumet  
The Fountainhead. 1949. King Vidor  
Good Night and Good Luck. 2005. George Clooney  
The Grapes of Wrath. 1940 John Ford.  
Marat/Sade, 1967, Peter Brook  
McCabe and Mrs. Miller. 1971. Robert Altman  
The Magnificent Seven. 1960. John Sturges  
Matewan. 1987. John Sayles  
Once Upon a Time in America. 1984. Sergio Leone  
On the Waterfront. 1954. Elia Kazan  
Paths of Glory. 1957. Stanley Kubrick  
Saving Private Ryan. 1998 Steven Speilberg  
The Searchers. 1956. John Ford  
Shane. 1953. George Stevens  
Spotlight, 2015. Tom McCarthy  
Stagecoach. 1939. John Ford  
The Wolf of Wall Street, 2013. Martin Scorsese
**Papers:**

1. **Reaction Papers:** Throughout the semester, you will be presented with questions relating to the films. You will be asked to address a particular question in a two-page paper which will guide our class discussions. Your reaction papers must be typed, clear and well-organized.

2. **Adaptation and Moral Struggle:** Your paper will focus on differences in literary and filmic images. You will analyze how the author of a novel and the director of a film adaptation attempted to use the different expressive characteristics of literary and filmic imagery to express the “same” meanings or messages. You will discover and analyse the differences in the moral struggles, dilemmas, and personalities of characters that may result from the different capabilities of films and books. NOVEL AND FILM, TBA. 5 pages, fully referenced.

3. **Final Paper:** You will compare two (or three) films which address similar ethical or moral issues from different perspectives. Details TBA. 7-8 pages, fully referenced.

   (Choose one theme. The first film is required. You may choose the next 1 or 2.)

      *Reds* & *Fountainhead*, *Matewan*, *On the Waterfront*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Marat/Sade*.

   b. **The Criminal:** Hero or Sociopath, Roughneck or Royalty?
      *Goodfellas* & *The Godfather*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Once Upon a Time in America*, *Wolf of Wall Street*.

   c. **Television News and Morality**
      *Network* & *A Face in the Crowd*, *Good Night and Good Luck*, *Spotlight*.

   d. **The Gunfighter:** Natural-born Killer or Social Hero?
      *Unforgiven* & *Shane*, *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Searchers*, *Stagecoach*, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*.

   e. **War and its Moralities**
      *Seven Beauties* & *Failsafe*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Paths of Glory*.

**Course Structure and Methods:**
As an EP4 seminar, we will emphasize communication skills.

**Writing**
Students will complete the papers described above, and will receive feedback from classmates and the instructor, designed to develop writing skills. This feedback will take the following form: The reaction papers will be discussed in class, with students and the instructor providing oral feedback, evaluation and suggestions. The instructor will subsequently provide written feedback. The adaptation paper will receive instructor feedback in writing and orally in scheduled office meetings. The final paper will involve: a.) an outline, draft, and presentation version, and b.) final paper. The outlines/drafts will be discussed in student groups. The presentation version will have student and instructor feedback designed to suggest improvements for the final paper. The final draft of the paper will receive written comments, including evaluation of the student’s development as a writer.

**Speaking**
Each week, a few students will be asked to lead discussion of the moral issues raised by each assigned film. The discussions will be focused by the assigned, 2 page papers. These discussions will be followed by class feedback addressing the strengths and weakness of the arguments and effectiveness of the students’ leadership in generating discussion. Students will offer more formal, 10 to 15 minute presentations to the class based on their chosen topics for the final paper. At the conclusion of each presentation, the student will moderate a discussion for approximately 5 minutes. Students will be provided with a.) peer and instructor evaluation in class, b.) written instructor evaluation and, c.) feedback in scheduled office appointments. Evaluations will include consideration of media use, (film clips, slides, handouts, internet material, etc., as well as oral presentation).
Grading

Five Reaction Papers.................................................................20%
Adaptation Paper.................................................................20%
Final Paper, ...........................................................................30%
Speaking, (includes discussion leadership, formal presentations
and the quality of your engagement and feedback).....................20%
Midterm......................................................................................10%

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<th>COURSE OUTLINE</th>
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<td>(WEDS) Course Introduction</td>
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<td>Film Structure, or, How to Read a Film</td>
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<td>Citizen Kane</td>
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<td>Moralities of Freedom, Conformity and Politics</td>
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<td>Reds</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Media, News and Morality (Assign Adaptation)</td>
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<td>Network</td>
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<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td>The Moral World of the Gangster</td>
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<td>The Nature of the Gunfighter</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam/ Introduce adaptation &amp; comparison papers</td>
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<td>Filmic and Literary Expression and Meaning</td>
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<td>Read An Occurrence... (on Google Drive)</td>
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<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td>War and Its Value Systems (Assign Final Paper)</td>
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<td>Seven Beauties</td>
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<td>Read Utilitarianism before you write the Seven Beauties Paper. (on Google Drive)</td>
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<td>Adaptation and Morality--ADAPTATION PAPERS DUE</td>
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<td>Last Exit to Brooklyn</td>
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<td>PRESENTATIONS—FINAL PAPERS DUE</td>
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Dec. 5 Summary and Final Comments

Film Availability

All required films are available to stream from Google Drive. I will send an email to each of you providing permission to access the course folder. However, since compression has lowered the quality of the films and you may not be able to view them on a large screen, I strongly recommend that you get a copy from the Walsh Library, stream them from Netflix or other service, rent or purchase the DVD. Required films are available in limited quantities at the Walsh Library. Many—but not all—films on the “selectively assigned” list are also available at the library. Most are also available to stream, rent or purchase on DVD. Two of the required films, Seven Beauties and Last Exit to Brooklyn are more difficult to find outside of the course folder.

You are responsible for seeing each film and writing your paper by the due date. Make sure that you have secured a copy in time.