

Religious Quest TH16108 (Spring 2013)

Final Project Guidelines

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Your final project invites you to explore a work of fiction or non-fiction that depicts Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as central to its plot. Works can be films, novels, plays, art, or other creative projects. You will analyze the work and apply the concepts we've dealt with over the course of the semester. The goal of the project is to critically analyze how the biblical texts, Christianity's relationship to Judaism, and theological concepts of God and Jesus Christ are depicted, translated and molded by the creator of the work.

The project has two components: an in-class presentation and a research paper.

Selecting a work:

When selecting a work, be sure that it is sufficiently accessible (available either in the library, online or for purchase) so that all members of the group can read, watch or view it. You want to pick something that has enough relevant content to generate an in depth and specific discussion of the course themes. You also want to consider a work that other people have discussed so you can engage these interpretations in your analysis.

You will submit a proposal for what you would like to work on to the professor by **October 23** in class. This proposal should include the title, creator, and date of the work. Include a one paragraph description of the work and a statement of why you want to work on this topic. The professor will offer feedback on the feasibility of using the work. If it not deemed acceptable, a revised proposal will be due on Oct. 28.

Analyzing the work:

Analysis should begin with an attempt to place the work in its context. Who is the creator and what is her or her background? When was it created? What historical currents influenced its creation? How does it fit within other works by the creator or other similar works by other artists or writers? Consider and articulate the creator's lens and purpose in creating the work.

Then analyze the work in relation to the major themes of the semester: (I) Religious Identity, (II) the Jewish and Christian master stories, (III) Christian-Jewish Relations, and (IV) God and Jesus.

(I) Religious Identity: which aspect of Ninian Smart's list does the work seem to emphasize? What is its attitude toward religion?

(II) What aspects of the Jewish and Christian master stories are depicted? What is the work's relationship to the biblical text? How does it interpret the text? On what sources does the work draw? How does it shape and mold the biblical

narrative to its own purposes? How does it depict Jesus, his followers and other main characters?

(III) How are Jews and Judaism depicted, if at all? This may be subtle depending on your work, but ask yourself:

- How does Jesus relate to the people of his time, including those we would assume or know are Jewish?
- Is Jesus' Jewishness, or that of his followers, highlighted? Is it hidden or overlooked?
- What role do Jews play in this depiction of Jesus' arrest and death?
- Connect the work (either its content or context) to the history of Christian-Jewish relations.

(IV) What does the work say or imply about God or Jesus Christ? Does it uphold or criticize any particular beliefs or conceptions of the divine?

Writing the Paper:

Format: 20-25 pages, 12 pt font, double spaced. Your essay should include all of the members of your group, a descriptive title, page numbers and a bibliography. You can use any scholarly system of citation (i.e. MLA or APA), as long as it is consistent with the guidelines of that system. Footnotes are preferred to endnotes.

Content:

a. Description and summary of the work. Include relevant information about the creator's background, methods and context, a brief plot summary, and a synopsis of its initial and ongoing reception, in other words, how was it received or reviewed? Does it continue to enjoy cultural significance? Also include an introductory statement on why your group chose this work.

b. Analysis. If the work is long or complex, select and describe a single theme, character, or scene for analysis. You can treat the work as a whole, but **be sure that your discussion and analysis is specific and draws on concrete examples** from the work.

c. Conclusion.

Are there inconsistencies, controversies or errors in the depiction that need to be addressed? How might you address them?

Would this be a good source for teaching about the Christian master story? Why?

What does this work add to the discussion of the religion, faith, identity and tradition? In other words, what is its significance for us and the questions we've been asking throughout the course.

In class presentation:

Format: 20 mins, everyone in the group presents together.

Content: Provide a **brief** synopsis of the work and its creator. Presentations should include at least one clip (1-2 minutes), image, or selected quotation that illustrates a key aspect of your analysis. Give a summary of your analysis and leave time for questions. Create a one-page handout for the class with the key points of your presentation.

Presentations are scheduled Mon Dec 2-Wed Dec 11. **If you are an athlete and will be traveling for a game on any of those days, you need to inform the professor by Nov. 1** so that an appropriate schedule can be worked out.

Grading:

This project makes up 25% of your final grade: Final Group Presentation (10%)
Final Group Paper (15%).

Everyone in the group will get the same grade for the presentation.

Each group will submit only one research paper, but each group member will get their own grade based on their contribution to paper.

As a group, you need to effectively develop a plan for doing the work that gives each person a chance to demonstrate his or her contribution and that results in an organized and coherent whole. You will submit a plan for distributing the work on **Nov. 18** in class. A final description of who did what, as well as attribution of the written sections should be included with the final paper. Any changes from the initial proposal should be noted in the final submission. Research, analysis, writing, and editing are all considered work, but each group member should be involved in each component. Part of the assignment is working *together*, so this will be reflected in the grade.

Lastly, everyone in the class will analyze the other group's presentations using a rubric that the professor will provide. These evaluations will inform the professor's grade for the presentation.

Your final group paper is due at the scheduled time for the final exam for this course: Saturday, December 14th at 9am.