**The Bitterroot Collegium**

**Presents**

***At the Movies!***

Biblical & Practical Theology:

Bible & Film Criticism

Winter 2020

Instructor: Dr. James V. Smith

drjamesvsmith@gmail.com

The purpose of “The Bitterroot Collegium” is to provide a comprehensive program of Christian education by equipping both the hearts and minds of Christian men and women to be more faithful and fruitful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Program Details**

Classes will meet for 1 hour per week and will typically continue from 4-8 weeks depending upon the topic. Topics/themes will draw from the 4 theological “food groups” including:

1. Biblical Theology
2. Historical Theology
3. Systematic Theology
4. Practical Theology

Classes will alternate between the “food groups,” while topics will be chosen based on the vision and values of Mosaic Church.

This winter, we are pleased to offer a 7 week course entitled, *“At the Movies: The Bible & Film Criticism,”* which will cover aspects of Biblical and Practical Theology. Unfortunately, many people today, are deriving their knowledge of Scripture from Hollywood movies, however, this also offers an unprecedented opportunity to make use of film as a practical vehicle to engage non-believers with the gospel, as well. In this class, we will discuss the intersection between the Bible and Film, as well as learning the basic principles of film as an art form.

***Class Schedule***

1/12 – The Church & Hollywood: A “Love/Hate” Relationship

Film: The Life & Passion of Jesus Christ (1905)

Focus Questions: 1) Many people have noted the “power of film” to change lives? What movies

have impacted or significantly changed your life? Why?

2) The 1960’s & 1970’s undermined the ability of the Church to shape

the film industry? Why is discussion now more important vs. older

forms of censorship?

3) What forces have come to shape America into a “movie culture” in

the last 40 years? What are some ways that churches and religious people

have responded to and made use of film?

1/19 - Cecil B. DeMille: *The 10 Commandments*

Reading: Exodus 1-20

Film: The 10 Commandments

Focus Questions: 1) When was the first time you saw Cecil DeMille’s epic, “The 10

Commandments?” What do you remember about it? How closely does it

follow the Biblical text?

2) In recent years, billboards have appeared on our highways reminding us

that God has given 10 commandments, not 10 suggestions. In a

nation that recognizes the separation of church & state, do you agree with

this billboard assessment of our culture? Why and/or why not?

3) Some people have called Cecil DeMille’s movies “Bathtub & Bible” epics.

What do you notice about DeMille’s use of nudity & faith?

1/26 – Morality & the Rating System: Responding to Film

Film: Shindler’s List

Focus Questions 1) In recent years, the Motion Picture Association of America’s (MPAA)

Rating system has come under severe criticism. Why?

2) Apart from the problems of the MPAA rating system, do you believe that

there are certain movies that are morally objectionable and should not be

viewed? Why or why not? What role do religious and/or ethical

views play when assessing a film?

3) Movies frequently address heated topics such as abortion, homosexuality

and euthanasia among others. How have movies influenced public

opinion?

2/2 – Children’s Films: Are Movies Art?

Reading: Jonah 1-4

Film: Veggie Tales: Jonah

Focus Questions: 1) The Book of Jonah is unlike any other in the Old Testament? Most people

remember Jonah & the Whale. Is this the most important thing found in

this book?

2) Do you believe that film can be a real form of art? If so, how would you

defend film? In what ways are art and business combined?

3) Some people believe that movies have become the world’s new art form.

Would you agree or disagree? Why?

2/9 – Pier Paolo Pasolini & the Vatican: *The Gospel According to Matthew*

Film: The Gospel according to St. Matthew by Pier Paolo Pasolini

Focus Questions: 1) What well known items can be found in the “Sermon on the Mount in

Matthew 5-7?” Are there any sayings of Jesus that have found their way

into the English language from Matthew 5-7? What are they?

2) Pasolini’s movie makes use of black and white film. Do you like black and

white movies? If so, why? How are they different from color?

3) Pasolini was inspired to make his movie after reading a hotel room Bible.

Can you think of other “strategic” ways to place God’s Word before

people who might not otherwise read it?

2/16 – The Jesus Rock Opera: Image & Music

Film: Jesus Christ Superstar

Focus Questions: 1) What special problems or difficulties do movies possess that books or

novels do not?

2) Some people believe that if you miss the opening (of many movies), you

might as well not have seen the movie? How might this be true? Have

you missed any movie openings only to find that “you might as well not

have seen it?”

3) How does music contribute to a film’s power and meaning? (Give

specific details and examples).

2/23 – Mel Gibson’s: *The Passion of the Christ*

Reading: John 18-19

Film: The Passion of the Christ

Focus Questions: 1) Gibson was one of the first filmmakers to try and portray a portion of the

gospels instead of the whole life of Jesus. What problems might

filmmakers have in trying to depict Jesus’ entire life?

2) Many people told Gibson that no one would want to see his film because

it did not use English and that Americans were not interested in movies

with sub-titles. Why were they wrong?

3) Some people believe that the Passion of the Christ is too bloody and

violent. What do you think? Is there a place in film for such graphic

imagery?

***Notes:***