IDH 3035 U51 1231 Myth and Ritual in Film  
Spring 2023

Days and Times: Tuesday, Thursday 12:30 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.  
Room: Graham Center 274

Instructor: Adam D. Gorelick  
Office Hours: by appointment  
P: 305-348-4100 | F: 305-348-2118 | agorelic@fiu.edu

Students should regularly access the course online in canvas. The Inbox messaging system within canvas is the best way to contact the professor.

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is subject to minor changes. Students should e-mail the instructor with any questions about the assignments and schedule.

Course Description  
This online course integrates theoretical discussions of myth and ritual (as interrelated cultural dimensions of religion) with analyses of the relatively contemporary medium of film. In each case, a collective artistic experience employs narrative form to evoke, explain, or create meaning. Following the trail of 19th-century anthropology and 20th-century psychology, we will examine the bonds between myth and ritual and also seek their secular analogues in literature and drama en route to film as an integrative multi-media form of cultural expression. We will explore the sociological implications of mainstream cinema (such as Spielberg, Pixar, etc.) as shared experience, film adaptations of myth versus myth-inspired storytelling, theological and political interpretations (e.g., of alien films), documentaries, and much more. Interactive features include live discussion, video, and some amateur filmmaking on the part of the students.

Course Outcomes  
Students will be able to...

- Analyze and articulate six dimensions of religion, how they interrelate, and how they contribute to a working definition of religion.

- Evaluate contrasting opinions about the relationship between two particular dimensions of religion, myth and ritual. Included among these opinions are various forms of myth-ritualism, monomyths of kingship succession, and the pattern of the hero.

- Compare and contrast the themes, applications, and legacies of myth and ritual as they appear in the art forms of literature, drama, and film.

- Employ critical and creative thinking skills in assessing the psychological and sociological effectiveness of filmmaking as a literary/dramatic medium for transmitting elements of myth and ritual.

- Compare and contrast genres and styles of film (such as science fiction, martial arts films, documentaries, animated films, etc.) and gauge the effectiveness of each in expressing and delivering elements of myth and ritual.
• Employ structured argumentation and public speaking skills in presenting six video blogs. These will apply and evaluate theoretical orientations from the textbook and lectures to the assigned films.

• Envision, design, and articulate in formal writing a project proposal drawing upon theoretical analyses discussed in the course, time management concerns, communications with third parties, technical considerations, and a creative conceptual vision for the project.

• Synthesize concepts from the weekly readings, lectures, and films to create short original documentary of their own devising.

**GL Learning Outcomes IDH 3034-5**

- **Global Awareness:** Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.

- **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will demonstrate knowledge of the interrelated global dynamics (social-cultural, political, economic, etc.) that shape aesthetics, values, and authority in diverse cultural contexts.

- **Global Perspectives:** Students will be able to develop a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.

- **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will be able to analyze the multiple global forces that shape their understanding of aesthetics, values, and authority — economic, political, sociological, technological, cultural, etc.

- **Global Engagement:** Students will be able to demonstrate a willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.

- **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will be able to develop solutions to local, global, international, and/or intercultural problems related to aesthetics, values, and authority.

**Texts**

*The Myth and Ritual Theory*

Robert A. Segal
Blackwell Publishing, 1998
ISBN-10: 0631206809

Additional selected readings and other materials will be assigned through Canvas.

**Required Films**

- Student’s choice: any film at a movie theater
- *The Jazz Singer*
- *Awake: The Life of Yogananda*
- *Metropolis*
• The Dark Knight
• Wall-E
• The 36th Chamber of Shaolin
• Kill Bill Vol 1.
• Kill Bill Vol 2.
• Amistad
• "The Cause (1861)" The Civil War: A Film by Ken Burns (episode 1)
• Django Unchained
• Watunna
• Frida

Honors College Policies and Requirements

Academic Misconduct Procedures and Policies

In The Honors College, the term "honor" refers both to academic accomplishment and character. Students in Honors should therefore adhere to and be held to the highest standards of personal academic accountability. Academic dishonesty in any form, including plagiarism, is antithetical to the very definition of being an Honors student at FIU. Consequently, an Honors College student found responsible for academic misconduct will be dismissed from the College.

An Honors faculty member may bring charges of academic misconduct against an Honors student if the faculty member suspects plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct. The faculty member will decide whether to pursue informal resolution, file formal resolution charges, or take no further action, and will follow the procedures outlined in the Academic Misconduct Procedures available at https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/get-support/student-conduct-and-academic-integrity/academic-integrity/index.php. Please refer to the following documents for additional information:


Student Portfolios

The Honors College will be using a portfolio method to assess students' learning outcomes. The portfolio allows for maximum flexibility in gauging student learning. Students decide (with instructor consultation) what “artifacts” or assignments to include for consideration in their portfolios to demonstrate successful achievement of each of five key student learning outcomes over the 4-year Honors experience. Portfolios provide a rich context for students to show what they have learned and to explain their learning process. Because the Honors curriculum is meant to be thought-provoking and reflective, student self-assessment through portfolios will facilitate learning and provide in-depth assessment. Each Honors College course includes at least one assignment that could potentially fit portfolio requirements. http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/portfolio/

Honors Education in the Arts (HEARTS)

The HEARTS program is designed to give Honors College students opportunities to “explore and appreciate different artistic and cultural traditions and modes of artistic expression. HEARTS will also serve as a clearinghouse (and curatorial framework) for our students to experience the arts on campus
and in the community by providing them with information about cultural activities and access to performances with free or discounted tickets. [http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/heart/](http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/heart/)

**Resources:**

**Panthers Care & Counseling & Psychological Services**

If you are looking for help for yourself or a fellow classmate, Panthers Care encourages you to express any concerns you may come across as it relates to any personal behavior concerns or worries you have, for the classmate’s well-being or yours; you are encouraged to share your concerns with FIU’s Panthers Care website.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers free and confidential help for anxiety, depression, stress, and other concerns that life brings. Learn more about CAPS at caps.fiu.edu. Professional counselors are available for same-day appointments. Don’t wait to call 305-348-2277 to set up a time to talk or visit the online self-help portal.

**Religious Holidays**

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

**Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges**

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students who are so challenged. Should you require accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC), if you have not done so already.” Please note that if you have a student who is registered with the DRC, you will receive notification about the student’s disability and a detailed description of accommodations the student will require.

**Note:** Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and written assignments are to be submitted to turnitin.com.

**Grading Scale**

- 94 - 100 A
- 90 - 93 A-
- 87 - 89 B+
- 84 - 86 B
- 80 - 83 B –
- 77 - 79 C+
- 74 - 76 C
- 60 - 73 D
- 0 - 59 F

**Course Requirements**

**Attendance and Participation** – 20% of final grade
Students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions.

**Video Blogs (Vlogs) – 30% of final grade**
Students will be required to record and submit short video blogs or “vlogs” on a weekly basis (2 minutes minimum). These consist merely of video of the students speaking. From the reading and lectures, students will utilize theoretical approaches about myth and ritual applied through the lens of the film we are reviewing that week. Students will also offer their own interpretation of the film’s meaning and impact. Each video must be preceded by a written outline.

**Micro-Documentary Project**
Students will design and create a short amateur documentary film on a topic of their choosing relating to Myth and Ritual in Film. The idea here is to sketch out a specific and innovative message and then to play with the medium of the micro-documentary in order to relay that message. This film will be between 2 and 10 minutes long and will require that students meet certain benchmarks along the way, namely, (1) a detailed research-backed proposal, (2) an annotated storyboard, and (3) the final cut of the documentary film itself. In terms of equipment, ideally this will require only a smart phone video recorder and user-friendly web-based editing software. Video equipment is available through the library.

1. **Detailed Research-Backed Proposal (10% of final grade)** – Students will submit a written proposal which must be approved by the instructor before going to production (maximum 2 pages). The proposal can be a combination of paragraphs, outlines, visual material, etc. It must include the following:
   - **An overall thematic approach to the topic of myth and ritual in film.** This can be broad or specific. It can incorporate theory discussed in class throughout the year or it can take a different theoretical approach. It can involve a category, component, or specific example of a myth or ritual. It might address the legacy of myth and ritual in literature and drama. It might zoom in on a certain archetype or filmmaker or style or technique or film. It might look at religiosity, spirituality, experiencing art, or living authentically. It should be creative and might be something the instructor would never have thought of doing. It can be humorous but should not parody the entire assignment. It should not just be about the hero’s journey: that familiar topic is not off limits but would need a twist. A good strategy for the micro-documentary is to establish a strong personal connection with the audience up front and to present a powerful set of images focused around a single theme, character, person, story, event, idea, place, process, etc. Students should consider whom they might interview or film doing something, where they might go, how they might combine voice, music, imagery, captions, animation, graphics, etc. This written proposal is not a formal essay, but it might resemble essay writing in places as students “talk their way” through their idea and rationale.
   - **Three or more scholarly sources not included in the course’s reading materials or lectures.** In addition to these 3 or more sources, students are welcome to reference the course materials whenever relevant.
• **A preliminary action plan with a proposed schedule.** Students will anticipate what they will need to do when. Itemized actions can include brainstorming sessions, research, scriptwriting (even for documentaries), communication with third parties, shooting schedules for interviews, shooting schedules for B-roll or other shots, unscripted improvisation, storyboarding, sound recordings such as music or voice overs, editing, etc.

2. **Annotated Storyboard (10% of final grade)** – students might find it challenging to make a storyboard for a documentary, but it is helpful for planning and is not set in stone. “Annotated” in this case means that students will write up captions or explanations to accompany the images in their storyboard. The storyboard might look similar to a comic strip. Students can simply draw them out and scan them. Students are permitted to render their storyboard art using digital imagery but NOT with prefabricated drag-and-drop applications such as [www.storyboardthat.com](http://www.storyboardthat.com). Stick figures are so much better. The professor loves stick figures. Students do not have to draw well to get their ideas across in a visual format. The purpose of the storyboard is to aid the filmmaker in his/her process of piecing together a narrative. Even though a documentary is not a fictional story, good documentaries follow some kind of narrative structure. The storyboard does not have to be beautiful (hand-drawn sketches or stick figures are perfect), but they should be thorough enough to be useful to the filmmaker.

3. **Final Cut of the Micro-Documentary (30% of final grade)** – Due at the end of the semester (2 to 10 minutes).

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**Calendar**

**Module 1: Course Introduction and Going to the Movies**

| Week 1 (1/9 to 1/15) | Reading:  
| | • Review syllabus and course materials  
| Video(s):  
| | • View the following interviews from *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*:  
| | o Part 1 - The Hero's Adventure  
| | o Mythology of Star Wars  
| Film:  
| | • Any film of student’s choosing at theater  
| Assignments:  
| | • Vlog Response #1, Due 1/21, 11:59 PM  

**Module 2: Reevaluating Hero Myth and Revisiting Ritualism**

| Week 2 (1/16 to 1/22) | Reading:  
| | • “In Quest of the Hero” from Theorizing about Myth by Robert A. Segal (PDF)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
<th>Selections from the <em>Upanishads</em> (PDF)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>View lectures carefully and take notes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Film:</td>
<td><em>The Jazz Singer</em></td>
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<td>MLK Holiday</td>
<td>Assignment:</td>
<td>1. Vlog Response #2, Due 1/27, 11:59 PM</td>
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### Module 3: Lessons Learned on the Streets of Dystopia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
<th>Continue Segal’s anthology: pp. 357 – 378</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>“William Ridgeway, The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races”</td>
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<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>View lectures carefully and take notes</td>
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<td>Film:</td>
<td><em>Metropolis</em></td>
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<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
<th>Continue Segal’s anthology: pp. 379 – 387</th>
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<td>“James Frazer, Introduction to Apollodorus, <em>The Library</em>”</td>
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<td>“H. J. Rose, The Evidence of Divine Kings in Greece”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>View lectures carefully and take notes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assignment:</td>
<td>Detailed Research Backed Proposal for Micro-Documentary, Due 2/10, 11:59 PM</td>
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<td>Film:</td>
<td><em>The Dark Knight</em></td>
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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
<th>Continue Segal’s anthology: pp. 388 – 411</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>“S. G. F. Brandon, The Myth and Ritual Position Critically Examined”</td>
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<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>View lectures carefully and take notes</td>
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### Module 4: Quietness, Slowness, Extension, Pause, Flexibility: Martial-Arts Film Then and Now

#### Week 7
(2/20 to 2/26)
- **Film:** WALL-E
- **Assignment:**
  1. Vlog Response #3, **Due 2/17, 11:59 p.m.**

- **Reading:**
  - Continue Segal’s anthology: pp. 412 – 427

- **Lecture:**
  - View lectures carefully and take notes

- **Film:** The 36th Chamber of Shaolin

#### Week 8
(2/27 to 3/5)
- **Spring Break**

#### Week 9
(3/6 to 3/12)
- **Reading:**
  - Continue Segal’s anthology: pp. 428 – 459
  - Joseph Fontenrose, The Ritual Theory of Myth

- **Lecture:**
  - View lectures carefully and take notes

- **Film:** Kill Bill Vol. 1

- **Assignment:**
  1. Annotated Storyboard for Micro-Documentary, **Due 3/2, 11:59 p.m.**

#### Week 10
(3/13 to 3/19)
- **Reading:**
  - Selections from the *Tao Te Ching* [PDF]

- **Lecture:**
  - View lectures carefully and take notes

- **Film:** Kill Bill Vol. 2

- **Assignment:**
  1. Vlog Response #4, **Due 3/9, 11:59 p.m.**

### Module 5: Walking through Hellfire: Slavery, Narrative, and American Identity

#### Week 11
(3/20 to 3/26)
- **Reading:**
  - Ira Berlins "American Slavery in History and Memory and the Search for Social Justice" [PDF]

- **Lecture:**
  - View lectures carefully and take notes

- **Film:** Amistad
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<th>Week 12</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
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<tr>
<td>(3/27 to 4/2)</td>
<td>• &quot;Poetry Selections Embedded in Weekly PowerPoint&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>• View lectures carefully and take notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Film:</td>
<td>• &quot;The Cause (1861)&quot; <em>The Civil War: A Film by Ken Burns</em> (episode 1)</td>
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<th>Week 13</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
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<tr>
<td>(4/3 to 4/9)</td>
<td>• Continue Segal’s anthology: pp. 460 – 470</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>• &quot;H. S. Versnel, Prospects&quot;</td>
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<td>Film:</td>
<td>• <em>Django Unchained</em></td>
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<td>Assignment:</td>
<td>1. Vlog Response #5, Due 4/06, 11:59 p.m.</td>
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**Module 6: The Shaman Artist**

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<th>Week 14</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
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<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>• View lectures carefully and take notes</td>
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<td>Film:</td>
<td>• <em>Watunna</em></td>
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<th>Week 15 &amp; 16</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
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<tr>
<td>(4/17 to 4/23)</td>
<td>• Selections from <em>The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait</em>[PDF]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>• View lectures carefully and take notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Film:</td>
<td>• <em>Frida</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment:</td>
<td>1. Vlog Response #6, Due 4/20, 11:59 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>FINALS PROJECT</strong>: Micro-Documentary Films due 4/25 11:59 p.m.</td>
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