

PARABLES IN POP CULTURE
T/RS 228

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This course is designed to help students attend to and interpret popular culture, especially its narrative elements, from the perspective of Christian faith. The course will examine Jesus' parables as secular windows into God's kingdom and will explore the ways in which contemporary film can function as parabolic storytelling.

Office = 393 Loyola Science Center
(570) 941-7729 (direct)

Office Hours: W 2:45-4:45

Objectives: By the conclusion of this course the successful student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a solid foundation of basic knowledge (facts, terms, important thinkers and theories, etc.) about popular culture and its relationship to religious faith.
2. Demonstrate sophisticated analyses of film technique in constructing meaning for critics.
3. Demonstrate the capacity to apply terms used in the study of theology and religion to life in contemporary society, through applications to cases and popular media portrayals.
4. Apply learning from the course to contemporary culture.

Brief List of Topics to be Addressed in the Course

Familiarity with basic theological and philosophical concepts introduced in college courses is assumed. The course then functions as an introduction to Film Studies from the perspective of theology, philosophy, and religious studies. Students will thus refine basic GE knowledge while learning new vocabulary associated with film and popular culture more broadly. Music, film, television shows, and other media consumed today will constitute the material to be examined, along with appropriate textual readings associated with cultural analysis. The following concepts and themes will be addressed:

Film Studies vocabulary and analytical tools
Parables and Indirect Communication
Fate and its relation to Divine Providence
Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, Love
Gender roles and societal expectations
Theological Anthropology: Human Person, Love, Sexuality
Quests for Justice
Narrative Forms and Traditions
Friendship and the Other

Brief List of Assignments

View core films necessary for class participation
Read assigned materials
Display oral presentation proficiency
Discussion and collaboration with peers
Essays

Evaluation: There are five components to your grade:

1. Class participation, worth 10% of your grade.
2. Daily journals, worth 20% of your grade.
3. Two Essays, 20% of your grade.
4. Presentation, 20% of your grade.
5. Final paper, 30% of your grade.

Online resources

Course information will be available electronically, either through email or D2L. There you may view the course syllabus, assignments, lecture slides, links to websites (useful for your research), and announcements. If you have problems using D2L, please contact the Information Resources Helpdesk at 941-4357.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation (10% of final grade): Attendance and informed participation in each class is assumed. This means you are expected to be ready to discuss course content when you arrive in class. Much learning will come through your comments and questions in reaction to the readings and presentations, so please be ready to make your contribution. Absences can adversely affect your grade.

Daily Journals: (20% of final grade) Each student is required to purchase a notebook for class notes and journaling. The goal is to journal a little each day, using course material. In the first instance, and perhaps even for the course of the term, the text *The Parables of Kierkegaard* should prove sufficient to encourage thought and reflection. The purpose of journaling is to practice articulating the ideas presented in the course, and to provide concrete activities related to analysis of culture. Each entry should include quotations from sources, commentary on those quotations, and any other relevant material under consideration by the person journaling. For example, Kierkegaard, or some other writer, may say something that reminds you of a film, a comic, a song, or some other cultural artifact, and so it would be natural to combine your reflections on Kierkegaard with whatever cultural material you happen to be absorbing at the time.

Two Essays (10% each): Students will compose research papers on storytelling, parable, and popular culture. Drafts will be submitted in advance of the final draft, to ensure sufficient feedback from the Professor and to enhance student learning.

Presentation (20% of final grade): Students will present research material before the class, utilizing the ideas and techniques introduced in the course.

Final Paper (30% of final grade). The final paper will provide an in-depth analysis of the student's portion of the final presentation. It will demonstrate sufficient mastery of content covered in the course. The exact topic must be determined in consultation with the instructor to ensure sufficiently controlled parameters for critical analysis.

Plagiarism - Plagiarism will, at the least, result in a failing grade for the assignment and, at most, a failing grade for the class. The University's Academic Code of Honesty defines Plagiarism in this way:

“The handbook of the Modern Language Association describes plagiarism as ‘giving the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else.’ Examples of plagiarism in paper writing include: direct quoting of any source material whether published or unpublished without giving proper credit through the use of quotation marks, footnotes and other customary means of identifying sources; paraphrasing material from books and articles, etc., without identifying and crediting sources; submitting papers written by another person or persons; offering false, fabricated or fictitious sources for papers, reports, or other assignments.”

Please familiarize yourself with the [Code of Honesty](#)

“Integrity in intellectual activity is an indispensable prerequisite for membership in any academic community. A university in the Catholic, Jesuit tradition is a community united by dedication to the pursuit of knowledge and truth. To accomplish its academic purpose, The University of Scranton draws inspiration from the teaching and Church of Christ and from the vision St. Ignatius of Loyola put forth in the Spiritual Exercises.

The University seeks to educate students who have outstanding intellectual ambitions, high ethical standards, and dedication to the common good of society. Academic excellence requires, then, not only talent and commitment but also moral integrity and a sense of honor on the part of faculty, administrators, staff and students.

While moral integrity is an end in itself, it is also a necessary requirement for the pursuit of knowledge and truth. Cheating on examinations and plagiarizing papers are examples of gross violations of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty poses serious obstacles to the students' quest for knowledge and self-knowledge, and hinders professors from accurately assessing the individual talents and accomplishments of their students.

The primary purpose of the Academic Code of Honesty is to uphold the place of honor in the lives of faculty, students,

administrators and staff. A sense of honor requires members of the University community to not break negative precepts and to fulfill positive duties. For example, students must not only avoid plagiarism, but also develop their talents, both for their own well-being and for the common good.” Please study the following [guidelines](#) to ensure proper academic procedures.

Academic Writing and Writing Assistance

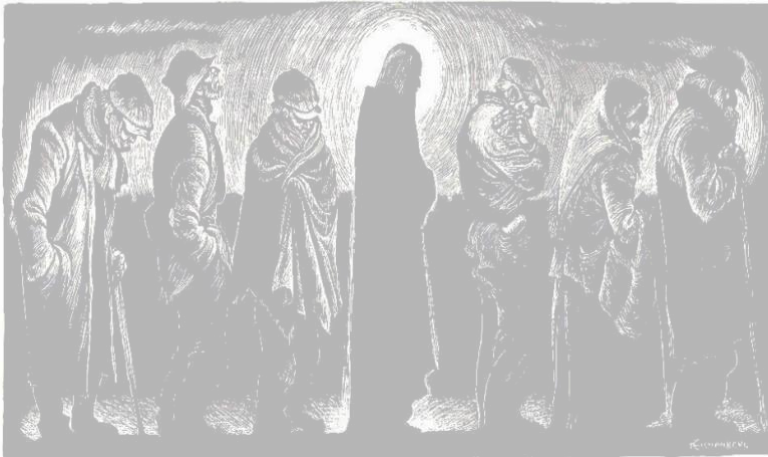
Please contact The Center for Teaching & Learning Excellence [CTLE], which encourages and supports a strong culture of scholarship, teaching and learning for a diverse university community. The University’s CTLE provides academic support services to assist students in achieving their academic and future goals by enhancing their reading, writing and learning strategies. <http://www.scranton.edu/academics/ctle/>

EQUITY & DIVERSITY

The University of Scranton is a community of scholars and a community of excellence. The Office of Equity and Diversity exists to ensure that the community of The University of Scranton is provided with the resources that will make our campus consistent with the Jesuit tradition.. "Education for Justice." The mission of the Office of Equity and Diversity is to ensure the University's compliance with state and federal Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action regulations, to develop an equity and diversity program consistent with the education tradition set forth by St. Ignatius Loyola, to actively promote equal access and equal opportunity for individuals without regard for race, gender, religion, creed, color, disability and/or Veteran Status. If and when this course fails to comply with these standards, please first notify the professor in person with your concerns. To ensure that he is in step with University policy, read [here](#).

As Kingfishers Catch Fire

BY [GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS](#)



As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each
hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its
name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the
same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; *myself* it speaks and
spells,
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came*.

I say móre: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: *thát* keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand
places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's
faces.

Required Texts:

- (1) Paul S. Fiddes, *Seeing the World and Knowing God: Hebrew Wisdom and Christian Doctrine in a Late-Modern Context (Reprint Edition)*
- (2) John Dominic Crossan, *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus*
- (3) Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis*
- (4) Thomas C. Oden (ed.), *Parables of Kierkegaard*

Course Schedule (subject to change):**Readings to be provided for each week, normally by electronic transmission.**

Wk. 1:	Jan. 30 – Introduction to Parables in Pop Culture Feb. 1 – Read: Crossan, 1-44 (take good notes!) – don’t forget to journal with Kierkegaard
Wk. 2:	Feb. 6 – No Class [READ: <i>Persepolis</i>] – don’t forget to journal with Kierkegaard Feb. 8 – No Class [FINISH READING <i>Persepolis</i>] – don’t forget to journal with Kierkegaard
Wk. 3:	Feb. 13 – FINISH READING <i>Persepolis</i> – don’t forget to journal with Kierkegaard Feb. 15 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 1-59
Wk. 4:	Feb. 20 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 60-83 Feb. 22 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 87-129 [Draft of Essay 1 Due – bring the printout to class]
Wk. 5:	Feb. 27 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 130-166 Mar. 1 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 167-217
Wk. 6:	Mar. 6 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 218-265 Mar. 8 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 269-298 [Final Draft of Essay 1 Due – bring the printout to class]
Wk. 7:	Mar. 20 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 299-323 Mar. 22 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 324-346
Wk. 8:	Mar. 27 – <i>Seeing the World & Knowing God</i> , pp. 347-396 [Draft of Essay 2 Due – bring the printout to class]
Wk. 9:	Apr. 3 – Crossan, pp. 45-88 Apr. 5 – Crossan, pp. 89-112
Wk. 10:	Apr. 10 – Crossan, pp. 113-137 Apr. 12 – Crossan, pp. 141-153 [Final Draft of Essay 2 Due – bring the printout to class]
Wk. 11:	Apr. 17 – Crossan, pp. 157-195 Apr. 19 – Crossan, pp. 197-218
Wk. 12:	Apr. 24 – Crossan, pp. 219-252 Apr. 26 – Student Presentations [Draft of Final Paper Due – bring the printout to class]
Wk. 13:	May 1 – Student Presentations May 3 – Student Presentations
Wk. 14:	May 8 – Student Presentations May 10 – Student Presentations Final Essay Due: May 11