University of Gdańsk

Subject card

Subject name and code	The Sacred in Cinema: Aesthetics and Symbolism, PG_00204365		
Field of study	Film and Audio-Visual Culture Studies		
Date of commencement of studies	October 2025	Academic year of realisation of subject	2026/2027
Education level	Master's studies	Subject group	Obligatory subject group in the field of study Optional subject group
Mode of study	full-time studies	Mode of delivery	at the university
Year of study	2	Language of instruction	Polish
Semester of study	4	ECTS credits	3.0
Learning profile	practical	Assessment form	credit
Conducting unit	Division of Film and Media -> Institute of Culture Studies -> Faculty of Languages -> Rector		
Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)	Subject supervisor	mgr Maciej Franciszczak	
	Teachers		

Lesson types

Lesson type	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
Number of study hours	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30

E-learning hours included: 0.0

Learning activity and number of study hours

Learning activity	Participation in didactic classes included in study plan	Participation in consultation hours	Self-study	SUM
Number of study hours	30	2.0	43.0	75

Subject objectives

Students gain knowledge on a range of diverse topics related to the representation and manifestation of various aspects of the sacred and spirituality in 21st-century world cinema. The curriculum will focus on the analysis and interpretation of narrative and stylistic devices designed to evoke the broadly understood and defined concepts of "Mystery" and "the Other" in the filmographies of selected filmmakers representing diverse cinematic traditions, aesthetic strategies, as well as various religious beliefs and sensibilities. The aim of this course is to introduce students to an alternative paradigm of film studies—one that is often overlooked in the curriculum—which offers new ways of understanding and experiencing cinema, and to provide them with the appropriate methodological tools for conducting independent research on the sacred in film.

Learning outcomes

Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
[WOFKAMU2_W05] He/she has an in-depth knowledge of the historical context of cinema and new media, especially the relationship between the past and the present.	He/she has an in-depth understanding of the historical context of cinema and new media, and recognizes the influence of film history on contemporary cinema.	[SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion [SW2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[WOFKAMU2_W10] He/she knows the recent history of film and TV series.	He/she is familiar with the recent history of film and television series, with a particular focus on aesthetic and narrative shifts in 21st-century world cinema and television series, as well as on the ways in which the sacred, spirituality, mystery, and the Other are represented and brought to life in various cinematic traditions, aesthetic strategies, and cultural and religious contexts.	[SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion [SW2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[WOFKAMU2_K08] He/she is aware of the responsibility for preserving the cultural heritage (especially film) of the region, country and Europe.	He/she is aware of his responsibility for the preservation, interpretation, and promotion of the cultural heritage—especially the cinematic heritage—of the region, the country, and Europe, with particular emphasis on its dimensions related to the representation of the sacred, spirituality, and mystery in world cinema, as well as the diversity of religious, aesthetic, and cultural traditions.	[SK1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SK2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[WOFKAMU2_U07] He/she has in-depth skills in film analysis and interpretation, which he/she uses in speech and writing.	The student possesses advanced skills in film analysis and interpretation, with a particular focus on the representation of the sacred, spirituality, and mystery in 21st-century world cinema, which the student applies in oral and written presentations.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU2] presentation/project/paper/ report

Subject contents

- Defining and distinguishing between the concepts of the sacred, religion, religiosity, and spirituality. Assessing their application and usefulness in film studies discourse.
- The history of cinema addressing spiritual themes. Strategies for evoking religion and the sacred in 20th-century cinema.
- Description of research methods, relevant literature, and cultural and cultural studies contexts.
- The Theme of the Sacred in 21st-Century Cinema. Shifts in Paradigms and Cinematic Trends. An examination of differences in the ways the sacred is expressed in contemporary cinema and in films from the last century.
- A presentation of the principles of the transcendental style and its revision according to Paul Schrader.
- A stylistic and narrative analysis, as well as an interpretation of selected films and phenomena related to the sacred in cinema.

Prerequisites and co-requisites

Assessment methods and criteria

Subject passing criteria	Passing threshold	Percentage of the final grade
Preparation of an individual final project	51.0%	70.0%
Active participation in the class	51.0%	30.0%

Recommended reading	Basic literature	A. Domalewski, *Główne nurty w badaniach nad filmem i religią*, „Images" 2021, nr 30(39). M. Marczak, *Poetyka filmu religijnego*, Kraków 2000. *Poszukiwanie i degradowanie sacrum w kinie*, red. M. Przylipiak, K. Kornacki, Gdańsk 2002. *Sacrum w kinie. Dekadę później. Szkice, eseje, rozprawy*, red. S. J. Konefał., M. Zelent, K. Kornacki, Gdańsk 2013. P. Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film. Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*, Oakland 2018. *Światowa encyklopedia filmu religijnego*, red. M. Lis, A. Garbicz, Kraków 2007.
	Supplementary literature	M. Eliade, *Sacrum i profanum. O istocie religijności*, przeł. R. Reszke, Warszawa 1999. M. Eliade, *Traktat o historii religii*, przeł. J. Wierusz-Kowalskiz, Łodzi 1993. M. Kępiński, *Transcendentne kino Darrena Aronofsky'ego. Film, sacrum, mit*, Łódź 2023. *Theology and the Films of Terrence Malick*, red. C. B. Barnett, C. J. Elliston, Londyn 2017. M. J. Wright, *Religion and Film: An Introduction*, Londyn 2007.
	eResources addresses	
Example issues/ example questions/ tasks being completed	• Analyses and interpretations of films that exemplify the theme of the sacred in the filmographies of filmmakers such as: Terrence Malick, Claire Denis, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Tsai Ming-liang, Alice Rohrwacher, Lucrecia Martel, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Bruno Dumont, Jessica Hausner, Paolo Sorrentino, Paul Schrader, Chloé Zhao, Naomi Kawase, Darren Aronofsky, Rose Glass, Wim Wenders, and Martin Scorsese. • The sacred and religion in contemporary Polish cinema. • The relationship between religion and the sacred and genre cinema, e.g., horror, psychological drama, and contemporary adaptations of biblical films. • Three approaches (strategies) of the contemporary transcendental style: The Surveillance Camera, The Art Gallery, The Mandala. • The sacred in slow cinema.	
Work placement	Not applicable	

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