

## RLG101H FILM ANALYSIS – INSTRUCTIONS

### Submission

- The deadline to submit this assignment is 11:59 pm on **February 16**. Your assignment will be penalized one mark (out of 100) per day late.
- You must submit your assignment to both BLACKBOARD and TURNITIN.COM as a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) file. The version of your assignment on Turnitin.com will be the one graded. Paper copies will not be accepted. If you do not wish to submit your work to Turnitin.com, you must consult with the course instructor; for details see the course website: <https://rlg101h.wordpress.com/grading/writing-assignments>

### Purpose

There are two main goals of this assignment:

1. To further demonstrate that theories of religion can be used to interpret phenomena that is often not understood as “religious”;
2. To provide you with the opportunity and the tools to reflect about your own learning.

### Assignment

Your task is to use theories of **belief, rituals, and texts** to analyze the same “non-religious” film as you did for the Film Paragraph assignment. You will also write a short learning reflection. The theories you use must be drawn from chapters 5 (Belief), 6 (Ritual), and 7 (Texts) in Nye’s book *Religion: The Basics*. The specific theories you may use are listed below (under “Theories”).

Your Film Analysis must consist of exactly **four paragraphs**. The first paragraph will be a revised version of the Film Paragraph you submitted using a theory of belief, which you will improve based on feedback from your TA. The next two paragraphs will involve the application of two additional theories. The final paragraph will consist of your reflection on what you have learned by doing this assignment. Your assignment in the end will be structured like this:

- Paragraph 1: film analysis using a theory of belief from chapter 5 in Nye’s text (revised)
- Paragraph 2: film analysis using a theory of ritual from chapter 6 in Nye’s text
- Paragraph 3: film analysis using a theory of text from chapter 7 in Nye’s text
- Paragraph 4: reflection on this assignment

Note: Your first three paragraphs can be in a different order if you prefer. For example you might want to write about ritual first, then, text, then belief. Do what you think works best!

### Message(s)

Your analyses in paragraphs 1-3 must show that, when the film is looked at using each theory, it can be seen to promote a particular message. By “message” I mean that the film is trying to tell us something important that is applicable to our own lives outside of the film: an insight into people; a philosophy about life; a way in which we should act; etc.

Please keep in mind that any given film will likely have several different messages. Some of these may even contradict one another. You may find that, when your film is examined using three different theories, you uncover three different messages. This is totally fine! You may also find that using the different theories yields the same message. This is fine too! The point is to tell us what you actually see when you do these three different analyses.

## Theories

You must choose ONE theory from chapter 5 (Belief) in Nye's text, ONE theory from chapter 6 (Ritual), and ONE theory from chapter 7 (Texts). The specific theories you may choose from are listed below. Once again is crucial that you choose a theory from this list. **If you use a different theory for this assignment, you may be penalized up to 50 marks (out of 100).**

### Belief:

- Reductionism (p. 108–9)
- Cognitive vs. affective beliefs (p. 117)
- Habitus (p. 124–6)

### Ritual:

- Rituals and society (p. 141–2)
- Ritual and neurosis (p. 143)
- Ritual and memory (p. 143–4)
- Ritual and power (p. 149–50)

### Texts:

- Authorship (p. 169–71)
- Readers (p. 176–8)
- Gender (p. 178)
- Language and interpretation (p. 158–9)

## Reflection

In the final (fourth) paragraph of your assignment, please reflect on something you have learned about religion, or the *study* of religion, from doing this analysis. Your reflective paragraph should be comprised of three main parts:

1. Past: What did you used to think about religion (or the study of religion) before doing this assignment?
2. Present: After doing this assignment what do you now think about religion (or the study of religion)? Why/how did the assignment affect your view(s)? Be as specific as possible.
3. Meaning: Why does what you learned *matter* to you? How have you been affected by having done this assignment? Think of this as the “So what?” question.

Here are some questions that might help you start your reflection:

- What does your experience with this assignment tell you about the assumptions you had beforehand about religion, or about the study of religion?
- What were the sources of your views of religion (or the study of religion) before doing this assignment?
- Did using theories to analyze a film help you understand the theories better? If so, why?
- Did using theories to analyze a film help you understand the *film* better and/or in new ways? If so, why?
- Did anything about doing this assignment surprise you?

The point of reflective writing is not to simply state your opinions or reactions, but to *think* about them. There is no right or wrong “answer” that you are expected to give; what we are “looking for” is nothing more or less than a frank and thoughtful appraisal of your experience (honest!).

Finally, when offering your reflections please make sure to provide **reasons and evidence** to account for your responses. In other words, it's not enough to tell us *what* you learned from doing this assignment – you need to explain *how* you learned this and *why* it matters.

Here is an example of reflective points<sup>1</sup> that someone might make about this assignment:

1. Past: Before doing this assignment I thought that religion was all about juggling bananas, because that was what I was taught in the Banana Temple where I was raised.
2. Present: Jonathan Z. Smith's theory helped me to see that fruit rituals in Ingmar Bergman's film *The Seventh Seal* symbolically help different characters overcome their existential isolation. From doing this assignment, therefore, I now believe that religion can be about all kinds of fruit, not just bananas!
3. Meaning ("so what?"): As much as I love the Banana Temple, I realize I should not assume that what is true there applies to all religions. From now on I will ask first, and juggle later.

### Films

You must write your Film Analysis on the same movie you used for the Film Paragraph assignment. If you write on a different film (e.g., from another TA's list) **you may be penalized up to 50 marks (out of 100)**. Your assignment must also follow standard academic practice for writing about film, as outlined in the instructions for the Film Paragraph assignment.

### Audience

Once again, assume that your audience has seen the film but that they do not know anything about the study of religion. This means that you should NOT provide a plot summary of the movie, but you DO need to explain each theory that you use.

### Advice

**Analysis:** As you did with Film Paragraph assignment, you must use the theories from Nye's text to *analyze* the film. It's not enough to simply find connections between the film and the theories – you need to show that, when the film is looked at using these theories, it has a particular *meaning*. In other words, there needs to be a clear point to your analysis.

**What matters:** Pay attention to those parts of the film that strike you as **meaningful** in some way. For example, you might look for important visual elements including images, objects, items of clothing, buildings, spaces/settings, etc. Similarly, you might want to examine key actions, experiences, words, stories, songs, etc. Note that you can analyze the same parts of the film in each of the three theory paragraphs, or you can analyze entirely different parts. It's up to you!

**"Religion":** Do not concern yourself with explicitly identifying "religious" aspects of the film. We simply want you to apply theories from religious studies to a film. We are not asking you to argue that the film is "religious" in any way.

**No research:** Once again you are to do **no additional research** for this assignment beyond watching the film and using theories from Nye's text. Your analysis, in other words, must be based solely on your own observations of the film.

**Other advice:** Please review the document "RLG101H Film Paragraph Advice + Example."

---

<sup>1</sup> Please remember that you must write a **paragraph**, not a numbered list. We have presented the points in this format to highlight the past/present/future structure of the reflection.

## Format

Your assignment must:

- Be no longer than 1300 words in length (not including title page, bibliography, or citations);
- Include a cover page based on the template below (replace the yellow highlighted portions with your own information);
- Be double-spaced and use Times 12-point font;
- Show page numbers in the top right corner of each page (page 1 comes *after* your title page);
- Consist of four paragraphs in total (three analytical paragraphs and one reflective paragraph);
- Include in-text citations to Nye's text that conform to The Chicago Manual of Style (author-date format);
- Include a bibliography that conforms to The Chicago Manual of Style (author-date format), which appears after your fourth paragraph (which is your reflective paragraph);
- Include a copy of the grading rubric (available on the course website) for the final version of this assignment on a separate page after your bibliography.

RLG101H  
Introduction to the Study of Religion  
Prof. Ken Derry  
TA: Name

**Title of Analysis (including *Film Title*)**

By Your Name  
Student Number

Date of Submission  
Word Count