

OTHER SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

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The following activities may be completed by individuals, groups, or used in an academic setting.

(1) Select one film each from Lists A through H (ScriptureWorkshop.com/film/index.html), and evaluate them using the To Read Film guide (ScriptureWorkshop.com/film/to_read_film.html). After studying the films prepare a **Summary** focusing on the shifts in “American reality” as projected in film across the previous century (based on the films viewed). Pay attention to the implications for Christian theology.

(2) **Comparative Study** on three films. Select three films that have some relationship (doing additional research will help). View the films and complete the To Read Film guide on each (ScriptureWorkshop.com/film/to_read_film.html). Then, explain how the films are related and what is to be compared, why the comparison is culturally and/or theologically significant, and proceed to demonstrate the significance of the comparison. Here are several examples of the kind of comparative sets you may create (you are welcome to use any of these as a starting point or come up with your own): films on a similar theme, like African crises (e.g., *Hotel Rwanda*, *The Constant Gardener*, *God Grew Tired of Us*, *Amistad*), the problem of terrorism at the intersection of nationalistic and religious agendas (e.g., *Munich*, *The Kingdom*, *Kingdom of Heaven*), the Vietnam war (e.g., *The Deer Hunter*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*), the effects of war on returning soldiers (e.g., *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, *Born on the Fourth of July*), reality bending mental illness (e.g., *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, *A Beautiful Mind*), the relationship of memory and humanness (e.g., *Blade Runner*, *The 6th Day*, *A.I.*), sibling rivalry (e.g., *East of Eden*, *Legends of the Fall*, *A River Runs Through It*), sins of the father (e.g., *East of Eden*, *Godfather Part II*, *Dead Poets Society*), angst and the question of the meaning of or being trapped in modern society (e.g., *Rebel Without a Cause*, *The Matrix*, *Groundhog Day*, *Fight Club*, *Vanilla Sky*, *Pleasantville*, *The Truman Show*, *Legends of the Fall*, *Dead Poets Society*), obsession (e.g., *All About Eve*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Fatal Attraction*, *Rudy*), addiction (e.g., *The Lost Weekend*, *Leaving Las Vegas*), the menace and threat of technology (e.g., *Frankenstein*, *Modern Times*, *Dr. Strangelove*), homosexuality (e.g., *Philadelphia*, *Far From Heaven*, *Brokeback Mountain*), racism (e.g., *Fights of Nations*, *Making an American Citizen*, *The Birth of a Nation*, *Intruder in the Dust*, *Salt of the Earth*,¹ *Crash*), interracial relationships (e.g., *Pinky*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, *Showboat*), anti-Semitism (e.g., *Crossfire*, *A Gentlemen’s Agreement*, *Judgment at Nuremberg*), controversial humor and the Third Reich (e.g., *The Great Dictator*, *Life is Beautiful*, *The Day the Clown Cried* [not released]), nuclear threat (e.g., *Dr. Strangelove*, *War Games*, *The Hunt for the Red October*), human origin and destiny (e.g., *Inherit the Wind*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Contact*), abortion (e.g., *If These Walls Could Talk*, *The Cider House Rules*, *Bella*); films of the same genre, like one of the early James Bond films of the Cold War era (e.g., *From Russia With Love*) with the post-9/11 revised James Bond of *Casino Royale* and one of the post-Cold War, post-9/11 Jason Borne films (e.g., *The Bourne Ultimatum*), westerns, spaghetti westerns, and anti-westerns (e.g., *Shane*, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, *A Fistful of Dollars*, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Unforgiven*); political criticism (e.g., *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *V for Vendetta*, *Lions for Lambs*);

¹ *Salt of the Earth* was considered controversial for its labor message as much as racist themes.

films that explore the relationship of story and reality like *Adaptation* (see McKee's *Story* in bibliography), *Stranger Than Fiction*, *Enchanted* (note *Enchanted*'s "spoofs" in relation to *Shrek*'s parodies); films by the same director, like Martin Scorsese (e.g., *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, *Goodfellas*), Oliver Stone (e.g., *JFK*, *The Doors*, *Alexander*); films featuring the same actor, like Gregory Peck (e.g., *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, *A Gentleman's Agreement*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*) or Marlin Brando (e.g., *The Wild One*, *The Ugly American*, *The Godfather*); films based on works by the same author, like Philip K. Dick (e.g., *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, *Minority Report*); intertextuality in films which make intentional connections, like *Master and Commander* playing off of *Jaws* and *Moby Dick*, or *American Gangster* juxtaposed to *The Godfather* and *The Deer Hunter*; films which remake the same story, like *King Kong*, *Frankenstein*, or *The Wizard of Oz* (the early versions up to 1939, understood as a social and economic allegory); or films on a particular scriptural narrative, like *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *The Passion of the Christ*, *Jesus of Nazareth*. There are many ways you could go with this project. Whatever you choose it should be substantive and significant.

(3) Imagine that you are writing a **Film Review** for *The Journal of Religion and Film*—you should read sample reviews (<http://avalon.unomaha.edu/jrf/>). Do not hesitate to share your religious point of view, and remember that your review should be written from a critical perspective as you focus on the scriptural and cinematic dimensions of the film under review. You may select a film or films from one of the lists below.

(4) Do a researched critical interpretation of a major movie trilogy. The body of **Trilogy Interpretation** should be focused on genre, direction, acting, historical background, and other matters of movie-making; theological interpretation with specific biblical-theological critique; and cultural interpretation focusing on how the trilogy interpreted and how it shaped North American culture.

(5) Design a **Teaching Guide** built around three films for an weekend conference of a local evangelical church (see example sets of three in instructions for the comparative study above). The introduction of the teaching guide should briefly explain how the three films work together, and the main body should include interpretation of the films, including relevant background on the film and filmmakers and specific interaction with scripture, and describing the teaching session(s), including discussion questions for large group and break-out group interaction (these may be included as an appendix). Also explain the key scenes you will focus on with the questions, and so on. Think through issues like whether the films should be viewed together or beforehand, and if clips or still-shots should be used to enhance discussion, and so on. Technical logistics can be included in a short appendix.