Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler  
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Office: 4 Glebe St. #206  
Office Hours: Wed 1-3 and Friday 10-noon or by appointment

In this class we will critically examine the myth of the American hero through weekly viewings of important and entertaining American movies.

This course will fulfill the General Education Student Learning Outcomes:  
Student Learning Outcome #1: Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture.  
Student Learning Outcome #2: Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.

These two learning outcomes will be assessed by the term paper (worth a total of 25%), which will ask students to analyze primary sources, in this case, films, in terms of the religious, political, and cultural ideas they express.

There are two required books:  
*Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World* by S. Brent Plate  

*Ethan Coen and Joel Coen: Collected Screenplays 1: Blood Simple, Raising Arizona, Miller's Crossing, Barton Fink*  

There are also required readings on OAKS. Print these out! Please bring the relevant book or printout to class.

Films will be at the circulation desk at Addlestone a few days after they are screened in class. You can watch them in the library on your laptop or on a library computer. Personal screenings are meant to supplement not to replace the classroom viewings.  
Warning: Films and readings may be violent or otherwise offensive.
Course Requirements:
Participation and attendance: **10%**
Two short writing assignments (2 x 5%): **10%**
Two “surprise” reading and viewing quizzes: (2 x 5%) **10%**
Open-book essay midterm exam: **15%**
Closed-book objective midterm exam: **10%**
7-9 pp. term paper: **25%**
Take-home essay final exam: **20%**

All work must be original and all sources correctly cited. The university's honor code will be strictly enforced. Students can find a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook, available online.

Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 61-62 F: 60 or below.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

Wed Aug 26: What is this class about? What is myth?
Read: Useful Terms (Handout)

Mon Aug 31: High Noon (Zinneman, 1952) 85 mins
Read: “Basic Glossary” (OAKS); Coen 113-122; Ellwood (OAKS)

Wed Sept 2: How do we talk about film?
Read: Voytilla I (OAKS); Campbell (OAKS); Plate 18-23
[Watch excerpt from Big Fish (Burton, 2003)]
**Exercise in formal film analysis due in class**

Mon Sept 7: Platoon (Stone, 1986) 120 mins
Read: Voytilla II (OAKS)

Wed Sept 9: Mythological, Theological and Political Film Criticism
Read: Beck (OAKS); Pippin (OAKS)
**Exercise in diagramming the Hero’s Journey due in class**

Mon Sept 14: The Matrix (Wachowski Bros., 1999) 136 mins
Read: Holroyd (OAKS)

Wed Sept 16: How does film create myth and ritual?
Read: Wagner (OAKS); Plate 23-24, 27-31, 38-43

Mon Sept 21: Star Wars (Lucas, 1977) 121 mins
Read: Gordon (OAKS)
Wed Sept 23: Criticizing the Monomyth
Read: Plate 24-27, 31-37; Lawrence (OAKS); Plate 78-91; Lyden (OAKS)
[Watch excerpts from *Triumph of the Will* (Riefenstahl, 1934) and *Star Wars Uncut* (Pugh, 2010)]

Mon Sept 28: *Seven Years in Tibet* (Annaud, 1997) 136 mins
Read: Iwamura (OAKS); “White Savior” (OAKS)

Wed Sept 30: The Orientalist Critique
Read: Mullen (OAKS)

Mon Oct 5: *The Big Lebowski* (Coens, 1998) 117 mins
Read: Andrus (OAKS)

Wed Oct 7: The Myth of Authenticity and The Critique of Capitalism
Read: Siegler (OAKS); Martin-Jones (OAKS)

Mon Oct 12: Midterm Exam film screening
Read: Midterm exam material

Wed Oct 14: **Midterm Exam**

**Term Paper Guidelines Handed Out**

Mon Oct 19: FALL BREAK

Wed Oct 21: Jesus as American Hero
Read: TBA
[Watch excerpt from *The Passion of the Christ* (Gibson, 2004)]

Mon Oct 26: *Miller’s Crossing* (Coens, 1990) 115 mins
Read: Mitchell (OAKS); Coen 249-396

Wed Oct 28: Death and the Hero Myth
Read: Plate 59-61, 69-77; Altman (OAKS)
[Watch excerpts from *Act of seeing with one’s own eyes* (Brakhage, 1971) and *True Grit* (Coens, 2010)]

Mon Nov 2: *Dead Man* (Jarmusch, 2000) 121 mins
Read: Rickman (OAKS)

Wed Nov 4: The Female Hero
Read: Schubart (OAKS); Carter (OAKS); Beavis (OAKS)

Mon Nov 9: *Fargo* (Coens, 1996) 98 mins
Read: Amesbury (OAKS)
Wed Nov 11: Race and Class in the American Hero Myth
Read: TBA (OAKS)

Mon Nov 16: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (Coens, 1999) 106 mins
Read: Seales (OAKS)

Wed Nov 18: The Homeric Hero Revisited
Read: Roberts (OAKS)
[Watch excerpt from *The Hudsucker Proxy* (Coens, 1994)]

Mon Nov 23: Class cancelled
**Final Paper Due by Tues Nov 24**

Wed Nov 25: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Mon Nov 30: *Barton Fink* (Coens, 1991) 116 mins
Final exam review handed out

Wed Dec 2: Conclusions—The Artist as Hero and World-Creator
Read: Plate 1-13; Plate and Siegler (OAKS); Coen vii-xi, 397-521.

Mon Dec 7: Final Exam film screening
**Take home exam and reading assignment handed out**

Mon Dec 14: **Take Home final exam due**

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Note: Students with documented disabilities who have been approved to receive accommodation through SNAP should feel free to discuss this during office hours. For more information, contact Disability Services at 953-1431.

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The Center for Student Learning has writing labs and can arrange individual tutoring for this particular class. Drop by, go to [http://www.cofc.edu/~csl/](http://www.cofc.edu/~csl/) or call 953-5635.

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**Technology policy**
Let’s face it: technology breaks. **An issue you may have with technology is no excuse for late work.** You need to protect yourself by managing your time and backing up your work. **Turn your cell phone on silent when you come into class.** **Do not text in class.** If you bring a laptop to class, use it for class. I reserve the right to ask anyone with a laptop or tablet to use it to lookup something to help our class discussion. I also might check your screen to make sure you are not checking your friend’s Instagram, etc.