

Professor Mark Lamas Jr.
RS1118: Religion and Film
California State University, Bakersfield

Midterm Guide
(*Monty Python's: Life of Brian*)

Assignment: The midterm for this course requires that you view *Monty Python's: Life of Brian* and answer the two prompts given below.

Assignment Requirements: Each prompt should be answered within 300-400 words. Papers **must include**: name, class time, date, clearly label which prompt you are answering, and word count for each prompt. **Printed papers** will be due at the **start of class on Tuesday, October 30th**. Papers submitted more than twenty-minutes after the start of class will be considered late and docked 10%. Every subsequent day a paper is late will result in 10 additional percentage points being docked. This midterm is worth 15% (150 points) of your overall grade in this course.

Writing Expectations: Each answer given for the prompts should include **at least two** references to the reading or lecture (no outside sources, please). A successful answer will not only include references to the reading or lecture, but also cinematographic language (see "Week 2 – Reading 1"). In other words, evaluating camera movements, lighting, editing, sound, character development, or *mise en scène*, for example, will be essential to receiving a strong grade. Avoid heavy summary except when essential to answering the question. I strongly advise seeing a RS tutor prior to submitting your paper (see "Tutoring" on BB for days and hours). Follow citation and timestamp requirements as listed in the "Film Analysis Guide".

Prompts:

1. *The Passion of the Christ* and the New Testament Gospels both negatively portray Jewish characters in the story of Jesus by aligning them with demonic features and placing the responsibility of Jesus' death solely on the Jews (i.e. anti-Judaism). Explain whether *Monty Python's: Life of Brian* tells the story of Jesus (through Brian who mimics Jesus' life) with or without the type of anti-Judaism (or antisemitism) displayed in *The Passion of the Christ*?
2. While Brian is clearly not Jesus in *The Life of Brian*—i.e. since Jesus himself makes a few cameo appearances— he is understood to be a parody of Jesus throughout the film. Brian's life mimics that of Jesus from birth to death...in other words, Brian and Jesus are two similar Jewish nobodies who reluctantly become "messiahs," who will eventually die at the hands of Roman power. It is this contrast with Jesus that makes the film funny and ironic. In *The Life of Brian*, how do the directors attempt to humanize Jesus through Brian's character? That is to say, how do the supernatural "myths" (see Plate, pgs. 23-35) of Jesus found in the Gospels become naturalized through Brian?

Grading Assessment: Each film analysis will be assessed according to the following criteria:

MIDTERM SUCCESS CRITERIA (for each prompt)	POINTS POSSIBLE	POINTS EARNED	
		Question 1	Question 2
Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a critically and creative engagement with the film. • Accurately applies key terms related to religious studies and film studies as learned from assigned readings and lectures. • Compelling introductory sentence and clearly defined thesis statement. • Provides two citations from reading or lecture. 	45 (30%)		
Format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate timestamps and citations. • Typed, Double-spaced, 12pt. font • 300-400 words in length • Marked in right or left hand corner: Name; Class Time; Film Name; Film Analysis #; Word Count 	7.5 (5%)		
Prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midterm fully addresses provided prompt. 	15 (10%)		
Mechanics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis is written in formal, academic English. • Proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. • Midterm paper is clearly organized and easy to follow. 	7.5 (5%)		
Total Prompt Points	75 (50%)		
Total Points	150 (100%)		