



Call for Papers

Faith, Film and Philosophy “Faith, Philosophy, & Mystery in Film”

September 30th & October 1st, 2011

Gonzaga University’s *Faith and Reason Institute* and Whitworth University’s *Weyerhaeuser Center for Faith and Learning* are pleased to announce their Fifth Annual Seminar on Faith, Film and Philosophy, entitled “**Faith, Philosophy, & Mystery in Film.**” The seminar and its associated public lectures are part of a series of jointly-sponsored programs focused on “Faith, Reason and Popular Culture.” The conviction behind these programs is that if Christian institutions of higher learning are to respond properly to their charge to be places where faith seeks understanding, then they must engage contemporary popular culture. Film is among the most powerful and important forms of popular culture. Thus, the seminar organizers seek scholars who will engage in two days of discussion investigating issues of faith and philosophical import raised by contemporary popular film. Presenters need not have any formal academic appointment.

Seminar sessions will take place on Friday (September 30) and Saturday (October 1). **Public lectures** associated with the seminar will be given on the evenings of 28-30 September 2011.

This year’s seminar examines the **mystery genre in film**. One of the most popular forms of narrative in the contemporary world is mystery fiction, where a crime is committed and eventually solved by an amateur or professional detective. On the silver screen, mystery is almost as old as film itself, with the first Sherlock Holmes movie appearing in 1903. Mysteries are among the very finest movies ever made (e.g., Alfred Hitchcock’s) as well as among the very worst (countless forgotten B-movies); and they are so well-known that the list of parodies and spoofs is almost as long as the list of serious attempts at good mystery. One would think that mystery fiction is as old as story-telling itself, yet the genre did not really come into its own until a century and a half ago. What is it about the mystery that modern audiences find so enthralling?

Possible topics for seminar papers include the following, though proposals on related topics are welcome and encouraged.

- Mystery and epistemology, or how the detective comes to know whodunit?
- Mystery and moral or political philosophy: the author or detective’s assumptions about justice, the natural law, or the lack thereof.
- Mystery and Christianity from Fr. Brown to the *Name of the Rose*: how might religious faith impede or accelerate the solving of crimes?

- Mystery and the mystery of being: do mystery stories eventually lead to nihilism or to optimism? Or are there no metaphysical implications to mystery?
- Mysteries and faith: do the faith commitments of mystery writers affect the types of mysteries they write and do any such effects show up on the screen?
- Science and mystery, or the CSI factor: the role of forensics and technology
- Drawing the line, or how to separate Sherlock Holmes from James Bond: what makes a mystery different from action adventure? From horror?
- The use and abuse of history for mystery: the character and purpose of period mystery films
- Signs of the times: portrayals of religion in mystery films
- Pulp and projector: why do so many mystery novels make their way to the big screen, and what is lost or gained in the process?
- Juvenile mystery (Nancy Drew, etc.)
- The changing faces of mystery from the Golden Age of Hollywood to the present
- Dames and mystery, from femmes fatales to Miss Marple
- Open versus closed mysteries: the art and philosophy behind telling the audience who the culprit is earlier in the film (open) or waiting until the end (closed)
- Famous detectives vis-à-vis any of the topics mentioned above
- Directors, producers, or screenwriters vis-à-vis any of the topics mentioned above

Ideally, most of the films discussed in the seminar should be less than thirty years old; if an author wishes to discuss a wider span of film history (e.g., the changing depictions of Sherlock Holmes from the 1930s on), weight should be given to the more recent or at least to relatively well-known examples. Obscure films, which one would not reasonably expect the seminar audience to have seen, should be generally avoided.

Proposals not longer than one page (double-spaced), and in Word format, should be submitted electronically to the attention of Margaret Rankin at faithandreason@gonzaga.edu no later than **15 June 2011**, and should include title, author(s), institutional association (if any), mailing address, email address, and the text of proposal. The seminar organizers will send **acceptances** by **22 June 2011**.

For further information consult www.gufaithreason.org.