

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL THEMES IN FILMS

KEN BOA



A PARTIAL LIST OF FILMS

[Red = Films taught]

[Blue = Films to be taught next]

- = Good synthesis of artistic merit and spiritual themes
 - = Great synthesis of artistic merit and spiritual themes
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About Schmidt

Alexander Nevsky (Eisenstein)

All Quiet on the Western Front

Amacord (Fellini)

• Amadeus

Amélie (Jeunet)

• Babette's Feast (Axel)

A Beautiful Mind

Beauty and the Beast (Cocteau)

Ben Hur

• Blade Runner (reality, humanity)

Blue, White, Red (Krzysztof Kieslowski's Three Colors Trilogy)

Braveheart

Broadway Danny Rose (Woody Allen)

Bruce Almighty

Casablanca

•• Chariots of Fire

Citizen Kane

City Slickers

• Close Encounters of the Third Kind

• The Color of Paradise (Majidi)

•• Crimes and Misdemeanors

• Dead Poets Society

The Decalogue, (Kieslowski)

The Deer Hunter

The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie (Buñuel)

Dreams (Kurosawa)

- Enchanted April
- Forest Gump
- The Fountainhead
- Gate of Hell (Kurosawa)
- Gladiator
- The Gospel According to Matthew (Pasolini)
- Grand Canyon
- Groundhog Day
- Henry V
- The Hour of the Wolf (Bergman)
- Ikiru (Kurosawa)
- It's a Wonderful Life
- Jean de Florette/Manon of the Spring (Berri)
- King of Hearts
- La Strada (Fellini)
- Last of the Mohicans
- Last Year at Marienbad (Resnais)
- Les Miserables
- Life Is Beautiful
- The Lion King
- The Lord of the Rings Trilogy
 - The Fellowship of the Ring
 - The Two Towers
 - The Return of the King
- The Magnificent Ambersons
- A Man for All Seasons
- Manhattan
- The Matrix
- Metropolis (Lang, 1927)
- A Midsummer's Night Dream (1935)
- Much Ado about Nothing
- Nosferantu (Murnau, 1922; Herzog, 1979)
- O Brother, Where Art Thou?
- October Sky
- One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest
- The Ox-bow Incident
- Papillon
- Pleasantville
- Rain Man
- Rashomon (Kurosawa)
- Regarding Henry
- Saving Private Ryan
- The Scarlet Letter (sin, grace, redemption)

- The Searchers
- The Scent of Green Papaya (Tran)
- • The Seven Samurai (Kurosawa)
- • The Seventh Seal (Bergman)
- • The Shawshank Redemption
- • Shindler's List
- Simon Burch
- Tender Mercies
- The Tree of Wooden Clogs (Olmi)
- Throne of Blood (Kurosawa)
- The Truman Show
- 2001: A Space Odyssey
- Ugetsu (Kurosawa)
- Unforgiven
- Viridiana (Buñuel)
- War and Peace (Bondarchuk)
- Wild Strawberries (Bergman)
- The Wizard of Oz
- Yojimbo (Kurosawa)

THE FOLLOWING FILMS WELL ILLUSTRATE A DIVERSITY OF THEMES:

- *The Seventh Seal*—Despair in a world without God
- *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*—The quest for transcendence without God
- *The Matrix*—The question of what is real in a postmodern world
- *Crimes and Misdemeanors*—The problem of morality without absolutes
- *Chariots of Fire*—Heroism inspired by radically different quests
- *The Shawshank Redemption*—Redemptive suffering in a fallen world
- *Babette's Feast*—Reconciliation through sacrificial love
- *Enchanted April*—Enhanced relationships as a hint of heaven

AUTEUR FOCUS

Woody Allen
Bergman

The Cohen Brothers

Fellini

Hitchcock

Kurosawa

Shakespeare interpretations by different directors

(Lear, Macbeth, Midsummer Night's Dream, Tempest)

SPECIFIC AUTEUR STUDIES:

- Bergman Trilogies
 - Through a Glass Darkly v. Winter Light v. The Silence (spiritual isolation theme)
 - Persona v. The Hour of the Wolf v. Shame (interpersonal theme)
 - Winter Light v. Wild Strawberries v. The Seventh Seal (meaning of life theme)
- Bertolucci: The Conformist v. The Last Emperor
- Luis Bunuel: Simon of the Desert v. Viridiana v. The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie
- Hitchcock: Vertigo v. Rear Window v. Strangers on a Train (unexpected consequences of choices)
- Orson Wells: The Lady from Shanghai v. whatever; or his Shakespeare adaptations (Macbeth, Lear, Falstaff)

COMPARATIVE STUDIES

A. MOVIE TO MOVIE COMPARISONS:

- The Seven Samurai (Kurosawa) v. The Magnificent Seven (Peckinpah) v. The Wild Bunch (Peckinpah) -- same story retold differently (different culture, and different underlying "message for the audience")
- King Lear (Olivier) v. Ran (Kurosawa) v. King Lear (Godard) v. A Thousand Acres (Jason Robards) v. others -- same story retold differently (different cultures, and different underlying "message for the audience")
- Macbeth (Olivier) v. Throne of Blood (Kurosawa) v. Macbeth (Mel Gibson) v. Macbeth (Orson Welles) -- ditto
- Schindler's List v. Sophie's Choice v. The Deer Hunter -- the ultimate in moral dilemmas

- Rashomon (Kurosawa) v. Last Year at Marienbad (Renaud) v. Wild Strawberries (Bergman) -- perspectives on the subjectivity of reality
- A Man For All Seasons v. Beckett v. Man of La Mancha -- perspectives on individual moral choice based on spiritual frame vs. the earthly world

B. MOVIE TO BOOK COMPARISONS:

- Jean de Florette/Manon of the Spring
- Like Water for Chocolate (Laura Esquevel)
- The Unbearable Lightness of Being
- Inherit the Wind
- The Last Temptation of Christ (Kanzantzakis)
- Joan of Arc (historical records v. several movie versions)
- The Ox-bow Incident (Walter Van Tilburg Clark)
- One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest (Ken Kesey)
- Sometimes a Great Notion (Ken Kesey)