

RELS 3213.001/FILM 3051.004
JESUS ON THE SILVER SCREEN
TR 12:30-1:45
Friday 116

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Office Hours: Wed., 2-3PM, and by appointment, Macy 202A

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Attempts to tell the story of Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection in the language of film are as old as the art form itself. From Cecil B. DeMille's *The King of Kings*, one of the earliest feature-length Jesus films, to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, one of the most recent offerings in the genre, almost every Jesus film has offended some viewers deeply and moved others profoundly. Given the intense personal devotion many people have to the Christian narrative, the cultural significance of the figure of Jesus and the checkered historical legacy of Christianity, both the mixture and extremity of reaction is understandable.

In this course, we will examine several well-known cinematic depictions of Jesus. We will analyze each film in relation to texts from the Christian New Testament, in light of the historical context in which it was produced and on its own merits as an aesthetic object. We will not be primarily concerned with whether these representations are historically accurate, biblically faithful or theologically orthodox. Instead, we will focus on the choices they make in telling the story of Jesus of Nazareth. By understanding the variety of representations in and the plurality of reactions to these films, we will hopefully gain a better understanding of the contemporary cultural meaning and function of the Christian discourses.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Bible, New Revised Standard Version or New International Version.

Bart Ehrman, *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2009).

Richard C. Stern et al., *Savior on the Silver Screen* (Paulist Press, 1999).

Course readings are available through Atkins Library's electronic course reserve:
<http://library.uncc.edu/caos/coursreserve>.

Please bring the relevant readings to each class session.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY

I want every student in this class to succeed. In selecting readings, crafting assignments, and setting a schedule, I have tried to create a framework that will help you do your best work. In presenting material, articulating expectations, and responding to assignments, I strive to be as clear as I can. I will not, however, hunt you down, or pester you, to make sure you are doing the required work.

To succeed in this course, you must be proactive. This includes both doing the work outlined in the syllabus and taking initiative if problems arise. If you do not understand the material or my expectations, if life is impinging on you in some way, or if my teaching style is not working for you, *please* let me know. I will do what I can to help, but I am completely unable to remedy the situation if I do not know there is a problem.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to (1) attend, and be on time for, all class meetings; (2) read carefully all assigned readings prior to the Tuesday session of the week for which they are assigned; (3) view attentively all assigned films by the Thursday session of the week for which they are assigned; (4) participate actively and productively in discussions of the assigned material; (5) be familiar with the syllabus; (6) take responsibility for fulfilling the requirements of the course; and (7) check their NinerMail accounts regularly for course-related communications from the instructor.

Students are **NOT** expected to have prior experience with biblical texts, the Jesus story, or film analysis, but are expected to demonstrate a willingness to engage the course materials carefully, critically and creatively. Students are **NOT** expected to agree with the views espoused by the instructor, the course materials or other students; they are expected to manage any disagreement respectfully and productively.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Consistent with the University's commitment to inclusivity, I pledge to do my best to run the class in a manner that is respectful of difference, including but not limited to, physical and mental ability, age, socio-economic status, religious identity, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality and veteran status. Students are expected to be respectful of these differences in their conduct in class and on campus.

As a sign of this respect, you should write in a way that recognizes diversity. In other words, you should strive, at the very least, to use gender-inclusive language and also to be mindful of metaphors that may have problematic racial, ethnic, class, sexual or (dis)ability connotations.

ACCOMMODATION OF DISABILITIES

If you have a disability that qualifies you for accommodations, please provide a letter from Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information regarding accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (www.ds.uncc.edu).

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend, and be on time for, all class meetings. *Every absence after two, for whatever reason, will result in a three-point deduction from your final grade. Every two instances of arriving late or leaving early will count as one absence.* If you are absent from class, you are responsible for getting any course announcements, lecture notes, handouts or assignments.

The exception to this rule is absences necessitated by religious observance. You may miss two classes for religious observance, but you must provide me with written notice (which includes e-mail correspondence) of the classes you will be missing for this reason no later than **Tuesday, September 9.**

FILM VIEWING

Students are expected to view carefully all assigned films by the Thursday session of the week for which they are assigned.

All films for the course are on reserve in the library. Many of the films are also available through Netflix, Blockbuster and other rental services.

I reserve the right to administer unannounced for-credit quizzes or short, in-class writing assignments to check whether students are, indeed, viewing the films.

Because watching the films is an essential component of the course, you will need to commit the necessary time and attention to make sure that you watch the films prior to discussing them in class. If you think this will be a problem or a hardship for you, you should not take this course.

CLASS DECORUM

(1) Be on time for class. If you must arrive late or leave early, please do so as unobtrusively as possible. (2) Cell phones must be turned off prior to class. If your cell phone rings, or you are observed text-messaging during class, you will be asked to leave class and it will be counted as an absence. (3) Computers may be used during class only to take notes or read electronic-reserve readings. If you are observed using your computer for any other purpose, you will be asked to leave class, it will be counted as an absence, *and it will jeopardize the use of computers for the remainder of the semester for all students in the course.*

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

I will communicate with you as a class and as individuals using the NinerMail (university) e-mail system. You are responsible for checking this account regularly and responding promptly to any e-mail requests.

SCHEDULE

Tue., 8.21 **Introduction to the Course**

UNIT ONE Written Depictions

Thu., 8.23 **Introduction to the Gospels**

Before writing the Unit One paper, read Ehrman, chapters 2-4.
For today's class, read Ehrman, pp. 1-12, 59-60, 153-62.

Tue., 8.28 **Mark**

Thu., 8.30 The Gospel of Mark
Ehrman, chapter 5

Tue., 9.4 **Matthew**

Thu., 9.6 The Gospel of Matthew
Ehrman, chapter 6

Tue., 9.11 **Luke**

Thu., 9.13 The Gospel of Luke, Acts 1-2
Ehrman, chapter 7

Tue., 9.18 **Workshop on Course Survival Skills**

How do I write for this class? How do I watch a film for this class?
Please read Stern et al., 7-24.
Please bring a copy of the style manual you will be using.

Thu., 9.20 **John**

Tue., 9.25 The Gospel of John
Ehrman, chapter 9

Thu., 9.27 **Non-canonical Gospels**

The Gospel of Judas (electronic reserve)
The Gospel of Mary (electronic reserve)
Infancy Gospel of Thomas (electronic reserve)

UNIT TWO
Cinematic Depictions

Tue., 10.2 *The King of Kings* (1927, Cecil B. DeMille) (112 mins.)
Thu., 10.4 Stern et al., 30-56.

Yael Ohad-Karny, “‘Anticipating’ Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*: The Controversy over Cecil B. DeMille’s *The King of Kings*,” *Jewish History* 19 (2005): 189-210.

Cecil B. DeMille, “The Screen as a Religious Teacher,” *Theatre* (June 1927) (to be distributed in class).

*****UNIT ONE PAPER DUE by Thursday, 10.4, 10AM.**

Tue., 10.9 **NO CLASS – Fall Break**

Thu., 10.11 *Intolerance*
Select scenes will be viewed during class.

Tue., 10.16 *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (1964, Pier Paolo Pasolini) (136 mins.)
Thu., 10.18 Stern et al., 96-124

Christopher C. Fuller, “Gibson’s *Passion* in Light of Pasolini’s *Gospel*,” *SBL Forum* (March 2006), sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=508 (to be accessed by student).

Bart Testa, “To Film a Gospel . . . and Advent of the Theoretical Stranger,” in *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Patrick Rumble and Bart Testa, 180-97 (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

Tue., 10.23 *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988, Martin Scorsese) (164 mins)
Thu., 10.25 Stern et al., 266-95

Robin Riley, *Film, Faith, and Cultural Conflict: The Case of Martin Scorsese’s The Last Temptation of Christ* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 11-34 (electronic reserve).

Andrew Greeley, “Scorsese’s *Last Temptation* Offers a Profound Religious Challenge,” *New York Times* (August 14, 1988): 1, 22 (to be distributed in class).

Tue., 10.30 *The Passion of the Christ* (2004, Mel Gibson) (127 mins)
Thu., 11.1 All readings for this week are on electronic reserve.

Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, "The Medieval Passion Play Revisited," in *Re-Viewing The Passion*, ed. S. Brent Plate, 3-18 (New York: Palgrave, 2004).

Paula Fredriksen, "Gospel Truths: Hollywood, History, and Christianity," in *On The Passion of the Christ*, 31-47 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Mark Silk, "Almost a Culture War: The Making of *The Passion* Controversy," in *After The Passion is Gone: American Religious Consequences*, ed. J. Shawn Landres and Michael Berenbaum, 23-32 (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004).

Stephen Prince, "Beholding Blood Sacrifice in *The Passion of the Christ*: How Real is Movie Violence?" *Film Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2006): 11-22.

Kent L. Brintnall, "Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and the Politics of Resurrection," *English Language Notes* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 235-40.

Tue., 11.6 *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973, Norman Jewison) (108 mins)
Thu., 11.8 Stern et al., 162-93.

Mark Goodacre, "Do You Think You're What They Say You Are?" *Journal of Religion and Film* 3, no. 2 (October 1999), www.unomaha.edu/jrf (to be accessed by student)

*******FINAL PAPER PROPOSALS DUE by Thursday, 11.8, 10AM.**

Tue., 11.13 *Godspell* (1973, David Greene) (103 mins)
Thu., 11.15 Lloyd Baugh, *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film* (Franklin, WI: Sheed & Ward, 1997), 33-47 (electronic reserve).

W. Barnes Tatum, *Jesus at the Movies: A Guide to the First Hundred Years*, 2nd ed. (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2004), 119-33 (electronic reserve).

Tue., 11.20 NO CLASS – American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting
Thu., 11.26 NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

Tue., 11.27 *Jesus of Montreal* (1989, Denys Arcand) (120 mins)

Thu., 11.29 Stern et al., 300-33

Bart Testa, "Arcand's Double-Twist Allegory: *Jesus of Montreal*," in *Auteur/Provocateur: The Films of Denys Arcand*, ed. André Loiselle and Brian McIlroy, 90-109 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1995) (electronic reserve).

Tue., 12.4 **Closing Thoughts**

*******FINAL PROJECT DUE by Monday, 12.10, 10AM.**

*******FINAL EXAM MEETING, Thursday, 12.13, 11:00AM-1:30PM.**

ASSIGNMENTS

You must submit all assignments by e-mail (kbrintna@uncc.edu). If I am unable to open your attachment, I will notify you as soon as possible. If you do not submit a readable version of the assignment within 24 hours of my notification, it will be graded at my discretion. ***No late papers will be accepted.***

All assignments should be double-spaced, in a 12-point font, with 1-inch margins and no extra spaces between paragraphs.

You should familiarize yourself with, and conform your conduct to, the University's Code of Student Academic Integrity. Plagiarism on any assignment will result in a failing grade for the course.

(1) **UNIT ONE PAPER (25%)**

This paper is due by Thursday, October 4, 10AM. You have three options:

Option a: In a 4-6 page essay, compare different versions of a single story that appears in more than one gospel. The comparison should include not only a detailed account of similarities and differences between the versions but also an argument as to why each gospel writer crafted the respective version. In other words, you will need to relate the details and variations of each version of the story to the overall perspective of the gospel in question.

Option b: In a 4-6 page essay, discuss a story that appears in only one gospel. In analyzing this story, you should explain why it likely appears in only one gospel. This argument should rely both on notions of the gospels' sources as well as on the perspective of the gospel in question. In other words, you will need to provide an argument for how this story furthers the rhetorical goals of the gospel in question and why it would not fit the rhetorical goals of other gospels.

Option c: In at least 4, and no more than 12, pages, craft an original gospel narrative. Your narrative must include at least four of the following scenes: an annunciation/birth-related scene, a miracle story, a teaching episode, an arrest scene, a trial scene, a crucifixion scene, a resurrection scene. This narrative can tell new versions of stories found in canonical or non-canonical gospels or can craft entirely new stories. In addition to the narrative, you must write a 2-3 page essay explaining the rhetorical goals of your gospel and what you think it adds to the existing collection of Jesus stories.

(2) **UNIT TWO PAPER (25%)**

You are required to write a 4-6 page paper on one of the films assigned for class. The specific focus of the paper is up to you, but it should demonstrate an in-depth consideration of the film's details and the materials written about the film assigned for the course. You are encouraged, but not required, to consider materials outside those assigned for the course. The paper should be in conversation with the themes and questions of the course, but you should expand the discussion beyond that had during class. In other words, I want to know what you think about the film after watching it, reading about it and discussing it rather than reading a summary of what was said in class. *The paper on any given film is due before class on the Tuesday following discussion of that film. For example, papers on The King of Kings will be due before class on Tuesday, October 9. Once the due date for writing about a particular film has passed, no papers on that film will be accepted.*

(4) **FINAL PROJECT** (50%)

A 1-2 page proposal for this project is due by Thursday, November 8, 10AM. The final project is due Monday, December 10, 10AM. You have three options:

Option a: You may write an 8-10 page research paper. The specific content of the paper is left largely to your discretion. The paper may deal with a single Jesus film, with the treatment of a specific theme or character in more than one Jesus film, or even with an allegorical Jesus film. You may write about films not covered in the course. (A suggestive list of films is included at the end of the syllabus.) The only restriction on the final paper is that you may not write (solely) about the film that served as the basis of your Unit Two paper. Given that this is a research paper, you should consult a sufficient range of materials on the film(s) you write about beyond those we have read for class. *If you choose to write about a film not viewed in class, please check in with me, so I can make sure and watch the film before grading your paper.*

Option b: You may write a scenario for a Jesus film. This can be in either screenplay or narrative form; it must be at least 8 and no more than 20 pages. It must include at least four scenes from the following list: an annunciation/birth-related scene, a miracle story, a teaching episode, an arrest scene, a trial scene, a crucifixion scene, a resurrection scene. In addition to the screenplay, you must write a 2-3 page essay that explains your rhetorical intentions. *You may not select this option if you wrote a gospel narrative for the Unit One paper.*

Option c: You may submit a Jesus film. This film should include at least three scenes from the following list: an annunciation/birth-related scene, a miracle story, a teaching episode, an arrest scene, a trial scene, a crucifixion scene, a resurrection scene. In addition to the film, you must write a 2-3 page essay that explains your rhetorical intentions. *You may not select this option if you wrote a gospel narrative for the Unit One paper.* You must submit your film in a format that I can view.

GRADING CRITERIA

In grading your assignments, I will use the following criteria (listed in order of importance):

(1) Does the paper demonstrate an understanding of the questions, issues and approaches discussed in class? (A paper can demonstrate an excellent understanding of class material without agreeing with that material.) (2) Does it give close, careful attention to the details of the relevant texts—cinematic and/or written—to support its general observations? (3) Does it have a clear thesis (main point; central, organizing observation)? (4) Does it select the most relevant elements from the written text(s) and/or films to support its thesis? (5) Is the paper free of grammatical, spelling and stylistic errors? (6) Does it provide adequate and accurate citations for its sources? (7) Does it engage a sufficiently wide range of sources?

Your papers will receive two scores—one for content (70%), one for mechanics (30%). These scores will be averaged to establish your grade for the assignment. ***This means that roughly a third of your grade in the course will be based on your attentiveness to grammar, spelling, proofreading and citation form.***

With respect to the content of your writing, you should privilege depth over breadth. ***It is better to address a small point, and do it well, than to try something grand, and do it superficially.*** I am not asking you to be *comprehensive* and *exhaustive*, but I expect you to provide sufficient detail to flesh out generalizations and to show some kind of mastery over the topic(s) on which you choose to write. Most importantly, your writing should be *accurate* and *thoughtful*. ***Remember you will not be in the room when I am reading your paper, so what you put on the page must be a clear, complete and precise statement of your ideas.***

With respect to the mechanics of your writing, it should be free of spelling, grammatical and typographical mistakes. Failure to correct writing mistakes I note in one assignment in subsequent assignments will negatively influence my evaluation of your work. ***I want to spend my time engaging your ideas, not copy-editing your prose. Failure to proofread or attend to grammatical and stylistic details shows a lack of professionalism as a student and a lack of respect for your reader.***

In order to have a common guide for questions of grammar, style and citation, I will rely on either Kate L. Turabian's *Manual for Writers* (7th edition) or the *MLA Style Manual* (7th edition) to evaluate the mechanics of your writing. If you have questions on this front, you need to review and conform your work to one of these style guides.

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

- A** Exceptional work. Careful, accurate, complete, sympathetic interpretation of the text(s). General observations supported by specific detail from the text(s) under analysis. Contains a strong and clear thesis. Contributes something particularly interesting, unique or creative above and beyond class materials and discussion. Clear and well-organized writing free of grammatical, spelling and stylistic errors.
- B** Strong work. Attentive to the most significant details of the text(s). Conversant with the themes, questions and issues of the course. Has an obvious main point. Presents a reasonable interpretation supported by sufficient evidence. Clear and well-organized writing free of serious grammatical, spelling and stylistic errors.
- C** Acceptable work with some problems. Fails to understand the text(s) on some points, or presents an incomplete explanation of them. Fails to show comprehension of the themes, questions and issues of the course. Has an unclear or unsupported thesis. Analysis may proceed at too general a level. Writing unclear in places, lacks a clear structure or has numerous grammatical, spelling and stylistic errors. Fails to show a progressive improvement in analytic precision over previous assignments.
- D** Work with serious problems. Analysis proceeds at a very general level. Analysis gets significant details wrong or ignores issues that are inconsistent with the paper's main point. Discussion fails to engage the course materials. Significant problems with the clarity or organization of the writing. Significant issues with grammar, spelling or style. Repetition of writing errors noted in prior papers.
- F** Unacceptable work.

Given these standards, most students get B-range grades on most of their papers, especially those submitted near the beginning of the course. A handful of students will do A work, and another handful of students will do C work. Only rarely do students submit work that merits a D or F.

If you come to class, participate in discussion, work hard on your assignments and improve over the course of the semester, I will take that into consideration when translating your individual assignment grades into a course grade.

QUESTIONS TO ASK OF THE FILMS

When working on the Unit Two paper and the Final Project, the following questions might be useful:

How does the film depict the basic character of Jesus? How does this characterization balance the elements of the orthodox Christian understanding that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine? How does the film balance the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus? How does the film portray the “supernatural” elements of the gospel story—e.g., God, Satan, demons, angels, miracles, resurrection? How does the film portray the “natural” elements of the gospel story—e.g., Jesus’ physical appearance, his surroundings, his style of movement, his manner of speaking? Does the film combine different gospels? Does it rely on other sources? How do these choices influence the image of Jesus? How does the film depict the Jewish leadership, the Roman leadership and the religious and political context of first-century Palestine? How does the film depict the other characters from the gospel story? Does the film add or ignore characters? If so, how does that shape the story? What, if anything, is the film’s “good news”? How would the film likely be received by a conservative Christian audience, a progressive Christian audience, a Jewish audience, a “secular” audience? How does the film’s depiction of Jesus relate to the historical moment in which it was made? How does the film’s depiction of Jesus relate to current social, political, cultural, ethical issues? How does the film “use” Jesus (or other characters) to address contemporary issues? In what ways is the film a good or bad movie? Is the narrative gripping, plausible, comprehensible? Are the characters sympathetic, believable, well developed, fully drawn? How are elements of film art (lighting, editing, music, acting, special effects) used to convey meaning?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

I consulted many of the following resources in designing this course and preparing my lectures. You may want to consult them in writing your papers.

Bruce Babington & Peter William Evans, *Biblical Epics*
Lloyd Baugh, *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film*
Paul V.M. Flesher & Robert Torrey, *Film & Religion: An Introduction*
Gerald E. Forshey, *American Religious and Biblical Spectaculars*
Peter Fraser, *Images of the Passion: The Sacramental Mode in Film*
Stephenson Humphries-Brooks, *Cinematic Savior*
Journal of Religion and Film (www.unomaha.edu/jrf)
Roy Kinnard & Tim Davis, *Divine Images*
J. Stephen Lang, *The Bible on the Big Screen*
Peter Malone, “Jesus on Our Screens,” in John R. May, ed., *New Image of Religious Films*
Peter Malone, *Movie Christs and Anti-Christs*
Margaret Miles, *Seeing is Believing*
Adele Reinhartz, *Jesus of Hollywood*
Jeffrey Staley & Richard Walsh, *Jesus, the Gospels and the Cinematic Image*
Bryan Stone, *Faith and Film*

W. Barnes Tatum, *Jesus at the Movies*
William R. Telford, "Jesus Christ Movie Star," in Clive Marsh & Gaye Ortiz, ed.,
Exploration in Theology and Film
Richard Walsh, *Reading the Gospels in the Dark*

ADDITIONAL MOVIES

Given the number of Jesus films in existence, their length and their availability, I had to make judicious selections in designing the course. The following is an exemplary list of the films we are not screening in class. You may consider any of them for your final paper.

The Passion of the Christ (1897)
The Horitz Passion Play (1987, Walter Freeman)
The Passion Play of Oberammergau (1898, Henry C. Vincent)
Life of Christ (1899, Alice Guy)
Christ Walking on the Waters (1890, Georges Méliès)
The Life and Passion of Jesus Christ (1905, Ferdinand Zecca)
Life of Christ (1907)
Life and Passion of Christ (1908)
Though Your Sins Be as Scarlet (1911, Charles Kent)
From the Manger to the Cross (1912, Sidney Olcott)
The Three Wise Men (1913, Colin Campbell)
The Last Supper (1914, Lorimer Johnson)
Intolerance: Love's Struggle Though the Ages (1916, D.W. Griffith)
Christus (1917, Giuli Antamoro)
Restitution (1918, Howard Gaye)
Leaves from Satan's Book (1919, Carl Theodor Dreyer)
I.N.R.I. (1923, Robert Weine)
Jesus of Nazareth (1928)
Golgotha (1935, Julien Duvivier)
The Lawton Story (1949, William Beaudine & Harold Daniels)
Westminster Passion Play (1951, Walter Rilla)
I Beheld His Glory (1952, John T. Coyle)
Day of Triumph (1954, Irvine Dichel & John T. Coyle)
He Who Must Die (1957, Jules Dassin)
Power of Resurrection (1958, Howard Schuster)
The Redeemer (1959, Joseph Breen & Fernando Palacios)
King of Kings (1961, Nicholas Ray)
The Greatest Story Ever Told (1965, George Stevens)
Son of Man (1969, Gareth Davies)
The Gospel Road (1973, Robert Elfstrom)
The Messiah (1976, Roberto Rossellini)
The Passover Plot (1976, Michael Campus)
Jesus of Nazareth (1977, Franco Zeffirelli)
Jesus (1979, John Krish & Peter Sykes)
The Day Christ Died (1980, James Cellan Jones)
Cotton Patch Gospel (1988, Michael Meece & Russell Treyz)

The Kiss of Judas (1988, Paulo Benvenuti)
The Perfect Stranger (1994, Jefferson Moore)
The Visual Bible: Matthew (1997, Reghardt van den Bergh)
Jesus (1999, Roger Young)
The Miracle Maker (2000, Derek W. Hayes & Stanislav Sokolov)
The Gospel of John (2003, Phillip Saville)
Judas (2004, Charles Robert Carner)
Son of Man (2006, Mark Dornford-May)
Color of the Cross (2006, Jean-Claude La Marre)
The Nativity Story (2006, Catherine Hardwick)

“INCIDENTAL” JESUS MOVIES

During the 50s and 60s, Hollywood produced a number of Biblical epics that featured Jesus as a tangential character. These films are often considered in relation to the movies in which Jesus is a central character. For example:

Last Day of Pompeii (1935, Ernest Schoedsack)
The Great Commandment (1942, Irving Pichel)
Quo Vadis (1951, Mervyn LeRoy)
The Robe (1953, Henry Koster)
Salome (1953, William Dieterle)
Ben-Hur (1959, William Wyler)
Pontius Pilate (1961, Irving Rapper)
Barabbas (1962, Richard Fleischer)
Life of Brian (1979, Terry Jones)
Dogma (1999, Kevin Smith)
Mary (2005, Abel Ferrara)

ALLEGORICAL JESUS MOVIES

There are scores of films for which different critics have argued that the central character functions as a Christ-figure. For example:

The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951, Robert Wise)
Shane (1953, George Stevens)
Cool Hand Luke (1967, Stuart Rosenberg)
Black Jesus (1968, Vlaerio Zurlini)
Greaser's Palace (1972, Robert Downey Sr.)
The Ruling Class (1972, Peter Medak)
The Holy Mountain (1973, Alejandro Jodorowsky)
Tommy (1975, Ken Russell)
E.T. (1982, Steven Spielberg)
Babette's Feast (1987, Gabriel Axel)
Reservoir Dogs (1992, Quentin Tarantino)
Dead Man Walking (1995, Tim Robbins)
Breaking the Waves (1996, Lars von Trier)
The Book of Life (1998, Hal Hartley)

The Butterfly Effect (2001, Eric Bress)
Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter (2001, Lee Demarbre)
A Dirty Shame (2004, John Waters)
Cinderella Man (2005, Ron Howard)
Constantine (2005, Francis Lawrence)
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005, Andrew Adamson)
Invention of Lying (2009, Ricky Gervais & Matthew Robinson)

********If you think there are good candidates for allegorical Jesus movies to be added to this list, please let me know.********