Kieslowski's Decalogue

Most every film, book, play has something to do with violating one or more of the Ten Commandments. Human daily drama – and comedy as well – has to do with breaching those ancient rules set by someone who knew all too well the weaknesses of humankind. Krzysztof Kieslowski's and Krzysztof Piesiewicz's Decalogue is a free nonreligious interpretation of the Ten Commandments, ten television films dealing with the trials and tribulations of disobeying the ten commandments in everyday life. We will watch the ten films in class and will discuss and write about the complex moral implications of Kieslowski's interpretations. You will have to search on line and in the library for different references: moral, political, religious, philosophical, psychological, artistic and ethical concerning the Decalogue. You will be asked to explore the differences and similarities between each film and the corresponding commandment.

By writing and discussing the different aspects of Kieslowski's films you will enhance your writing skills, learn to research different topic, develop your concepts of art and expand your analytical capacities.

There will be 10 major assignments, each one based on a film and the inspiring commandment. 4-6 of the written assignments will be graded. You will have an idea or a theme you will choose and pursue throughout the semester and will develop as a final essay.

The major graded assignments will be:

A. A topic you will choose at the beginning of the semester. It will be about one of the many aspects of the Decalogue you are willing to pursue in depth.
B. You will be required to write essays about subjects we will discuss in class and about different aspects of the films.
You will research several topics – some of your choice – concerning the Decalogue.

There will be constant exchange of tasks among you and your fellow students and constructive criticism of each paper read in class.

You will be asked to keep a diary of your readings, beliefs, thoughts and impressions regarding the subjects discussed in class and your own research.

You will have to use the writing center for your graded assignments.

**Purposes**

1. Enhance your proficiency in writing, reading and discussing topics in class.
2. Increase your self-confidence in writing and in making speeches in class.
3. Enrich your vocabulary and fluency in writing and in talking.
4. Expose you to different forms of cultures and philosophies.
5. Demonstrate there are several ways to view the world around us and they are all legitimate as long as you can express it in a communicative and understandable manner.
6. Expand your tolerance to different ideas and cultures.
7. Learn to differentiate between an individual way of thinking and fashions, between your own ideas and group's conditioned way of thinking.

**Expectations**

You are expected to show up to every class, and on time. Missing lessons and lateness will interfere with learning and hence affect your grade. Since there is a large emphasis on team-work you will be required not to disrupt your fellow student's creativity and to be considerate.

No ringing cell phones and no eating during class.

All assignment will be presented in print; hence you have to master computer skills. The writing center is there to help you with any difficulties you encounter.

**Grading**

Your contribution in class will determine 20% of your final grade

The work done in groups with other students and with the writing center will determine 15% of your final grade
The presentations you will give in class on your own, and/or with fellow students will determine 15% of your final grade.
The written works you will be required to present throughout the semester will determine 25% of your final grade.
The last assignment in lieu of final exam will determine 25% of your final grade.

**Required text**
The Bedford Handbook

**Schedule**

**Week I**
- **Tuesday January 11**
  - Introduction
- **Thursday January 13**
  - Decalogue one: Faith versus Fait

**Week II**
- **Tuesday January 18**
  - Students' presentations
- **Thursday January 20**
  - Art and freedom

**Week III**
- **Tuesday January 25**
  - Decalogue two
- **Thursday January 27**
  - Belief and the notion of evil

**Week IV**
- **Tuesday February 1**
  - Students' presentations
- **Thursday February 3**
  - Using the library

**Week V**
- **Tuesday February 8**
  - Decalogue three
- **Thursday February 10**
  - Charity and compassion

**Week VI**
- **Tuesday February 15**
  - Students' representations
- **Thursday February 17**
  - The Writing Center

**Week VII**
- **Tuesday February 22**
  - Decalogue four
- **Thursday February 24**
  - Parents and children

**Week VIII**
- **Tuesday March 1**
  - Students' representations
Thursday March 3  Decalogue five
Week IX
Tuesday March 8  Spring Recess
Thursday March 10  Spring Recess
Week X
Tuesday March 15  Students' presentations
Thursday March 17  Death penalty
Week XI
Tuesday March 22  Decalogue six
Thursday March 24  Love and moral
Week XII
Tuesday March 29  Decalogue seven
Thursday March 31  Need versus greed
Week XIII
Tuesday April 5  Students' presentations
Thursday April 7  Other Biblical interpretations
Week XIV
Tuesday April 12  Decalogue eight
Thursday April 14  Ethical Hell
Week XV
Tuesday April 19  Decalogue nine and ten
Thursday April 21  Envy and its toll
Week XVI
Tuesday April 26  Students' presentations
Thursday April 28  Conclusion

Notes
1) You can expect to dedicate 3-6 hours per week outside of class, reading and preparing assignments.
2) Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodation in this class are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Offices as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.
3) Do not hesitate to address me with any kind of problem you have during class or after.

4) This syllabus is subject to change.