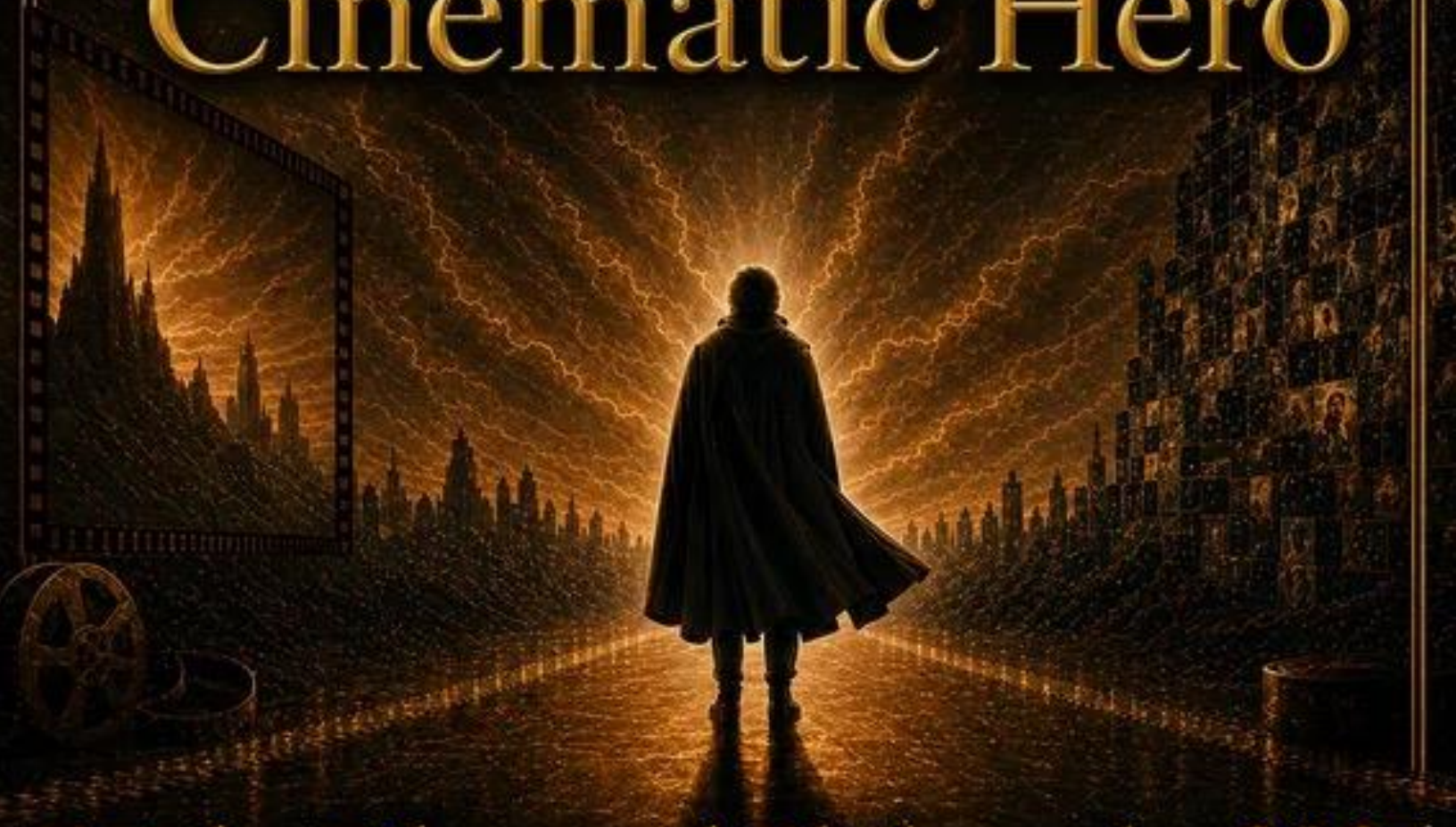


Reconsidering the Cinematic Hero



Faith, Film and Philosophy 2026

October 12-16, 2026 | Gonzaga Faith and Reason Institute

Call for student paper proposals--\$75 award

Student Panel on Wednesday, October 14, 7 pm

Hemmingson Auditorium (HEMM 004), Gonzaga University

Gonzaga Faith & Reason Institute

<https://www.gonzaga.edu/ffp2026>

Interested in ideas as they appear in popular movies and TV series? Want an opportunity to share your thoughts about movie and TV ideas in a public forum and earn some cash in the process?

As part of the Faith, Film, and Philosophy 2026 series, the Gonzaga Faith & Reason Institute is organizing a panel of student presentations on the theme **Reconsidering the Cinematic Hero**. The

presentations should address the topic of heroes and heroism in contemporary film, and make concrete reference to particular films or series. Panelists selected for inclusion will each receive a \$75 award after completing the event.

2026 Panel Theme: “Reconsidering the Cinematic Hero”

Film treatment of the traditional hero is at a crossroads. The harsh naturalism of recent decades has punctured idealizing portrayals of the heroic. Revisionist treatments of the hero have emphasized human limitations, mixed motivations, fallenness, and vicious degradation. At the same time, a relentless postmodern drive to find hints of the heroic at the margins has functioned as an implicit critique of traditional ideas of heroism especially in its masculine form, in effect offering a deconstructive genealogy of the "heroic" that exposes its deep flaws and uneven record in promoting human flourishing. These forces have contributed to what has been called "superhero exhaustion," a phenomenon recognized by critics and film industry leaders alike, though the fatigue is much wider than the superhero genre.

In recent years, however, hints have appeared of a rethinking of the idea of the heroic, such as the quiet and sacrificial family leader of *A Quiet Place* (Krasinski 2018), the stolid anti-Nazi conscientious objector of *A Hidden Life* (Malick 2019), a vulnerable and unironic Superman (Gunn 2025), the physically imposing but humble-hearted Knight of the Seven Kingdoms (Harris & Smith 2026), and the reluctant and self-effacing astronaut of this year's *Project Hail Mary* (Lord & Miller 2026).

Possible questions to address include (but are not limited to):

- What different views of the hero or the heroic are found in recent films and series?
- Is the traditional film hero dead? If so, are there new concepts of the hero that are replacing it?
- Are there particular characteristics of a successful or admirable film hero? Do contemporary films and series exhibit or lack these characteristics?
- What is the current trajectory of superhero films? Is the superhero genre exhausted?
- Does the contemporary film hero tend to reflect the classical idea of virtue and manliness or the Christian idea of service and sacrifice? Are these two concepts or heroism compatible?

submission length: 250-300 word prospectus; papers selected for inclusion in the panel should have a final length of 1800-2000 words / about 12-15 minutes speaking time

submission deadline: Wednesday, September 30, 2026, 12 midnight

submit to: faithandreason@gonzaga.edu

selections announced: Friday, October 2, 2026, 5 pm

panel takes place: Wednesday, October 14, 7 pm, Hemmingson Auditorium

students selected for the panel will receive a \$75 award after completing the event

