



Global Conference on Media, Communication and Film

20 - 22 February 2026

London, United Kingdom

‘Men of Constant Sorrow’: Exploring the Coen Brothers’ America Through a Serious Man and O Brother, Where Art Thou?

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Abstract

Filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen have established themselves as unique voices within the landscape of American cinema. Although the Coen Brothers do not often comment on their own films, choosing instead to let the work speak for itself, recurring themes in their filmography can show a pointed criticism of American culture. While their films span different genres and time periods, we can better understand the Coens' critiques of America by examining their films through the elements of plot, characters, and setting. This paper will compare the films *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and *A Serious Man* to better explore the themes of American culture depicted in the films of the Coen Brothers, and give insight and understanding of their body of work as a whole.

Keywords: Cinema, The Coen Brothers, Auteur, American culture, masculinity, setting