

PHILOSOPHY AND FILM

PHI 4150 – 001

FALL 2011

PROFESSOR: GABRIEL ROCKHILL

Time: MW 3:00-4:15

Location: Tolentine 310A

Office Hours: M 10-11, W 11-12 or by appointment (SAC 171)

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OVERVIEW

This course will explore the relationship between film and philosophy. We will begin by examining the philosophic debates about the historic emergence of film and its links to various conceptions of the nature of human thought. This will lead us to the question of the relationship between film and the unconscious as well as to the problem of the connections between the appearance of film (c. 1895) and the development of psychoanalysis (c. 1900). Against the backdrop of this first major section of the course, we will then examine the links between film and temporality since the “seventh art” is often considered to be the art of time *par excellence*. In particular, we will concentrate on the nature of time, memory, and history as well as on the temporal models used to think the history of film. In the final section of the course, we will situate film in a larger context in order to inquire into the relationship between film and the other arts, film and politics, and film and the new media of the televisual and digital age. Through the course of our investigation, we will have the opportunity to discuss the role of technology in the arts, competing descriptions of human thought, theories of memory, psychoanalysis and its description of the human psyche, modes of representation and revelation proper to film, rival conceptions of temporality, competing historiographical paradigms, narrative structure within and outside of film, theories of ideology, the politics of film, the emergence of new digital technology, and many other topics proper to the study of philosophy and film.

In addition to being presented with some of the major philosophic issues in film and media studies, students are expected to come away from the course with a solid grasp of some of the major movements in film history (including the first “films,” early avant-garde cinema, Surrealism, classic Hollywood cinema, Italian Neo-Realism, the French New Wave, New German Cinema, the Hong Kong “School,” and contemporary independent film). They will also be made familiar with some of the most important film and media theorists of the 20th and early 21st centuries (Bazin, Bellour, Bordwell, Musser, Thompson). Finally, they will be exposed to the ideas of important philosophers whose work can be related, directly or indirectly, to issues in film (Benjamin, Bergson, Deleuze, Freud, Kracauer, Plato, Sartre).

REQUIRED MATERIAL

1. Sigmund Freud. *The Ego and the Id*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989.
2. Essays and articles will be made available to you electronically and placed on reserve in the library. **It is required that you print or photocopy them so that you can bring them to every class.**
3. All of the films are available in Falvey library.

4. Optional book: Lewis Vaughn. *Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation – 15%**. The class will be conducted as a seminar so it will be very important for you to come to class on time having engaged with the required material. This means taking notes on the films and readings, preparing informed questions and comments, and reviewing the material after class discussion. A cursory, passive overview of the material will prove insufficient. In addition, you should make sure that you organize your time wisely since some sessions will require more out-of-class work than others. Finally, it is your responsibility to arrive on time and make sure that your name has been checked on the attendance list (no changes will be made retroactively).
2. **Pop Quizzes – 25%**. There will be 2-3 pop quizzes on the course material at an undisclosed point in time during the semester.
3. **Mid-Term Paper – 25%**. You will be expected to write a 2-page double-spaced mid-term paper that critically responds to and engages with one of the films and/or readings in the first half of the semester. You will need to carefully review the material you choose and consult other relevant sources. The aim of this exercise is to have you succinctly present a core theme or issue and carefully work through its implications via rigorous philosophical argumentation and precise textual analysis. You can choose any of the required material from the first half of the semester.
4. **Final Exam – 35%**. A **comprehensive** final oral exam will be scheduled at the end of the semester. I will provide you with guidelines and study hints in advance of the exam. The best way to ensure a solid performance on your final exam is to take detailed notes on the lectures and readings. With the exception of students with disabilities that require alternative test-taking arrangements or other university approved exceptions, all tests must be taken in class at the day and time listed on the syllabus. No other make-up tests will be administered.

POLICY ON E-MAILS AND COMPUTER USE

1. I will try to respond to all e-mails in a reasonable time frame. As a general rule of thumb, this means that you will get a response within 24 to 48 hours. If you send an email over the weekend or late at night, do not expect to receive a response back immediately, even if you deem it to be an emergency.
2. I will **not grant extensions via e-mail**.
3. In general, I will not provide my lecture notes or other material that you could have obtained in class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain this material.
4. I will not provide information already available in the syllabus via e-mail.
5. **No computers** will be allowed in the classroom unless you obtain explicit consent from me.

POLICY ON GRADE CHANGES, LATE WORK AND ABSENCES

1. I will not change grades based on oral negotiation. If you feel that I have overlooked something in my grading policy, please submit a detailed written explanation of what has been overlooked along with the graded copy of your work.
2. **No late work will be accepted**. Rather than looking behind in class, you should plan on looking ahead and catching up on future assignments any points you may have lost on past assignments. You will only be able to make up for late work in the most extreme cases, and preferably when you have let me know

ahead of time that you have a serious extra-curricular problem.

POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND RESEARCH RESOURCES

Any form of plagiarism is unacceptable. This includes, but is not limited to, referencing or paraphrasing someone else's ideas without proper citation as well as handing in someone else's work as your own. This also includes using any part of an Internet resource without proper citation. Any assignment that is at all plagiarized will automatically receive an F and, depending on the circumstances, may constitute grounds for failing the course. Moreover, every incident will be reported to the university and could constitute grounds for expulsion. For a good list of resources on what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarizing see <http://directory.google.com/Top/Reference/Education/Educators/Plagiarism/Prevention/>

You should be aware of the fact that not all of the information on the Internet is equally accurate. This is why I strongly encourage library research over Internet research and require that you do most of your work in the library. Of course, you should also be wary of the quality of published sources and try to get a feel for what is reliable (based on the author's name, the publisher, journals' reputations, etc.). If you have any questions regarding the quality of Internet or published resources, please contact me.

PROGRAM (subject to change)

SECTION 1: THE BIRTH OF FILM

- Aug. 24** Introduction.
Aug. 29 Presentation on the "Birth" of Film.
Ferdinand Zecca's "History of a Crime (*Histoire d'un crime*)" (1901) (film viewed in class).
Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."
Aug. 31 André Bazin. "Ontology of the Photographic Image" in *What Is Cinema?*
Charles Musser. "Introduction" in *The Emergence of Cinema*.
Jacques Rancière. "Mechanical Arts and the Promotion of the Anonymous" in *The Politics of Aesthetics*.

SECTION 2: FILM AND THOUGHT

- Sept. 5** *Labor Day – No Class*
Sept. 7 Henri Bergson. "The Cinematographical Mechanism of Thought" in *Creative Evolution*.
Sept. 12 Alain Resnais. *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959).
Marcel Proust. *Remembrance of Things Past* (selection).
Sept. 14 Wong Kar-Wai. *In the Mood for Love* (2000).
Optional Film: Wong Kar-Wai. 2046 (2004).

SECTION 3: FILM AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

- Sept. 19** Sigmund Freud. *The Ego and the Id* (first three chapters).
Sept. 21 Luis Buñuel. *Un chien andalou* (1928) (film viewed in class)
Sigmund Freud. *The Ego and the Id* (first three chapters).
Sept. 26 Sigmund Freud. *Civilization and its Discontents* (chapters I, V and VIII).
Luis Buñuel. *L'âge d'or* (1930).
Sept. 28 P.T. Anderson. *Magnolia* (1999).
Midterm Paper Due

SECTION 4: FILM AND TIME

- Oct. 3 Alfred Hitchcock. *Vertigo* (1958).
Oct. 5 Terry Gilliam. *12 Monkeys* (1995).
Oct. 10-14 **Semester Recess**
Oct. 17 Chris Marker. *La jetée* (1962).
Raymond Bellour. "The Book, Back and Forth."

SECTION 5: FILM AND HISTORY

- Oct. 19 Jean-Luc Godard. *Breathless* (1960).
Oct. 24 Gabriel Rockhill, "Modernism as a Misnomer: Godard's Archeology of the Image."
Oct. 26 Class displaced to Marcuse conference (details to follow)
Herbert Marcuse. "Art and Revolution" in *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*.
Nov. 2 Jean-Luc Godard. *Contempt* (1963).

SECTION 6: THE AVANT-GARDE AND CINEMATIC MODERNITY

- Nov. 7 Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History* (selection).
René Clair, *Entr'acte* (1924) and Fernand Léger, *Ballet mécanique* (1924) on the DVD *Anthology of Surreal Cinema – Volume One*
Man Ray, *Le retour à la raison* (1923) (film to be viewed in class).
Nov. 9 Robert Wiene, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1921).
Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (selection).
Nov. 14 André Bazin. "Evolution of Cinematographic Language" in *What Is Cinema?*
Optional Film: Orson Welles. *Citizen Kane* (1941).
Nov. 16 Gilles Deleuze. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (chapter 1).
Optional Film: Vittorio De Sica. *Umberto D* (1952).

SECTION 7: GREEK AND CHRISTIAN SOURCES IN HOLLYWOOD

- Nov. 21 Joseph Campbell. "Prologue: The Monomyth" in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.
George Lucas. *Star Wars Episode IV – A New Hope* (1977).
Please bring the handouts I gave you so that we can discuss the "monomyth."
Nov. 28 The Wachowski Brothers. *The Matrix* (1999).
Plato. *The Republic* (selection from Book VII).
The Bible: "The Gospel According to Matthew" (selection).

SECTION 8: FILM AND THE OTHER ARTS

- Nov. 30 Ovid. *Metamorphoses* (selection).
R.W. Fassbinder. *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant* (1972).
Nov. 23-25 **Thanksgiving Recess**

SECTION 9: POLITICIZING FILM AND NEW MEDIA

- Dec. 5 Jean-Paul Sartre. *What Is Literature?* (selection).
Videos available through WikiLeaks:
<http://www.collateralmurder.com/>
Glenn Greenwald, "Attempts to Prosecute WikiLeaks Endanger Press Freedoms":
http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/glenn_greenwald/2010/12/14/wikileaks/index.html
John Pilger, *The War You Don't See*:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egcTynu6sBk>

Optional Film: WikiRebels Documentary:
<http://www.zcommunications.org/wikirebels-documentary-by-wikileaks-wl>

- Dec. 7** Gus Van Sant. *Elephant* (2003).
Gabriel Rockhill. "The Politics of Aesthetics: Political History and the Hermeneutics of Art" (selection).
- Dec. 12** Sofia Coppola. *Lost in Translation* (2003).
Homay King. *Lost in Translation* (Review).

FINAL EXAM

- Dec. 16** 8:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.