

PHILOSOPHY 360 PHILOSOPHY & FILM

Spring 2020
Mon./Thurs. 2:30-3:50
COR A129
CRN# 23732

Instructor: Nina Belmonte
Office: CLE B326
Office Hours: Tues. 1:30-2:30
Email: belmonte@uvic.ca

Course Description:

Ever walk out of a theatre wishing you could convince everyone to stay and talk about the film? In this course we will explore the appearance of philosophy in film. We will examine a selection of films (old and new, from diverse countries and directors) whose ‘philosophical’ meaning is lies not just in content, but in the creative use of the film medium itself. Each week we will analyze one “Featured” film and read from appropriate texts in philosophy, aesthetics, film theory, and some fiction. In addition, there will be suggested complementary films (the “Double Bill”), which will not be required but which will enhance the week’s discussion and serve as possible subjects of the final paper. We will study how ideas might be represented in light, sound, motion and narrative; we will explore the texts; and we will discuss the particular strengths and limits of film as a philosophical medium.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

In this course we will learn how to ‘read’ a film - attending to editing, sound, narrative, character and *mise en scene* – all critical viewing skills for living in our culture of the screen (large & small). We will familiarize ourselves with key topics in film theory and philosophy, and become able to identify their interplay on the screen. We will endeavor to become better, more careful readers, deeper thinkers and better writers, honing our skills at speaking and writing more precisely and effectively – indispensable skills for all walks of life, from the living room to the boardroom.

Course Material:

All texts and films will be available online and on Reserve in the library. Online course materials will be available via UVic CourseSpaces. To access your customized CourseSpaces page, sign in to UVic and click on Online Tools. You should see CourseSpaces as an option.

Assignments:

Class Participation/Homework:	20%
Two Short Essays (25% each)	50%
Final Film Analysis	<u>30%</u>
	100%

Description of Assignments

Class Participation/Homework

We will begin class every Monday with a discussion of the focus film for the week. To that end, and for the sake of a high-quality course experience, there will be regular homework questions based on the films and readings and due *in class* on Mondays *at the beginning of class*. These questions are intended to help you come to class prepared to engage in discussion; it will not be possible to make them up. *DO NOT EMAIL THE HOMEWORK.*

Two Short Papers (~1000 Words):

There will be two short papers required for this course. These will be critical/exegetical writings on the theory and philosophy we've read, intended to improve skills of critical and concise composition, and to prepare you for your final essay. I will give out paper topics one week before the due date, but you are always free to write on a topic of your own choice, so long as you speak with me *before the due date*. These will be evaluated on your understanding of the material, and the clarity and presentation of your argument.

Final Paper (Film Analysis)

There will be a more substantial (2500 words) paper due at the end of the semester in which you will analyze a single film or filmic representation of a particular philosophical idea. I will provide a list of possible films/topics, but you are free to choose one of your own, as long as you speak with me *in advance*. This work should draw from the course readings and include at least three secondary sources. The final paper may include insights from the shorter, theory papers.

Evaluation/Grades:

Percentages will convert to a letter grade according to the following scheme:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 65-69	D = 50-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 60-64	F = 0-49
A- = 80-84	B- = 70-72		

Policy on Late Assignments

Limited, short-term extensions may be granted on a case by case basis, as long as the request is made *before the day the assignment is due*. Appropriate accommodations will be made for those with an accommodation letter from the Center for Accessible Learning, but please note that such a letter is not "a blanket extension on all work, nor is it a license to submit work after the course has ended."

A Note on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Actions such as plagiarism, multiple submissions, falsifying materials used in academic evaluations, cheating, aiding others to cheat, or unauthorized use of an editor violate University policies on academic integrity and are considered serious offences. You must inform yourself about the university regulations (see [UVic Policy on Academic Integrity](#)).

Classroom Conduct

Since the quality of the learning environment is paramount, every student has the right to learn in an inclusive, cooperative, and effective environment. In this classroom, we will treat each other with respect, even and especially when we disagree. In order to keep our discussions distraction-free, you are expected to turn off your cell phones, mp3 players, and other electronic devices during class. The use of laptops is not necessary in the dynamic and participatory environment of a discussion-based course.

* * * * *

Schedule of Classes

- WEEK ONE: Introductions**
Featured Film: Cousins, “The Story of Film” (Cousins, 2011)
(Intro, and Ch. One)
- January 6 **Philosophy and/as/in Film?**
9 **Beginnings: “A Lie to Tell the Truth”**
Read: Bazin, “The Ontology of the Image”
- WEEK TWO: “Kinema-to-graphy”**
- 13 **Film Grammar**
Read: TBA
- 16 **Evolutions: Digital Image - “Making us feel like we’re there...”**
Read: Manovich, “Digital Cinema and the History of a Moving Image”
- WEEK THREE: Philosophy in Film: The Direct Approach**
Featured Film: “Waking Life” (Linklater, 2001)
Double Bill: “Wittgenstein” (Jarman, 1993)
- 20 **Can Films “Do” Philosophy?**
Read: Carroll, “Movie Made Philosophy”
- 23 **Language Games**
Read: Metz, “Cinema: Language or Language System?”
- WEEK FOUR: Philosophy as Film: *Lights***
Featured Film: “The Seventh Seal,” (Bergman, 1957)
Double Bill: “The Passion of Joan of Arc” (Dreyer, 1928)
- 27 **Inwardness Expressed**
Read: Bálazs, “Visible Man”
- 30 **Inwardness as Truth**
Read: Kierkegaard, “Truth is Subjectivity” and “Dread”
- WEEK FIVE: Philosophy as Film: *Camera***
Featured Film: “The Thin Red Line,” (Malick, 1998)
Double Bill: “The Tree of Life,” (Malick, 2011)
- February 3 **Being in the World**
Read: Silverman, “All Things Shining”
- 6 **Being unto Death**
Read: Heidegger, *Being & Time*, Sects. 52 & 53

WEEK SIX: Philosophy as Film: “Camera”
Featured Film: “Arrival” (Villeneuve, 2016)

- 10** The Story of Your Life**
Read: Chiang, “The Story of Your Life”
****First Essay Due****
- 13 Language and Perception**
Read: Whorf, “Science & Linguistics”

WEEK SEVEN: Intermission

17-20 **Reading Break**

WEEK EIGHT: Philosophy as Film: Action
Featured Film: “The Bourne Identity” (Liman, 2002)
Double Bill: “La Femme Nikita” (Besson, 1990)

- 24 Kinema-to-graphy/Action in Action**
Read: O’Brien, *Cinema of Striking Back*, Introduction
- 27 The Enacted Self**
Read: Velleman, “Self as Narrator”

WEEK NINE: Philosophy as Film: Sound
Featured Film: “Her” (Jonze, 2013)
Double Bill: “2001: A Space Odyssey” (Kubrick, 1968)

- March 2 Voice as Person**
Read: Jollimore, “The Endless Space Between Words”
- 5 Modern Love**
Read: Foster, “Love and Personal Identity”

WEEK TEN: Philosophy as Film: Concept
Featured Film: “Rashomon”, (Kurosawa, 1950)
Double Bill: “Memento” (Nolan, 2000)

- 9** The Time of a Story**
Read: Richie, “Rashomon”
****Second Essay Due****
- 12 The Possibility of Truth**
Read: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil*, Sects. 1-19

WEEK ELEVEN: Philosophy of Film: *Ethics of the Image*
Featured Film: “Triumph of the Will,” (Riefenstahl, 1934)
Double Bill: “Kill Bill,” (Tarrantino, 2004)

16 Beauty & Evil
Read: Devereaux, “Beauty and Evil”

19 TBA

WEEK TWELVE: Philosophy of Film: *Representation & Identity*
Featured Film: “To Sleep With Anger” (Burnett, 1990)
Double Bill: “The Reel Injun” (Diamond, 2010)

23 Cinema of Symbolic Knowledge
Read: Naremore, *Charles Burnett*, Chp. 5

26 Race and Representation
Read: Mills, “Non-Cartesian Sums”

WEEK THIRTEEN: Philosophy of Film: *Affect*
Featured Film: “Rear Window,” (Hitchcock, 1954)
Double Bill: “Vertigo,” (Hitchcock, 1958)

30 Visual Pleasure – The Need to See
Read: Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

April 2 Argument by Affect
Read: Fawell, “Fashion Dreams”

****17 ***Final Paper Due*****