

Philosophy of Film, Spring 2018

Professor: Dr. Marina Folescu

Email: folescum@missouri.edu

Class time: Tue & Thu, 12:30 pm to 1:45 pm

Lab time: Mon 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Office Hours: by appointment

Office: Strickland Hall 434

Course Description

This course is aptly named “philosophy *of* film”, and not “philosophy *in* film”. We will not investigate what philosophical themes a film might be addressing. Instead, we will consider film as an art form and discuss philosophical issues related to aesthetics and philosophy of art. We will be focusing on some philosophical issues that films raise regarding their nature as artifacts and our specific ways of interacting with them. In this course we will present and discuss a framework for examining these issues. In particular, by adopting the methodology of analytic philosophy, we will examine whether film is an art form, discuss what exactly is cinema, analyze the moving image (the shot, cinematic sequencing and narration, as well as the production of affect and emotions), discuss the nature of documentaries, and examine how to evaluate films, as art objects.

Course Objectives

We will be studying primary texts written by major figures of western philosophy of film, who helped shape not only the development of philosophy of art and aesthetics, but also influenced some other academic disciplines, such as psychology and cognitive science. By completing this course, students will have been exposed to and have gained an understanding of some major issues regarding the nature of art and film, and the relation between artistic and visual representation. By completing the written assignments, students will have enhanced their reasoning skills, which include, among other things, an ability to closely read a difficult text, and to analyze and reconstruct the arguments advanced in such a text.

Throughout the semester we will also be watching several films in their entirety. These mandatory screenings will occur on Mondays, in the time slot designated as “Lab”. An attendance sheet will be passed around and attendance to these screenings will count toward the final grade.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

Assignments and Grading

Readings / Attendance / Participation: 25% (of total grade)

10% for class attendance: you are expected to come prepared to discuss the readings and the films we watch. This portion of the grade is awarded for *quality*, not quantity of attendance. Quality participation involves advancing the discussion with relevant contributions.

15% for written responses: each Mon, before the first class of the week (on Tue), students will submit, via Canvas, two questions about the readings to be discussed in class that week.

Students with legitimate excuses (as determined by me) may be given an option of making up for up to three absences by turning in some additional work.

The assigned readings must be completed **prior** to class for the day they are assigned.

Three essays: Each counts 25% towards the final grade. The first two exams are due at the beginning of class, on the following dates:

2/20 – first essay

3/22 – second essay

5/8 – Final essay. The final exam must be submitted online, via Canvas by 2:30pm.

Note: the date and time of the final examination are set by the Registrar's office according to the days and times of the class meeting; I have no say in exam scheduling. Please do not ask to take the exam early; if you know now that you will have commitments that make you unable to submit the final paper on Canvas, please do not enroll in this class.

No extra-credit work will be given, so make your regular work count.

Late assignments will be penalized by 1/3 of a grade per day.

All assignments are going to be turned in electronically, via Canvas. If you are not familiar with Canvas, please contact the IT Department for help. No assignment will be accepted either by e-mail or in person.

Course Policies

Canvas / E-mail: I expect all students to check their university e-mail accounts. Unless an email from a student requires immediate action, it is my policy to reply to emails within one business day. I also expect all students to check Canvas regularly for announcements and other information. The assignments will be both distributed and submitted via Canvas.

Grading: I use this scale for converting percentages to letter grades: 90-100 is the A range, 80-89 is the B range, 70-79 is the C range, etc., with pluses and minuses assigned proportionally (for example, 87-89 is a B+, 83-86 is a B, and 80-82 is a B-).

The grades are assigned in the following manner: A – for excellent work; B – for good work; C – for fair work; D – for work that is sub-par; F – for work that does not meet the minimum requirements.

Simply meeting the minimum requirements for this course does not entitle a student to a grade of A or B.

Any student who receives a grade of F on any assignment will automatically fail this class.

Electronics Policy: Students are not allowed to use any electronic devices in the classroom (laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc.) Exceptions will be made only if a student has a note from the disability office on campus OR a student makes a good (independent of disabilities) case for laptop use. The use of all other electronic devices is strictly prohibited, even in exceptional cases. I would prefer not to have to enforce this rule; but experience teaches me that I may need to. Any unauthorized use of electronic devices will be penalized: students will have their grade reduced by 3%.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic dishonesty, being unfair to other students, and disrespectful to me, will not be tolerated. I strictly follow the university's policies on academic integrity. Each student is expected to know the University policy on plagiarism as it is stated on <http://osrr.missouri.edu/guidelines/index.html>. Students caught plagiarizing on a paper, exam, or any assignment, will be reported to the Office of the Provost for investigation. Any assignment that contains plagiarized material (as confirmed via Option A or B) will receive **a grade of zero, which brings along a grade of F for the class. Beware:** under university regulations, paraphrasing from a text, without using proper citation practices, counts as plagiarism. Properly citing the sources used is an easy way of avoiding this problem. If you are unsure about how to cite sources in your written assignments, please see me during OH.

Academic Accommodations: If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible. If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please register with the Disability Center (<http://disabilitycenter.missouri.edu>), S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.

Flexibility: Strictly adhering to a particular guideline is not always the most sensible course of action. So, I reserve the right to alter the course plan, reading schedule, grading policies, etc. throughout the semester, when the need arises.

Recommended Books

- Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi (Eds.). *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 2006). ISBN: 1405120274 [PFMP].
- Noël Carroll. *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. ISBN: 9781405120258 [PMP].

Assigned Readings

- All assigned readings are mandatory. They will be posted on Canvas and made available to you at least one week in advance. You should print the articles posted on Canvas and bring them to class, since you are not allowed to use laptops, tablets, and smartphones during class time.

Course Topics

The following schedule of topics covers only the first three sections of this class (and may be changed if necessary). You will be given such a schedule of topics for each section of the class (approximately every two weeks). You will be notified of any changes, both in person and online, via Canvas.

I. Film as Art

Week 1	1/16	Introduction What are some of the most important themes in philosophy of film? How to watch a movie
	1/18	Silent Art Film: Rudolf Arnheim, “The Artistry of Silent Film” (from <i>Film as Art</i> , available on Canvas)
Week 2	1/22	Lab: “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari” (Wiene, 1920) (running time: 71 min)
	1/23	Discussion of the film: it’s all about the visuals The Case Against Film Art: Roger Scruton, “Photography and Representation” [PFMP], available on Canvas
	1/25	The Case Against Film Art: Roger Scruton, “Photography and Representation” [PFMP], available on Canvas (ctd.)
Week 3	1/29	Lab: “Reservoir Dogs” (Tarantino, 1992) (running time: 99 min)
	1/30	The Case For Film Art Eisentein, “Through Theater to Cinema”
	2/1	Discussion of the film and further remarks on the cinematic experience, as different from other art forms
Week 4	2/5	Lab: “The Grandmaster” (Won Kar-Wai, 2002) (running time: 130 min)
	2/6	Eisenstein, “A Dialectic Approach to Film Form” [on Canvas] and Discussion of the film
	2/8	Dominic McIver Lopes, “The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency” [PFMP; link on Canvas]

II. Medium Specificity

Week 5	2/12	Lab: “Three Colors: Blue” (Kieslowski, 1993) (running time: 98 min)
	2/13	The Case for Medium Specificity What is Medium Specificity? Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Clement Greenberg (no readings)
	2/15	Hugo Münsterberg, Chapter 9 of <i>THE PHOTOPLAY</i> [on Canvas]
Week 6	2/19	Lab: No Screening
	2/20	NO CLASS: FIRST ESSAY DUE
	2/22	NO CLASS
Week 7	2/26	Lab: “Rashomon” (Kurosawa, 1950) (running time: 88 min)
	2/27	The Case Against Medium Specificity André Bazin, “Cinematic Realism” [Canvas]
	3/1	Noël Carroll, “Forget the Medium!”, pp. 1-9 in <i>Engaging the Moving Image</i> [link on Canvas]

III. What is Cinema?

Week 8	3/5	Lab: “Russian Ark” (Aleksandr Sokurov, 2002) (running time: 99 min)
	3/6	Noël Carroll, “Defining the Moving Image” [PFMP; on Canvas]
	3/8	Noël Carroll, “Defining the Moving Image” (ctd.) [PFMP; on Canvas]
Week 9	3/12	Lab: “La Jetée” (Chris Marker, 1962) (running time: 28 min)
	3/13	Arthur Danto, “Moving Pictures” [PFMP; on Canvas]
	3/15	Susanne K. Langer, “A Note on the Film” [PFMP; on Canvas]
Week 10	3/19	Lab: “The 400 Blows” (Truffaut, 1959) (running time: 99 min)
	3/20	Discussion of the film and Andrew Kania, “The Illusion of Realism in Film” [on Canvas]
	3/22	NO CLASS: SECOND ESSAY DUE

SPRING RECESS: 3/24 – 4/1

IV. Documentary and Fiction Film

Week 11	4/2	Lab: "Happy People: A Year in the Taiga" (Herzog, 2010) (running time: 90 min)
	4/3	Gregory Currie: "Visible Traces: Documentary and the Contents of Photographs" [PMPF, on Canvas]
	4/5	Noël Carroll: "Fiction, Non-Fiction and the Film of Presumptive Assertion: A Conceptual Analysis [PMPF, on Canvas]

Week 12	4/9	Lab: "Exit Through the Gift Shop: A Banksy Film" (Banksy, 2010) (running time: 87 min)
	4/10	Carl Plantinga: "What a Documentary Is, After All"
	4/12	Discussion of films and concluding remarks on this topic: can animated films be documentaries?

V. Must Films Have Narrators?

Week 13	4/16	Lab: "Sunset Boulevard" (Wilder, 1950) (running time: 110min.)
	4/17	The Case for Film Narrators George Wilson "Le Grand Imagier Steps Out"
	4/19	The Case Against Film Narrators Andrew Kania, "Against the Ubiquity of Fictional Narrators" [on Canvas]

VI. Film, Emotion, and Society

Week 14	4/23	Lab: "Dancer in the Dark" (Von Trier, 2000) (running time: 140 min)
	4/24	Colin Radford and Michael Weston: "How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?" [on Canvas]
	4/25	Kendall Walton: "Fearing Fictions" [on Canvas]
Week 15	4/30	Lab: "Triumph of the Will" (Riefenstahl, 110 min)
	5/1	Devereaux, "Beauty and Evil: the case of Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will"
	5/3	Concluding remarks