

PH159: PHILOSOPHY of FILM

MWF 11:15-12:05 CAS 211

Aaron Garrett -- garrett@bu.edu

OH TH 1:30-4:30 @ STH 641, or by appointment

Leticia Castillo Brache— lcbrache@bu.edu

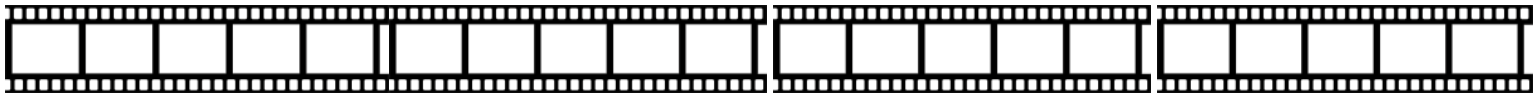
Sections **A2** M 4:40-5:30; **A3** T 9:30-10:20; **OH** M 2-4 @STH 502

Jordan Kokot — jdkokot@bu.edu

Sections **A5** TH 2-2:50; **A4** F 2:30-3:20; **OH** F 12-2 @STH 508

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this class we will investigate philosophical issues connected with film including: Is there anything that is distinctive about film as a medium? What distinguishes film genres? Is there a clear distinction between documentary films and fiction films? Why do we watch horror films and tragedies if they involve feeling unpleasant emotions? How does film narration function? On what basis do we evaluate films? Are some films objectively better than others? Is moral art better art?



REQUIREMENTS:

A **midterm (20%)** and a **final exam (30%)**. **Two papers (3-5 pp.)**, each counting for **20%** of the grade. Papers will be downgraded 4 points for every day they are late. There will be no explicit grade for participation, but it will be taken into account if students are on the cusp of a better grade.

The remaining **10%** of the grade will be based on journal entries about the films we will view. Journal entries will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. There will be 15 total. Each entry counts for 2/3 of a point. **Journal entries are due by 10 AM on the day for which the film is due.**

The **grading scale**: 94 or above = **A**; below 94 to 90 or above = **A-**; below 90 to 87 or above = **B+**; below 87 to 84 or above = **B**; below 84 to 80 or above = **B-**, etc.

Each student is allowed three unexcused absences combined from **both** lecture and section. Leaving before the end of class, or arriving late, counts as an absence. Beyond two absences, the final course grade will be dropped 2 points per absence.

Plagiarism, using the works of others in your work without citation, will not be tolerated. Students whose papers appear to have been plagiarized will be asked to submit the paper for evaluation. If you have any questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, please consult:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>

REQUIRED BOOK:

Gracyk, *The Philosophy of Art* (Polity) [**PA**]

Links to the other readings will be available on the course website.

Films are in bold and italic and should be watched **for the date listed**. A list of all the films to be watched will be on the course website. Most of the films will be available on **Kanopy [K]**— a service that BU subscribes to and that you have access to as a student. Films not accessible on **Kanopy** will be accessible via **Amazon [F]** or **Vimeo [V]**. In addition, we will have an optional screening of *The Love Witch* through CIMS.

SCHEDULE

I. Introduction

9.3 F Introductory Lecture

II. Elements of Film

9.6-9.10 M Labor Day W The Beginnings of Film; F Shots, Montage, and Staging

For 9.8: *Sherlock Jr.* (Keaton) [K]

For 9.10: *La Jetée* (Marker) [K]

III. The Power of Movies

9.13-9.17 M Acting, Mise-en-scène, and Sound; W Langer, "A Note on Film"; Deren, "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality"; F Carroll, "The Power of Movies"

For 9.15: *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Deren) [K]

For 9.17: *Seven Samurai* (Kurosawa) [K]

IV. The Philosophy of Art

9.20-9.24 M "Art as Expression" [PA Chapter 2]; W "Defining Art" [PA Chapter 6]; F "Defining Art" [PA Chapter 6] **FIRST PAPER PROMPT**

For 9.22 *The Love Witch* (Biller) [K]

(Optional screening on 9.20 COM B05 6:30pm-9pm)

V. Representation and Photography

9.27-10.1 T Scruton, "Photography and Representation"; W Scruton, "Photography and Representation" F "Walton, "Transparency and the Photographic Image"

For 9.29 *Outer Space* (Tscherkassky) [V]

10.4-10.8 M "Walton, "Transparency and the Photographic Image" **FIRST PAPER DUE BEFORE CLASS**; W Lopes, "The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency"; F Abell, "Cinema as a Representational Art (extract)

For 10.8: *Little Dieter Wants to Fly* (Herzog) [K]

VI. Documentary

10.12 – 10.15 T Documentary Lecture; W Currie, "Visible Traces" §§1-5, 7, 8 (the first five paragraphs), 9-12; F Plantinga, "What a Documentary is, after all".

For 10.13: *Cameraperson* (Johnson) [K]

10.18-10.22 M Friend, "Falsehoods in Film"; W Midterm Discussion; F **MIDTERM EXAM**

VII. Narrative

10.25-10.29 M What is cinematic narration? (Reading TBA); **W** Carroll and Bordwell on narrative (extracts); **F** Aristotle, *Poetics* (extract).

For 10.27 *Holy Motors* (Carax) [K]

VIII. Adaptation and Genre

11.1-11.5 M Hume, "Of Tragedy"; **W** Adaptation Lecture; **F** Adapting Chekhov; Chekhov, "Three Stories" (Guest Lecturer).

For 11.5 *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (Ceylan) [K]

IX. Genre: Tragedy, Melodrama, and Horror

11.8-11.12 M Carroll, "Film, Emotion, Genre"; **W** Gaut, "The Paradox of Horror"; **F** Freeland, "Horror and Art Dread"

For 11.10 *A Tale of Two Sisters* (Jee-woon) [K]

X. Empathy and Identification

11.15-11.19 M Plantinga, "The Scene of Empathy"; **W** Coplan, "Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions"; **F** Chion, *Audio-Vision*, Chapter 1

For 11.15 *The Farewell* (Wang) [K]

XI. Sound and Taste

11.22-11.26 M Chion, *Audio-Vision*, Chapter 2 **SECOND PAPER DUE BEFORE CLASS**

THANKSGIVING

11.29-12.3 M Cohen, "Music as a Source of Emotion in Film"; **W** Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste"; **F** "Of the Standard of Taste"

For 11.29 *Lovers Rock* (McQueen) [A]

For 12.1 *In the Mood for Love* (Kar-wai) [K]

XII. Moralism and Immoralism

12.6-12.10 - M Eaton, "Robust Immoralism"; **W** Carroll "Rough Heroes"; **F** Concluding Lecture

For 12.6 *A New Leaf* (May) [A]

FINAL EXAM 12.16 12-2 (tentative)

FILM & JOURNAL DUE DATES.

9.8: *Sherlock Jr.* (Keaton) [K]

9.10: *La Jetée* (Marker) [K]

9.15: *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Deren) [K]

9.17: *Seven Samurai* (Kurosawa) [K]

9.20 *The Love Witch* screening COM B05 6:30pm-9pm

9.22 *The Love Witch* (Billier) [K]

9.29 *Outer Space* (Tscherkassky) [V]

10.8: *Little Dieter Wants to Fly* (Herzog) [K]

10.13: *Cameraperson* (Johnson) [K]

10.27 *Holy Motors* (Carax) [K]

11.5 *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (Ceylan) [K]

11.10 *A Tale of Two Sisters* (Jee-woon) [K]

11.15 *The Farewell* (Wang) [K]

11.29 *Lovers Rock* (McQueen) [A]

12.1 *In the Mood for Love* (Kar-wai) [K]

12.6 *A New Leaf* (May) [A]

MAJOR COURSEWORK DUE DATES

10.4 FIRST PAPER

10.22 MIDTERM EXAM

11.22 SECOND PAPER

12.16 FINAL EXAM 12-2 (tentative)