

PH159: PHILOSOPHY of FILM

MWF 11:15-12:05 CAS 211

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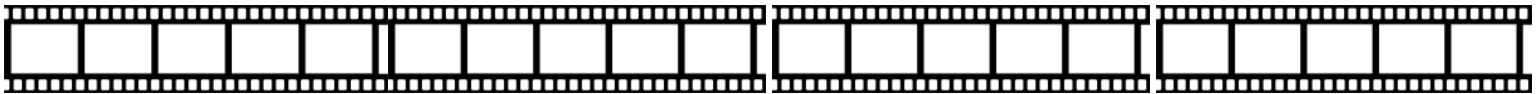
OH F 2-4 @ STH 641, or by appointment

Sections **A2** M 2:30-3:20; **A5** W 11:15-12:05; **OH** TBD @STH 508

Sections **A3** TH 2-2:50; **A4** T 3:35-4:25; **OH** TBD @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 13 total. **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.

Attendance in both lecture and discussion section is required. 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 or on the class **Blackboard** page [**B**]. 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

1.20 TH Introductory Lecture

II. Elements of Film

1.25-1.27 T The Beginnings of Film; TH Shots, Montage, and Staging

For 1.25: *Sherlock Jr.* (Keaton) [K]

For 1.27: *La Jetée* (Marker) [K]

III. The Power of Movies

2.1-2.3 T Acting, Mise-en-scène, and Sound; TH Langer, "A Note on Film"; Carroll, "The Power of Movies"

For 2.3: *Vertigo* (Hitchcock) [K]

IV. The Philosophy of Art

2.8-2.10 T "Art as Expression" [PA Chapter 2]; TH "Defining Art" [PA Chapter 6] **FIRST PAPER ASSIGNED**

For 2.10 *The Love Witch* (Biller) [K]

V. Representation and Photography

2.15-2.17 T Scruton, "Photography and Representation"; TH Walton, "Transparency and the Photographic Image"

For 2.17 *Hairat* (Beshir) [V]

2.22-2.24 T **FIRST PAPER DUE BEFORE CLASS**; TH Lopes, "The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency"

No class 2.22

For 2.24: *Cameraperson* (Johnson) [K]

VI. Documentary

3.1 – 3.3 T Abell, "Cinema as a Representational Art (extract); Currie, "Visible Traces" §§1-5, 7, 8 (the first five paragraphs)
TH **MIDTERM**

For 3.3: *The Thin Blue Line* (Morris) [B]

BREAK 3.8-3.10

3.15-3.17 T 9-12; Plantinga, "What a Documentary is, after all"; TH **MIDTERM**

VII. Narrative

3.22-3.24 T Carroll and Bordwell on narrative (extracts); **TH** Aristotle, *Poetics* (extract).

For 3.22 *The Day he Arrives* (Hong) [K]

VIII. Adaptation and Genre

3.29-3.31 T Hume, "Of Tragedy"; **TH** Chekhov, Stories.

For 3.31 *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (Ceylan) [K]

IX. Genre: Tragedy, Melodrama, and Horror

4.5-4.7 T Carroll, "Film, Emotion, Genre"; **TH** Gaut, "The Paradox of Horror"; Freeland, "Horror and Art Dread"

For 4.7 *Suspria* (Argento) [K]

X. Empathy and Identification

4.12-4.14 T Plantinga, "The Scene of Empathy"; Coplan, "Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions"; **TH** Chion, *Audio-Vision*, ch. 1-2

For 4.12 *The Farewell* (Wang) [K]

XI. Sound and Taste

4.19-4.21 T Cohen, "Music as a Source of Emotion in Film"; **TH** *Lover's Rock* in class **SECOND PAPER DUE BEFORE CLASS**

For 4.21 *Lover's Rock* (McQueen) [A]

4.26-4.28 T Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste"; **TH** Eaton, "Rough Heroes" and Carroll "Robust Immoralism"

For 4.26 *In the Mood for Love* (Kar-wai) [K]

XII. Moralism and Immoralism

5.3 Concluding Lecture

FINAL EXAM TBA

FILM & JOURNAL DUE DATES.

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

1.27: *La Jetée* (Marker) [K]

2.3: *Vertigo* (Deren) [K]

2.10 *The Love Witch* (Biller) [K]

2.17 *Hairat* (Tscherkassky) [V]

2.24: *Cameraperson* (Johnson) [K]

3.3 *The Thin Blue Line* (Morris) [B]

3.22 *The Day He Arrives* (Hong) [K]

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

4.7 *Suspiria* (Argento) [K]

4.12 *The Farewell* (Wang) [K]

4.21 *Lovers Rock* (McQueen) [A]

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

MAJOR COURSEWORK DUE DATES

2.22 FIRST PAPER

3.3 MIDTERM EXAM

4.21 SECOND PAPER

TBA FINAL EXAM