

PHI 4884: Philosophy of Film
Spring 2017 Philosophy
Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Scarbrough
Wednesdays 6:25-9:05pm Graham Center 287A
Office Hours: T/Th 2:15-3:15, W: 5-6 pm
Email: escarbro@fiu.edu
Web Site: <http://myweb.fiu.edu/escarbro>

Course Description:

This class is an introduction to the philosophy of film. The course is designed to provide you with a broad overview of **some** of the topics in the philosophy of film. This is not a film theory course, nor is it a film history or film studies course. Topics discussed include:

- What is film (ontological questions)?
- What is documentary film?
- Do films have narrators?
- Who is the author of a film?
- How can we respond emotionally to things in film we know are fake? (Paradox of fiction)
- Why do we take pleasure in disgusting images? (Horror / slasher films)
- How should we judge a film made by a moral monster? A film that glorifies Nazis? A film that advocates for immoral actions?
- Can porn films be artworks?
- Can films make arguments?
- Can a film be philosophy?

You will be required to read one article and watch one movie per week. Although there are no prerequisites for this course, previous coursework in philosophy will be extremely beneficial. The articles assigned are not designed for introductory students.

Important info at a glance:

Required Text:

Carroll, Noel and Choi, Jinhee, ed. *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).¹

All other text will be placed in a shared folder (PDF).

You are also required to watch one movie a week. These movies can either be found on Kanopy (a streaming service through our library), or through our course reserves (3-hour lending period through the library). I expect you to watch the movie even if you have seen it before. Good movies, like good books, reward multiple viewings.

Assignments:

- Participation 15%
- Weekly Journal 15%
- Discussion leader 5%
- Quizzes 20% (2 quizzes)
- Papers 45% (3 short papers)

¹ This book is required and you must bring it to class.

Course Objectives:

It is the objective of this course to acquaint the student with aesthetic theory both as a way of enriching the student's exchange with art as well as the broader culture. Your skills will be developed and tested in three ways:

- (1) **Reading Comprehension:** involves carefully, closely reading all the assigned texts;
- (2) **Philosophical Writing:** involves completing a variety of written assignments designed to teach you how good philosophical writing differs from other familiar types of writing;
- (3) **Class Discussion:** involves actively, respectfully engaging with your peers and instructor about philosophically complex, abstract theories that have implications for how we should make choices and live our lives.

Success in this course requires you to prepare yourself for class discussion by reading critically, to defend your own views with reasons and arguments, and to give a good faith effort to develop your philosophical skills, both verbally and in writing.

Learning Objective: It is the aim of this class to equip the student with the tools necessary to make informed and intelligent aesthetic judgments about film.

Student Conduct & Academic Integrity:

I take academic honesty extremely seriously and will pursue sanctions against any student(s) caught engaging in any form of academic misconduct, in accordance with the **FIU's Code of Academic Integrity**, as well as the definition of plagiarism, readable in the Student handbook. Both the Code and the Handbook are available here:

https://ugrad.fiu.edu/academic_misconduct/Pages/Home.aspx

Ignorance of policies regarding academic misconduct does not constitute a legitimate excuse for inappropriate behavior.

Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities should contact Disabled Resource Center (Modesto Maidique Campus) at 305-348-3532 or visit their website to request accommodations at <http://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/student-success/disability-resource-center/request-accommodations/index.php> . Please present the letter of accommodation to me so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for the class.

Grading:

Late work will be penalized at 10% a day (or part of a day) unless you have made prior arrangements with me. You may not make up quizzes, in-class presentation or participation grades without prior consent of instructor or documented illness/emergency. In cases of *documented* illness or emergency, contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

Attendance and Participation 15%: You are required to attend class sessions. Attendance includes being awake, alert, and prepared. If you miss more than 3 unexcused classes your final grade will be penalized. Participation is vital to your success in this class. You are being graded on the quality of your contribution to the class.

Weekly Journal Questions and Reflections 15%: Attendance includes being prepared with questions. You will be required to write in your on-line journal (on blackboard). Each journal entry should have two questions about the text and a brief (1 paragraph) reflection on how the movie assigned does or does not relate to the author's argument. Journal entries are turned in on blackboard by the start of class. These are designed to encourage class participation and are designed to help you write your papers.

Leadership Project 5%: Everyone in the class must sign up for a slot to be the discussion leader for a particular reading. As a discussion leader you will have prepared questions about the reading, and must relate the reading to the assigned meeting. You may even want to prepare an activity for the class. Get creative!

Two Quizzes 20% (10% each): There will be two in-class examinations. Each will be worth 10% of your final grade. The first will only cover 1/2 of the class materials. The final quiz will be cumulative and will occur during our examination period.

Three short papers 45% (15% each): You must complete three short papers. Each of these papers should be 3-5 pages in length. The papers should have an introduction (with thesis statement), exegesis, argument, and conclusion. If you are having trouble coming up with a thesis statement, please come see me in office hours. Your first paper must be on one of the movies/readings in the first third of the course and is due by class the fifth week of class. Your second paper must be on one of the movies/readings in the second third of the course and is due by the beginning of class the tenth week of class. Your final paper should be on one of the movies/readings in the final third of the course and is due at the beginning of class the last week of class. All of these papers will be turned in via Turn-It-In, a link to which can be found on your Blackboard page. Plagiarized papers (or parts of paper) will receive a 0 for that assignment.

Grading Scale:

A = 93-100%,

A- = 90-92%,

B+ = 87-89%,

B = 83-86%,

B- = 80-82%,

C+ = 77-79%,

C = 70-76%,

D+ = 67-69%,

D = 63-66%,

D- = 60-62%,

F = 59% and below

Tentative Lesson Plan*

WEEK 1: Introduction (1/11)

Discussion on how to watch a movie.

WEEK 2: What is Film? (1/18)

Readings:

- Introduction Section II (text)
- Carroll “Defining the Moving Image” (text)

Film:

F for Fake (Welles, 1975) - Kanopy

Required You-tube:

Wayang Kulit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfydro4X2t0>

WEEK 3: Documentary (1/25)

Readings:

- Introduction Section III (text)
- Carroll, “Fiction, Non-Fiction, and the Film of Presumptive Assertion: A Conceptual Analysis” (text)

Film:

Thin Blue Line (Morris, 1988) – Course Reserves

You-tube:

Lumiere Bro.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dgLEDdFddk>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nj0vEO4Q6s>

Recommended:

Cave of Forgotten Dreams (Herzog, 2010)
You can look at my list of recommended documentaries on Kanopy

WEEK 4: Film Narrative / Narration (2/1)

Readings:

- Introduction Section IV (text)
- Currie, “Unreliability Refigured: Narrative in Literature and Film” (text)

Film:

Rashomon (Kurosawa, 1950) – Kanopy

* I reserve the right to add to / eliminate / change the readings assigned in this course.

WEEK 5: Cinematic Authorship* (2/8)

Readings:

Livingston, "Cinematic Authorship" (text)

Film:

8 ½ (Fellini, 1963) – Kanopy

***You must have written one of your papers by this class period.**

WEEK 6: Emotions and Film: Playing make-believe (2/15)

Readings: Introduction, Section V (text)

Walton, "Fearing Fictions" (text)

Film:

Spirited Away (Miyazaki, 2001) - Course Reserves

In class: WORLD OF TOMORROW (Hertzfeldt, 2015)

WEEK 7: Emotions and Film: Empathy (2/22)

Reading:

Neill, "Empathy and Film Fiction" (text)

Film:

Au Hasard Balthazar (Bresson, 1966) - Kanopy

WEEK 8: Emotions and Film: Identification* (3/1)

***Midterm Exam**

Reading:

Gaut, "Identification and Emotion in Narrative Film" (text)

Film:

Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee, 1989) – Course Reserves

WEEK 9: Horror (3/8)

Readings:

Carroll, "Why Horror?" (PDF)

Movie:

The Host / Gwoemul (Joon-ho Bong, 2006) – Requested Course Reserves

SPRING BREAK: MARCH 12-17

WEEK 10: Horror (3/22)*

Reading:

Gaut, "The Paradox of Horror" (PDF)

Movie:

A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night (Amirpour, 2014) - Kanopy

*You must have written your second response paper by this class period.

WEEK 11: Film and Ethics (3/29)

Reading:

Article: Devereaux, “Beauty and Evil: The Case of Leni Riefensthal’s *Triumph of the Will*” (text)

Movie:

Triumph of the Will (Riefenstahl, 1935) – Online:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHS2coAzLJ8>, also on Course Reserves

WEEK 12: Film and Ethics: The Case Against Pornography (4/5)

Reading:

Vadas, “A First Look at the Pornography/Civil Rights Ordinance: Could Pornography Be the Subordination of Women?” (text)

Required Youtube:

<http://www.makers.com/moments/pornography-phenomenon>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=neQeea4rmLA>

Suggested Movie:

Don Jon (Gordon-Levitt, 2013)*

*If you would like to write one of your papers on this topic, you must watch the suggested movie. If you do not wish to write your paper on this topic, you need not watch this movie.

WEEK 13: Film and Ethics: The Case for Pornography (4/12)

Article:

Prinz and Brabandt, “Why Do Porn Films Suck?” (PDF)

Movies:

Dirty Diaries (Various Directors, 2009)* - Kanopy

OR Dirty Diaries manifesto

*Your article mentions *Dirty Diaries* (2009) as a successful art porn film. I have chosen two of the films below for your viewing: *Skin* and *Dildoman*. These are **not** required, merely recommended as they are pornographic. If you would prefer not to watch these films, you may read the “Manifesto” instead (found here): <http://www.dirtydiaries.org/manifesto>

WEEK 14: Film and Philosophy (4/19) *

Article: Intro to Part VIII (text)

Article: Hanson, "Minerva in the Movies: Relations Between Philosophy and Film" (text)

Film: *The Seventh Seal* (Bergman, 1957) – *Kanopy*

*Your final response paper must be handed in by this class period.

WEEK 15: FINAL EXAM PERIOD (4/26)

Final exam: 5-7pm Graham Center 287A