

The Philosophy of Film

2010 Summer Term II

T, Th 1:00–4:00

Buchanan A 202

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We all love movies. We love movies because they are entertaining, emotionally moving, and provide escape from mundane life. However, film also provides a playground of philosophical issues which have been largely ignored in traditional philosophy of art survey courses. These issues are worth exploring on their own because they influence how we appreciate and engage with film, one of the most popular and accessible forms of art. This class will be specifically focused on figuring out the philosophical issues and questions regarding the nature of film, as well as their possible solutions. Such issues and questions include: What is a film? What is the relationship of photography to film? Can film have aesthetic value or even be considered art? How can we find it enjoyable to watch films we find to be disturbing or horrifying? What is philosophically interesting about film criticism? Can the moral content of films influence their aesthetic value?

After the course is finished you should have a good understanding of the philosophy of film, which can be used to impress your friends. As such this class will be useful and practical, not only for the increase in philosophical knowledge, but, through guest lectures and debates, this course will offer you insight into the actual practice of philosophy and how it is done.

Required Text (available at the UBC Bookstore)

- 1) Noel Carroll and Jinhee Choi (eds) *The Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*. Blackwell, 2006.
- 2) Other readings available online

Course Requirements

- Participation: 10%
- 3 Pop Quizzes: 30% (10% each)
- Short Paper (3-5 pages): 25%
- Long Paper (6-8 pages): 35%

Quizzes: The point of the quizzes is to test comprehension of the readings and lectures and to make sure you have been keeping up with it all. The content will be a combination of very short answer, fill in the blank, True/False, multiple choice, etc. They will also be unannounced.

Papers: The short paper will be your response to an essay question that I will pass out in advance. Here you will have the opportunity to write philosophy: construct an argument, defend your position, respond to counterexamples, etc. **The long paper can be on a topic of your choosing, but you must email me briefly explaining the topic beforehand.** More details will be given about the papers before they are due in class. Please check the course website for tips on *How to Write a Philosophy Paper*. These tips will come in handy, trust me.

Reading Schedule

(you are to come to class already having read the assigned material for that day)

Week 1

Jul 13th **Course Intro**

- i) Terrence Rafferty “Everybody gets a Cut: DVDs Give Viewers Dozens of Choices - and That’s the Problem” (3)

Jul 15th **Film Theory**

- i) Stephen Prince “Psychoanalytic Film Theory and the Problem of the Missing Spectator” - *online*

Week 2

Jul 20th **Film as Art**

- i) Roger Scruton “Photography and Representation” (1)
- ii) Dominic Mclver Lopes “The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency” (2)

Jul 22 **Film as Art**

- i) Catherine Abell “Cinema as Representational Art” - *online*
- ii) Guest Response: Dominic Mclver Lopes

Week 3

Jul 27th **What is Film?**

- i) Noel Carroll “Defining the Movie Image” (9)
- ii) Susanne K. Langer “A Note on the Film” (5)
- ii) Movie: *The Purple Rose of Cairo*

Jul 29th **Movie Review - Short Paper Due**

- i) Irving Singer Chps 1 & 2 from *Reality Transformed* - *online*

Week 4

Aug 3rd **Film and Emotion**

- i) Noel Carroll “Film, Emotion, Genre” (14)
- ii) Berys Gaut “Identification and Emotion in Narrative Film” (17)

Aug 5th **Film and Emotion**

- i) Kendall Walton “Fearing Fictions” (15)
- ii) Debate: Derek Matravers and Joshua Johnston

Week 5

Aug 10th **Topics in Film Criticism**

- i) Paisley Livingston “Cinematic Authorship” (20)
- ii) Joseph H. Kupfer “Film Criticism and Virtue Theory” (22)

Aug 12th **Film and Music**

- i) Peter Kivy “Music in the Movies: A Philosophical Enquiry” ~ *online*
- ii) Debate: Nola Semczynszyn and Joshua Johnston

Week 6

Aug 17th **Film and Ethics**

- i) Mary Devereaux: “Beauty and Evil: The Case of Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*” (23)
- ii) Movie: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

Aug 19th **Movie Review ~ Long Paper Due**

- i) Thomas E Wartenberg “Arguing Against Utilitarianism” – *online*

Policy on Late or Missed Work: There will be no chance to make-up a quiz if you just decided not to come to class that day. However, if you missed class for some legitimate reason, in accordance to UBC’s policy on academic concession, I will let you retake it. Please refer to Arts Advising for more information: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0>. Papers will have a 5% deduction for each day they are late.

Note: This syllabus may be modified at any time by the instructor.