

PHIL 360
PHILOSOPHY & FILM
Fall 2020
[DRAFT]

Asynchronous
Live (Zoom) Lectures:
Mon/Thurs - 2:30-3:30

Dr. Nina Belmonte
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Virtual Office Hours: TBA

Note: This will be an asynchronous online course – i.e., there will be *no synchronous participation required*. Nevertheless, *short lectures will still be delivered live* (synchronously) via Zoom at what would have been the scheduled class time for students to attend and ask questions. These lectures will be recorded and posted to the course website site and will be part of the course content.

Course Description:

Ever walk out of a theatre wishing you could convince everyone to stay and talk about the film? In this course we will investigate the appearance of philosophy in/as film. Each week we will analyze one philosophically significant film (old and new, from diverse countries and directors), and read from corresponding texts in philosophy, aesthetics, film theory, and fiction. We will explore how ideas are represented in light, color, sound and motion as well as in narrative.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

In this course you will learn how to ‘read’ a film - attending to editing, sound, narrative, character and *mise en scene* – all critical viewing skills for life in our culture of the screen (large & small). You will encounter key topics in film theory and philosophy, and identify their interplay on the screen. You will be challenged to become more attentive viewers and readers, deeper thinkers and better writers, honing your skills at articulating your thoughts, and writing more precisely and effectively – indispensable skills for all walks of life, from the living room to the boardroom.

Course Material:

All texts and links to live sessions will be accessible via the UVic course website. Films will be available online or from UVic library’s digital and streaming sources.

Assignments:

Participation (forums/live sessions):	10%
Weekly Homework Assignments:	20%
Philosophical Film Analysis 2 x 20% each	40%
Final Film Analysis	<u>30%</u>
	100%

Description of Assignments

Each week you will:

Watch the “focus film” of the week.

Read the accompanying two texts on film theory and philosophy.

Reflect on the film by **posting your responses (via text or video) to an online forum**. These questions are intended to help you to think about what you see, to analyze the film as a film.

Inquire further into the film and readings by attending or viewing live sessions.

Review the week’s material and articulate your thoughts in **written or recorded answers to homework questions**.

Participation (in Forums and Live Sessions): (10%)

In order to share ideas, articulate our thoughts, and learn from others, there will be small group online forums whose makeup will change each week. You are encouraged to use these forums to discuss the films and the readings, and to help you complete the homework. Some homework assignments will involve interviews or peer reviews within the groups.

Weekly Homework Assignments: 20%

Each week there will be short written or recorded assignments due. These are designed to help you think about the films and gauge your understanding of the readings.

Philosophical Film Analyses (~1000 Words) (2 at 20% each)

There will be two philosophically oriented film review essays required in this course, providing opportunities to improve your critical viewing and writing skills, and to prepare you for your final essay. For each essay, you will be assigned a working group with which to share ideas and reviews. Essays will be evaluated on: your understanding of and engagement with the course material; integration of ideas and visual details; the quality of your thought; the clarity and presentation of your writing (including spelling, punctuation, and grammar); and (when applicable) the quality of your peer review.

I will post suggested paper topics one week before the due date, but you are free to choose a topic of your own, as long as you *speak with me before the due date*.

Final Film Analysis – (30%)

There will be a more substantial (2500 words) essay due at the end of the semester in which you will analyze a single film not covered in the course. I will provide a list of possible films/topics, but you are free to choose one of your own, as long as you *speak with me at least 48 hours in advance*. This final project should draw from the course readings and include at least three secondary sources (academic papers, books, or film reviews) that were not included in course readings. Final projects will be evaluated on: your understanding of and engagement with the course material and the chosen outside sources; integration of ideas and visual details; the quality of your thought; and the clarity and presentation of your writing (including spelling, punctuation, and grammar).

Evaluation/Grades:

Percentages will convert to a letter grade according to the following scheme:

A+ = 90-100 B+ = 77-79 C+ = 65-69 D = 50-59
A = 85-89 B = 73-76 C = 60-64 F = 0-49
A- = 80-84 B- = 70-72

Policy on Late Assignments

Limited, short-term extensions may be granted on a case by case basis, as long as the request is made *before the day the assignment is due*. Appropriate accommodations will be made for those with an accommodation letter from the Center for Accessible Learning, but please note that such a letter is not “a blanket extension on all work, nor is it a license to submit work after the course has ended.”

A Note on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Actions such as plagiarism, multiple submissions, falsifying materials used in academic evaluations, cheating, aiding others to cheat, or unauthorized use of an editor violate University policies on academic integrity and are considered serious offences.

You must inform yourself about the university regulations (see [UVic Policy on Academic Integrity](#)).

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Schedule of Classes [DRAFT]

Note: **“Inquire”** elements are online class periods: **short lectures delivered live** on Zoom with slides or clips interspersed with question periods. They will be held on **Mon/Thurs at 2:30 pm Pacific Time.**

WEEK ONE: Introductions

Watch: UVic’s “Territorial Acknowledgement” video

September 10 Inquire: Philosophy and/as/in Film?

WEEK TWO: “Kinema-to-graphy”

Watch: “The Story of Film” (Cousins, 2011)
(Intro, and Ch. One)

14 Inquire: “A Lie to Tell the Truth”

Read: Bazin, “The Ontology of the Image”

17 Inquire: “Making us feel like we’re there...”

Read: Manovich, “Digital Cinema and the History of a Moving Image”

WEEK THREE: Philosophy in Film: Can Films “Do” Philosophy?

Watch: “Waking Life” (Linklater, 2001)

21 Inquire: What is the Holy Moment?

Read: Grabiner, “The Holy Moment”

24 Inquire: Can Films “Do” Philosophy?

Read: Carroll, “Movie Made Philosophy”

WEEK FOUR: Philosophy as Film: Lights

Watch: “The Seventh Seal,” (Bergman, 1957)

28 Inquire: What’s in a Closeup?

Read: Bálazs, “Visible Man”

October 1 Inquire: What is the Truth of Our Existence?

Read: Kierkegaard, “Truth is Subjectivity”

WEEK FIVE: Philosophy as Film: Camera

Watch: "The Thin Red Line," (Malick, 1998)

- **5 Inquire: How Can Film Interrogate Existence?**
Read: Silverman, "All Things Shining"
****First Short Essay Due Oct 5th****
- 8 Inquire: Why is Death the Key to What We Are?**
Read: Heidegger, *Being & Time*, Sects. 52 & 53

WEEK SIX: The Grateful Pause

- Thanksgiving (No Class)**
- 15 Question Period/Essay Review**

WEEK SEVEN: Philosophy as Film: "Camera"

Watch: "Arrival" (Villeneuve, 2016)

- 19 Inquire: How Does Film Create Realities?**
Read: Chiang, "The Story of Your Life" (optional)
- 22 Inquire: Can Language Alter Perception?**
Read: Whorf, "Science & Linguistics"

WEEK EIGHT: Philosophy as Film: Action

Watch: "The Bourne Identity" (Liman, 2002)

- 26 Inquire: How is Film "Action in Action"?**
Read: O'Brien, *Cinema of Striking Back*, Introduction
- 29 Inquire: What does my "Self" have to do with my Actions?**
Read: Velleman, "Self as Narrator"

WEEK NINE: Philosophy as Film: Sound

Watch: "Her" (Jonze, 2013)

- November 2 Inquire: Can a Voice be Person?**
Read: Jollimore, "The Endless Space Between Words"
- **5 Inquire: What Does Love Have to do with "Personhood"?**
Read: Foster, "Love and Personal Identity"
****Second Short Essay Due Nov 5th ****

WEEK TEN: Philosophy as Film: Concept

Watch: "Rashomon" (Kurosawa, 1950)

- 9 Reading Break**
- 12 Inquire: Is there Truth, or only Perspective?**
Read: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil*, Sects. 1-19

WEEK ELEVEN: Philosophy of Film: *Affect*

Watch: "Rear Window," (Hitchcock, 1954)

16 Inquire: Why Do We Love to Watch?

Read: Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

19 Inquire: How Do Images Manipulate Us?

Read: Fawell, "Fashion Dreams"

WEEK TWELVE: Philosophy of Film: Representation & Identity

Watch: "To Sleep With Anger" (Burnett, 1990)

23 Inquire: How Does our History Define Who we Are?

Read: Naremore, *Charles Burnett*, Chp. 5

26 Inquire: How is Racial Bias Represented in Film?

Read: Mills, "Non-Cartesian Sums"

WEEK THIRTEEN: Philosophy of Film: Ethics of the Image

Watch: "Triumph of the Will," (Riefenstahl, 1934)

30 Inquire: Can Evil Be Beautiful?

Read: Devereaux, "Beauty and Evil"

December 3 Inquire: Is Screen Violence Entertainment or "Art"?

Read: TBA

****Final Paper Due December 10th****