

Faculty of Arts
Department of Philosophy
Winter 2015

PH8122 – Topics in Philosophy

PHILOSOPHY AND FILM

INSTRUCTOR: Andrew Hunter	OFFICE: 426 JOR
TELEPHONE: (416) 979-5000 ext. 6160	OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 1-3 pm or by appointment
SEMINAR MEETING TIMES: Mondays 3-6 pm	
EMAIL: ahunter@arts.ryerson.ca	
COURSE WEB SITE: https://www.my.ryerson.ca	
Length: One semester	
Type: Seminar (3 hours)	
Location: JOR-440	

“To my way of thinking the creation of film was as if meant for philosophy – meant to reorient everything philosophy has said about reality and its representation, about art and imitation, about greatness and conventionality, about judgment and pleasure, about skepticism and transcendence, about language and expression.” (Stanley Cavell, *Contesting Tears*)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This seminar will examine a selection of topics and problems that have arisen out of recent philosophical thought about film and photography. Questions to be considered will include:

- Are some photographs and films works of art?
- Are they realistic in any special sense of that term?
- Do movies have authors?
- Are there interesting similarities between language and film? Could there be a "language of cinema"?
- How do movies communicate stories? Does it make sense to say that they have narrators?
- To what extent can movies serve as a medium for philosophical thought?

The seminar presupposes no previous familiarity with work in this area.

COURSE FORMAT: Both instructor-led and student-led seminar discussions will comprise the course. Several readings (usually 2-3), focusing on a scheduled topic, will be assigned each week. **Reading the assigned material in preparation for each class is mandatory.** In addition, 10 films will be discussed during the semester. The titles of these films are listed in the Course Schedule below. Students are required to view each film before the weekly meeting. I will provide screenings of each film in the department the week before the relevant seminar. If you are unable to attend this screening, you are nonetheless responsible for viewing the film in advance of the class. Students will also be required **to write 6 weekly brief response pieces** from the readings and films. To focus discussions, the class will attempt to summarize the central theoretical, methodological or practical

implications of each week's readings and films. The goal of each class is to have a fully engaged discussion about the week's topic, with a focus on critical analysis and synthesis of topics and themes of the readings/films.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Noel Carroll (2008). *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures*
- Robert Pippin (2013). *Fatalism in American Film Noir: Some Cinematic Philosophy*
- Selected articles (distributed in class or on Blackboard)

SOME USEFUL WEB RESOURCES:

- <http://sensesofcinema.com/>
- <http://www.film-philosophy.com/index.php/f-p>
- <http://www.screeningthepast.com/>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

Assignment	Weight
<p>Major Essay</p> <p>The term paper should critically engage with topics, texts, and films considered in the seminar. The papers will be evaluated in terms of demonstrated understanding of key course material, quality of argument, and originality of thought. You are not required to consult other sources for your paper, although this is permitted. Term papers should be about 15 typed, double-spaced pages. I will not assign topics, but I am happy to discuss ideas about possible topics.</p>	40%
<p>Presentation</p> <p>Each student will give a short presentation on one week's assigned readings and/or film. Since we will all have read the relevant texts (and seen the film), presentations should avoid being exclusively exegetical. A brief summary of key ideas (in the readings or the film) should lead to a short but stimulating discussion. Presentations should be no more than 30 minutes, including the discussion.</p>	20%
<p>Short response pieces on weekly readings</p> <p>Submitted by email no later than the Sunday before class. Short critical comments (1-2 pages double-spaced) due by email before the class. These should be a short discussion pieces, or critiques, of some aspect in the week's readings and film. Do not summarize. The point is to engage with the course material. You may submit up to 10 of these response pieces, and I will use your best 4 to calculate your grade for this component. Each is graded out of a possible 5 marks.</p>	32%
<p>Participation</p> <p>This grade will be evaluated based on your thoughtful contributions to class discussions. In addition to having read the assigned readings before coming to class, you are also expected to have watched the assigned film. Please bring the readings to class (either in paper or electronic form), and be prepared to discuss the material as well as the film.</p>	8%

CLASS SCHEDULE: WEEKLY TOPIC AND READINGS

WEEK	SEMINAR TOPIC/READINGS	FILM: screened the previous week.	PRESENTATIONS
Week 1 Jan. 12	Introductions		
Week 2 Jan. 19	Film as Art <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noël Carroll, The Philosophy of Motion Pictures (Chapter 1) • Roger Scruton, “Photography and Representation” • Noël Carroll, “Vertigo: The Impossible Love” 	Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)	
Week 3 Jan. 26	What Is Film? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noël Carroll, The Philosophy of Motion Pictures (Chapter 2) • Andre Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” • Kendall Walton, “Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism” 	The Conversation (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)	•
Week 4 Feb. 2	What Is Cinema? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noël Carroll, The Philosophy of Motion Pictures (Chapter 3) • Arthur Danto, “Moving Pictures” • Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) 	Peeping Tom (Michael Powell, 1960)	
Week 5 Feb. 9	Guest Lecture: Prof. Murray Pomerance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Passenger”, from Murray Pomerance, <i>Michelangelo Red and Blue</i> (2011) 	The Passenger (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1975)	
Feb. 16	READING WEEK – NO CLASS		
Week 6 Feb. 23	The Moving Picture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noël Carroll, The Philosophy of Motion Pictures (Chapter 4) • Gregory Currie, Photography, Painting, and Perception” • Kendall Walton, “On Pictures and Photographs” 		•
Week 7 Mar. 2	Movies and Narratives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noël Carroll, The Philosophy of Motion Pictures (Chapter 5) • George Wilson, “Le Grand Imagier Steps Out: The Primitive Basis of Film Narration” • George Wilson, “Max Ophüls’ Letter from and Unknown Woman” 	Letter From an Unknown Woman (Max Ophüls, 1948)	•

Week 8 Mar. 9	<i>Affect and the Moving Image</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noël Carroll, <i>The Philosophy of Motion Pictures</i> (Chapter 6) • Kendall Walton, “Fearing Fictions” • Stanley Cavell, “North By Northwest” 	<i>North By Northwest</i> (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959)	
Week 9 Mar. 16	<i>Film Philosophy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Pippin, <i>Fatalism in American Film Noir</i> (Chapter 1) • Wartenburg, “Film as Philosophy” 	<i>Double Indemnity</i> (Billy Wilder, 1944)	•
Week 10 Mar. 23	<i>Film Philosophy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Pippin, <i>Fatalism in American Film Noir</i> (Chapter 2) 	<i>Out of the Past</i> (Jacques Tourneur, 1947)	•
Week 11 Mar. 30	<i>Film Philosophy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Pippin, <i>Fatalism in American Film Noir</i> (Chapter 3) 	<i>The Lady From Shanghai</i> (Orson Welles, 1947)	•
Week 12 Apr. 6	<i>Film Philosophy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Pippin, <i>Fatalism in American Film Noir</i> (Chapter 4) 	<i>Scarlet Street</i> (Fritz Lang, 1945)	

Paper – Use of Turnitin.com

Students agree that by taking this course required papers MAY be subject to submission for textual similarity review to www.turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Students should familiarize themselves with Ryerson’s plagiarism policy (see below).

The **Ryerson Writing Centre** offers **free** one-on-one tutorials on all aspects of written work (e.g., grammar basics, “writer’s block,” and academic referencing systems) (416-979-5000 xt. 7192, LIB272B, next to the Library entrance). <http://www.ryerson.ca/writingcentre>

Blackboard (<https://my.ryerson.ca>)

All students will need to access a Blackboard account for this course. This will be the primary mode of disseminating all course updates (e.g., scheduling changes, handouts, relevant information). Grades will be posted here only; they will **NOT** be emailed individually.

COURSE POLICIES:

Late submissions: Unless there are legitimate, extenuating circumstances (supported by documentation from a legitimate source, such as a physician), no extensions will be granted. **A 5% penalty will be applied for each day an assignment is late.**

OTHER MATTERS:

- 1. University Policies.** Students are responsible for being aware of university and departmental policies and procedures, especially pertaining to the **Student Code of Academic Conduct**. These policies are published in the Ryerson calendar. Please also consult the **Academic Integrity** website for a comprehensive list of policies, including guidelines about the academic code of conduct and the policy on **plagiarism**
<http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/>
- 2. Special Arrangements.** Students requiring special arrangements or accommodations (e.g., sign language interpreter; Access Centre students), please discuss this with the instructor within the **first week** of the course.