

DC 227-802 **Film Philosophy**

TUESDAY 6:00 PM - 9:15 PM

Location: Levan 305, Lincoln Park Campus

Instructor: James Syrek **Email:** Jsyrek@depaul.edu

Office Hours: Student Center 332, Thurs 4-5:30 PM

Course Description

An introduction to philosophy, using film as a lens through which philosophical ideas are examined. In discussion and writing, students analyze narrative or documentary films (classic or contemporary) on enduring philosophical questions such as: what is truth; what is right; or what is the meaning of life.

Prerequisites

None

Learning Domain Description

DC 227 Film Philosophy is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Philosophical Inquiry domain. Philosophical Inquiry examines the most basic questions of human existence. It considers the fundamental beliefs and convictions that shape what it means to be human, our relationships with others, and the nature of the world itself. Its aim is to develop our critical, imaginative, and analytical abilities, and it enables students to understand various kinds of important intellectual problems from a variety of perspectives and approaches, interpret and assess historical and contemporary texts concerned with these issues, and articulate reasoned judgments about these most basic concerns of human life. Philosophical inquiry is thus committed to the task of reflecting on the ideas and events that make up the cultures, societies, and traditions within which we live and to enhancing our understanding of their significance and complexity. Courses in Philosophical Inquiry support the mission of the Liberal Studies Program by fostering deeper understanding and appreciation of the worlds of meaning and of value and of the enterprise of intellectual inquiry and social dialogue.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems.
- Evaluate philosophical questions, issues and/or problems using informed judgment.
- Analyze and interpret the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems.
- Engage with philosophical topics and figures in their historical context.
- Confront and interpret primary texts from the philosophical tradition.
- Write an analytic essay treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forwards an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion.

How Learning Outcomes Will Be Met

1. Through the assignment of screenings of multiple films, students will be provided common texts from which they **can Address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems.**
2. Through the assignment of multiple response papers, students will **evaluate philosophical questions, issues and/or problems using informed judgment.** In these papers, students will **analyze and interpret the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems.**
3. Through the assignment of readings from the required textbook, students will **engage with philosophical topics and figures in their historical context.**
4. Through the assignment of excerpts from primary texts, students will **confront and interpret primary texts from the philosophical tradition.**

5. Through the assignment of a midterm paper, students will **write an analytic essay treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forwards an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion.**

Writing Expectations:

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of 10 pages of writing for this course. This writing may take the form of response papers, online film responses, the midterm paper and an outline for your final oral presentation. At least one assignment should involve revision, which may count (but only once, not twice) towards the 10-page minimum.

How Writing Expectations Will Be Met

1. Students will write **seven, one-page response papers** on assigned readings and films, based on discussion question prompts.
2. Students will type **six one-page online responses** to assigned secondary weekly films.
3. **One response paper** will be revised.
4. Students will write a 2-3 page midterm paper.
5. Students will type a one-page outline to accompany their final oral presentation.

*Total pages written for the course equals **15 to 17 pages.**

Course Management System

D2L

Class films can be found on COLTube

Textbooks and Printed Resources

Required: Litch, Mary. *Philosophy Through Film*. Routledge, 3rd edition, 2014.

Attendance (begins class #1):

Class attendance is *mandatory*. One unexcused absence will be allowed without penalty. Every unexcused absence thereafter will result in a 5% deduction of your final grade. Absences may be excused with proper documentation (doctor's note, funeral notice for death in the family, etc.).

If you are tardy more than 15 minutes, you are counted as absent. Two tardies of any length = 1 absence.

Assignments

LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Discussion Question Response Papers:

For each weekly assigned primary film analysis, a set of discussion questions will be posted under Dropbox on D2L. Write a minimum one-page (250 words total for ALL questions, and I will check word count) response paper, and upload the .doc or .pdf to the Dropbox. There will be a total of six of these assignments in the course. One assignment will be submitted for revision.

Weekly Online Posts:

After viewing each primary film, you are assigned a second ("secondary") film to also view. You will be completing the answer to a weekly question on D2L in the Discussions section. Answers must be posted by the beginning of class; no late posts accepted, ever. Each post must be a minimum of 250 words.

Midterm Paper/Midterm Exam:

You are tasked with applying your growing philosophical skill set to a movie of your choice! The film must be a current theatrical release. Plan on going to the movies between week 3 and 5 to complete this. Details will be given in class, week 3. The midterm exam is slated for week 5 as well. Both these (paper & exam) count together for your "midterm" grade.

Oral Presentation/Final Exam:

Week 10 is dedicated to oral presentations which are counted as part of your final exam grade.

Class Participation

Students will receive one final class participation grade. The rubric is as follows:

Makes at least one comment in every class: 10 points

Makes at least one comment in all but one or two classes: 7-9 points

Makes at least one comment in about half the classes: 4-6 points

Makes at least one comment in only two to three classes: 2-3 points

Makes only one comment or is never heard from during the whole course: 0-1 points

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under News in D2L and sent via email.

Grading

A: 93-100, A-: 90-92, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+: 77-79, C: 73-76, C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 63-66, D-: 60-62

Discussion Questions Response Papers & Weekly Posts:	25%
Class Participation:	10%
Midterm (paper & exam):	30%
Final (presentation & exam):	35%

Permission to Read Papers

One of the main ways we discuss class topics is through the reading of student papers. If you DO NOT want your name displayed while your paper is read in class, e-mail me immediately.

If you do not e-mail me, I will assume that you are granting permission for your paper to be read and discussed in class.

Week-by-week Assignments/Readings:

Class 1

Jan 3rd

Topic: Course Introduction, What is philosophy? Why does it matter? Can movies contain philosophy?

Read (before next class): Litch, Introduction, ch 1 & 2, "Allegory of the Cave" in the back of the book

Assignment: View *Hilary & Jackie* *AND* *Doubt* -*Hilary & Jackie* response paper/*Doubt* online post

Class 2

Jan 10th

Topic: Truth & Skepticism

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 3 & John Locke, excerpts from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

Assignment: View *Memento* *AND* *Lost In Translation* -*Memento* response paper/*Lost In Translation* online post

Class 3

Jan 17th

Topic: Personal Identity

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 5, and Augustine, excerpts from *On Free Choice of the Will*

Assignment: View *Pariah* *AND* *Adjustment Bureau* -*Pariah* response paper/*Adjustment Bureau* online post

Class 4

Jan 24th

Topic: Free Will & Determinism

Assignment: Study for midterm exam *AND* Complete midterm paper

Class 5

Jan 31st

MIDTERM EXAM

Film in screening in class (film tbd)

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 6 and John Stuart Mill, excerpts from *Utilitarianism*

Assignment: View *Gone Baby Gone* *AND* *Dead Man Walking* -*GBG* response paper/*DMW* online post

Class 6

Feb 7th

Topic: Ethics

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 7 and Thomas Hobbes, excerpts from *Leviathan*

Assignment: View *The 13th* (on Netflix only) -*The 13th* response paper

Class 7

Feb 14th

Topic: Political Philosophy

Screen in class: *Never Let Me Go*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 8 and Augustine, excerpts from *On Free Choice of the Will*

Assignment: View *The Seventh Seal* *AND* film tbd -*The Seventh Seal* response paper/film tbd online post

Class 8

Feb 21st

Topic: The Problem of Evil

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 9 and Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"

Assignment: View *Moonlight* *AND* *Into the Wild* -*Moonlight* response paper/*Into the Wild* online post

Class 9

Feb 28th

Topic: The Meaning of Life

Assignment: Oral presentations for next week

Class 10

March 7th

Oral presentations

College Policies

Online Course Evaluations

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: csd@depaul.edu.

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