

## **DC 226 FILM PHILOSOPHY FOR MAJORS**

DC-227-501 and DC-227-510

Time: M 13:30-16:45

Campus: Loop

Room: CS&TC 00708

Instructor: Ronald Eltanal (Associate Professor), MFA-University of Southern California

Office: CDM 501

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Office and Advising Hours: Please see instructor page at the CDM website.

### **Course Description**

Using film as a lens through which philosophical ideas are examined, students will 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. Particular attention will be paid to the possible influence of philosophy on aesthetic and storytelling choices made by filmmakers.

### **Prerequisites**

None

### **Course Management System**

D2L

Class films can be found on COLTube, on D2L

### **Textbooks and Printed Resources**

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

### **Course Policies (Class Attendance, Participation and E-mail)**

**No Electronics:** As with several writers' rooms in the Industry, no computing or mobile telephony devices may be used in class. Lecture notes and presentations will be posted on D2L. If you wish to take notes, you may use the Luddite tools of pen/pencil and paper/notebook.

**E-mail:** I will respond to e-mails on the next business day from which you send the e-mail (if you e-mail on Friday, I will not respond until Monday).

**FOR IN-CLASS STUDENTS:** 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.).

**FOR ONLINE STUDENTS:** Class "attendance" is mandatory, and verified through posting on the discussion board. If you answer the discussion board question in your paper, but forget to post on the discussion board, I will mark you absent. The point of the discussion board is to allow your classmates to read your answer, and reply to it (their class participation grades depend on it). One absence (missing post) 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.).

**Permission to Read 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.

NEVER INCLUDE YOUR ID NUMBER IN YOUR PAPERS.

Comedy: As Paul Thomas Anderson said, "You have to put on a good show first." In order to increase class engagement, I may employ comedic techniques. As with any attempts at comedy, there is inherent risk of offense. If you are offended by any comedic or other comments made by me, please accept my apology in advance, and talk to me as soon as possible. It will certainly not affect your grade or your esteem in my eyes; in fact, I will think more highly of your pluckiness.

### **Assignments**

LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

#### *Discussion Question Response Papers:*

After each film, 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 D2L. There will be a total of seven of these assignments in the course.

For online students, a "secret phrase" will be given at some point of the lecture or discussion on the class prior to the response paper's due date. Failure to include the secret phrase will result in a grade deduction for the paper. The point of the secret phrase is to ensure that online students watch and listen to the entire lecture and discussion, as if they were in class. If you cannot find the secret phrase, you may be multitasking and should try focusing on only the class recording. Hence, I will not provide the phrase (as I would not give the answer to a midterm question).

DO NOT SHARE THE SECRET PHRASE WITH YOUR CLASSMATES. Doing so constitutes cheating, and will result in a 0 for the assignment. To discourage cheating, I will give extra credit to any student who forwards me e-mail or any such missive soliciting cheating.

Discussion question responses are due on the class after they are assigned.

FOR ONLINE STUDENTS ONLY: In addition to answering all the questions in your response papers, post answers to designated discussion questions on the Discussion Board on D2L. Only questions designated in each assignment will be required to post.

Discussion question responses are due on the class AFTER they are assigned.

#### *Class Participation*

IN CLASS STUDENTS: 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

ONLINE STUDENTS: Students will receive one final class participation grade. Participation is counted by REPLYING to a classmate's post on the discussion board (not including the "Class Introductions" topic). Try to spread the wealth in your replies, and operating according to Kant's categorical imperative (you'll learn what this phrase means later); it's a bummer to see no one respond to your post, and see everyone reply to the popular student's super rad post. The reply

only need be a sentence or two long. The rubric is as follows:

Makes at least one reply in every discussion topic: 10 points

Makes at least one reply in all but one or two discussion topic: 7-9 points

Makes at least one reply in about half the discussion topic: 4-6 points

Makes at least one reply in only two to three discussion topic: 2-3 points

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

#### *Midterm Ethics Script:*

There will be no midterm exam in this class. In lieu of that, students will be required to write a three-page script, with two characters, in one setting. The topic of the script is ethics, and the characters must be fighting over an ethical dilemma in it. Grading will be based on how compelling the script is, and how well it deals with an ethical dilemma. Proper screenplay formatting is required. All screenplays must be submitted to D2L.

#### *Final Projects*

Students must complete one of two final project options.

##### 1. Screenplay

Write an original 7- to 10-page screenplay influenced by existentialist philosophy. A first draft of the screenplay must be turned in the week before the final project is due. The first draft should be written as completely as the final draft, and will constitute 50% of the final project grade. Grading will be based on how compelling the script is, and how well it deals with existentialist themes. All screenplays must be submitted to D2L. Proper screenplay formatting is required.

##### 2. Produced Film

One student may direct a script written for the midterm ethics assignment. The script must use student or professional actors (a headshot and resume for each actor is required). Grading will be based on how professional the film is, and how well it executes the script.

#### **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**

Grading Scale

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: 35 points

Class Participation: 10 points

Midterm Ethics Script: 25 points

Final Project: 30 points

#### **Week-by-week Assignments/Readings:**

##### **Class 1**

Jan. 2

Topic: Course Introduction, and Epistemology, or "What is Truth?"

Screen: *Memento*

Read (before next class): Read (before first class): Litch, Chapter 1; pp. 266-268, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" (from *The Republic*) under "Readings from Primary Sources";

Litch, Chapter 3; and John Locke, excerpts from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

Assignment: Memento Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 2**

Jan. 9

Topic: Personal Identity, or “What is the Self?”

Screen: *Moon*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 4 and Alan Turing, excerpts from “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”

Assignment: *Moon* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**NO CLASS Jan. 16**

**Class 3**

Jan. 23

Topic: Personhood, or “What is a person?”

Screen: *The Cove*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 6, Immanuel Kant, excerpts from *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* and John Stuart Mill, excerpts from *Utilitarianism*

Assignment: Revise *Memento* or *Moon* Response Paper; *The Cove* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 4**

Jan. 30

Topic: Ethics, or What is right or wrong?

Screen: *Match Point*

Assignment: *Match Point* Discussion Questions Response Paper and Midterm Ethics Script

**Class 5**

Feb. 6

*Match Point* Discussion

Workshop: Midterm Ethics Script

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 5 and David Hume, excerpts from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

**Class 6**

Feb. 13

Topic: Free Will and Determinism

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

Screen: *Coherence*

Assignment: *Coherence* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 7**

Feb. 20

Topic: The Problem of Evil

Screen: *A Serious Man*

Assignment: *A Serious Man* Discussion Questions Response Paper

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 9 and Albert Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus” and Jean-Paul Sartre, excerpts from “Existentialism is a Humanism”

**Class 8**

Feb. 27

Topic: Existentialism

Screen: *The Spectacular Now*

Assignment: *The Spectacular Now* Discussion Questions Response Paper

If doing screenplay for final project, rough draft of screenplay.

### **Class 9**

Mar. 6

Workshop: Final Project Screenplay First Drafts

### **FINAL EXAM (NOTE NEW TIME: 2:30 to 4:45 PM):**

Mar. 13

Read and Screen Final Projects

## **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](http://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](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).  
Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.  
Phone number: (312)362-8002  
Fax: (312)362-6544  
TTY: (773)325.7296