

## **DC 227 Film Philosophy**

Fall Quarter 2014 | Distance Learning  
Location: Online Course

Instructor: Brian Mellen

Office hours: W 1:30 to 3:00pm in **DePaul Center C106A By Appt. Only**

Email: [bmellen@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:bmellen@cdm.depaul.edu)

Or Skype/iChat by appointment if you cannot make it in to the loop.

### **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.

### **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:**

In **DC 227**, students will:

1. Using multiple perspectives, students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems.
2. Students will be able to evaluate philosophical questions, issues and/or problems using informed judgment. Students will be able to analyze and interpret the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems.
3. Students will be able to develop an understanding of the historical context of philosophical topics, figures, and texts.

4. Students will be able to write an analytic essay treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forwards an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion.
5. Students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze ethical issues, applying philosophical tools drawn from various ethical traditions to concrete cases pertinent to a variety of subject matters.

#### **How Learning Outcomes Will Be Met:**

1. Through the assignment of screenings of multiple films, students will be use multiple perspectives, and begin with a common text from which they can address, think critically 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 be able to develop an understanding of the historical context of philosophical topics, figures, and texts.
4. Through the assignment of a larger, final paper, students will write an analytic essay treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forward an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion.
5. In one particular assigned reading, film screening, and response paper, students will address, critically think about, and analyze ethical issues, applying philosophical tools drawn from various ethical traditions to concrete cases pertinent to a variety of subject matters.

#### **Writing Expectations:**

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of 14-16 pages of writing for this course. This writing will take the form of a midterm essay, weekly written answers to discussion questions, and a final research paper.

#### **How Writing Expectations Will Be Met:**

Students will write weekly papers (one-page each) answering a set of questions pertaining to the philosophical concepts presented in the weekly screening. A Midterm Paper (five pages, double-spaced) and a Final Paper will be assigned as well (six to eight pages).

**Weekly Papers:** Each week students will be given a set of questions pertaining to the movie screened last class. Students are to answer each question, typed up on one-page. Submit to D2L as .doc or .PDF.

**Midterm Paper (DUE 10/20):** Students will write one philosophical analysis paper (three pages) on the philosophical themes presented in a film of their choosing. It can't be a film shown in class or analyzed in the class book. It also must be a film

of substance (i.e. no fluffy popcorn films like the Hangover or That Awkward Moment).

If you're confused on what movie to pick, ask yourself the following questions, "Was the movie made for pure entertainment or is there something deeper within the film that would give you enough substance to write an academic paper?" Submit to D2L as .doc or .PDF.

**Final Research Paper (DUE 11/19):** In lieu of a final, you will write a research paper, five pages long. Citations and a short bibliography must be included for each paper. Submit to D2L as .doc or .PDF. Your paper must include the following:

1. Choose a philosophical question (i.e. What is Life? What is Reality? Can intelligence be created?)
2. Research the primary or non-textbook secondary sources that articulate this position. **You cannot use ANY textbook as a source, and you cannot use online only sources, like Wikipedia.** Citations must be used throughout the paper, not just part of a last page bibliography.
3. Find any two films that deal with or illustrate philosophical themes covered in class. Analyze how the films explore the question. **You cannot use a film that was shown in class or is discussed in the textbook.**
4. Compare and contrast how these philosophical themes are covered in the two films. Relate the films' philosophical views to your own position. Explore what new conclusions you've made given this comparison.

**Course Management System:** D2L

**Textbooks and Printed Resources:**

Litch, Mary. Philosophy Through Film. Routledge, 2nd edition, 2010. ISBN: 041599743-7

**Grading:**

Discussion Board Questions	10%
Quizzes	10%
Weekly Papers	25%
Midterm Paper	20%
Final Paper	30%

**Participation in Discussion Forum:** 10% of your total grade (1% per week, 2% for week 9).

Discussion Forum Rubric (A weekly grade will be given):  
100% = 1 posting and 2 replies to other posters per week  
85% = 1 posting and 1 reply to other posters per week  
75% = 1 posting and 0 replies to other posters per week  
65% = 0 posting and 1 reply to other posters per week

0% = 0 posting and 0 replies to other posters per week

**LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

**Grading Scale:**

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-87, B = 86-83, B- = 82- 80, C+ = 79-77, C = 76-73, C- = 72-70, D+ = 69-67, D = 66-63, D- = 62-60, F = 59-0.

A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work

**Late Papers/Projects:**

Late papers and projects are not accepted. In case of illness, please contact me prior to the due date. LEAVE LOTS OF TIME TO UPLOAD ASSIGNMENTS.

**Content Changes:**

Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling.

**Class Schedule**

*\* Page numbers are based on the 3rd Edition of Litch book, but are still in the 2nd Edition starting with pp. 264*

**Week 1 9/15**

Syllabus, Overview of the Course, What is Philosophy? Skepticism

**Homework Due 09/22:**

**What you need to watch:** Inception (2010, Christopher Nolan, 148 minutes)

*Readings: Litch Introduction pp 1-7,  
pp. 276-278 Plato, "Allegory of the Cave"*

**Quiz #1**

**Discussion Question #1:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Midterm Paper (DUE 10/20):** Students will write one philosophical analysis paper (three pages) on the philosophical themes presented in a film of their choosing. It can't be a film shown in class or analyzed in the class book. It also must be a film of substance (i.e. no fluffy popcorn films like the Hangover or That Awkward Moment).

If you're confused on what movie to pick, ask yourself the following questions, "Was the movie made for pure entertainment or is there something deeper within the film that would give you enough substance to write an academic paper?" Submit to D2L as .doc or .PDF.

## **Week 2 9/22**

Skepticism Continued

**Homework Due 09/29:**

**What you need to watch:** Inception Continued

*Readings: Litch Chapter 2 - Skepticism (Chapter 1 if you have 2nd Edition)*  
*pp. 285-288 Descartes, "Meditation One"*  
*pp. 289-300 Berkeley, "A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge"*  
*pp. 301-303 Kant, "Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics"*  
*pp. 310-316 Hume, "A Treatise of Human Nature"*

**Quiz #2**

**Discussion Question #2:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week One and Two Essay:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

## **Week 3 09/29**

Truth/Relativism

**Homework Due 10/06:**

**What you need to watch:** Doubt (2008, John Patrick Shanley, 104 Minutes)

*Readings: Litch Chapter 1 - Truth (Chapter 2 - Relativism if you have 2nd Edition)*  
*pp. 279-281 Russell "The Problems of Philosophy"*  
*pp. 282-288 James "Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways"*

***If you have the second addition then your readings is instead the following:***

*pp. 288-291 Kuhn "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions"*

**Quiz #3**

**Discussion Question #3:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week Three Essay:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

## **Week 4 10/06**

Personal Identity

**Homework Due 10/13:**

**What you need to watch:** Fight Club (1999, David Fincher, 139 Minutes)

*Readings: Litch Chapter 3 - Personal Identity*  
*pp. 304-309 Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding"*

**Quiz #4**

**Discussion Question #4:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week Four Essay:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week 5 10/13**

Artificial Intelligence

**Homework Due 10/20:**

**What you need to watch:** Her (2013, Spike Jonze, 126 Minutes)

*Readings: Litch Chapter 4 - Artificial Intelligence*  
*pp. 317-321 Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"*  
*pp. 322-327 Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs"*

**Quiz #5**

**Discussion Question #5:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week Five Essay:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week 6 10/20**

**MIDTERM PAPER DUE TODAY!!!**

Free Will, Determinism, and Moral Responsibility

**Homework Due 10/27:**

**What you need to watch:** Ruby Sparks (2012, Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 104 Minutes)

*Readings: Litch Chapter 5 - Free Will, Determinism, and Moral Responsibility*  
*pp. 328-337 Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding"*  
*pp. 338-345 Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"*

**Quiz #6**

**Discussion Question #6:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week Six Essay:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Final Research Paper (DUE 11/20):** In lieu of a final, you will write a research paper, five pages long. Citations and a short bibliography must be included for each paper. Submit to D2L as .doc or .PDF. Your paper must include the following:

1. Choose a philosophical question (i.e. What is Life? What is Reality? Can intelligence be created?)
2. Research the primary or non-textbook secondary sources that articulate this position. **You cannot use ANY textbook as a source, and you cannot use online only sources, like Wikipedia.** Citations must be used throughout the paper, not just part of a last page bibliography.
3. Find any two films that deal with or illustrate philosophical themes covered in class. Analyze how the films explore the question. **You cannot use a film that was shown in class or is discussed in the textbook.**
4. Compare and contrast how these philosophical themes are covered in the two films. Relate the films' philosophical views to your own position. Explore what new conclusions you've made given this comparison.

### Week 7 10/27

Ethics

**Homework Due 11/03:**

**What you need to watch:** Gone Baby Gone (2007, Ben Affleck, 114 Minutes)

*Readings: Litch Chapter 6 - Ethics*

*pp. 346-352 Kant, "Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals"*

*pp. 353-357 Mill, "Utilitarianism"*

**Quiz #7**

**Discussion Question #7:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week Seven Essay:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

### Week 8 11/03

Political Philosophy

**Homework Due 11/10:**

**Screening:** The Matrix (1999, Wachowskis, 136 Minutes)

*Readings: Litch Chapter 7 - Political Philosophy*

*pp. 358-364 Hobbes, "Leviathan"*

*pp. 365-371 Mill, "On Liberty"*

**Quiz #8**

**Discussion Question #8:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week Eight Essay:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week 9 11/10**

The Problem of Evil and Existentialism

**Homework Due 11/17:**

**What you need to watch:** A Serious Man (2009, Coen Bros., 106 Minutes)  
127 Hours (2010, Danny Boyle, 93 Minutes)

*Readings: Litch Chapter 8 - The Problem of Evil*  
*pp. 372-377 Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence" (Not contained in 2nd Ed.)*  
*pp. 378-382 Augustine, "On Free Choice of the Will"*  
*Litch Chapter 9 - Existentialism*  
*pp. 383-385 Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"*

**Bonus Quiz**

**Discussion Question #9:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week Nine Essay:** Specific details can be found on D2L.

**Week 10 11/17**

**FINAL PAPER DUE 11/20!!!**



## **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).

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Phone number: (312)362-8002  
Fax: (312)362-6544  
TTY: (773)325.7296