

## **FILM PHILOSOPHY**

DC227-502/511

DePaul University

Winter Quarter 2018

Wednesdays, 1:30PM-4:45PM (Daley Building, 14 E. Jackson, Rm. 802)

Instructor: Eric Marsh

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Office Hours: CDM Center, Rm. 522, Fridays 9:00AM-1:00PM by appointment only

**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.

**Learning Domain Description** - 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. DC227 Film Philosophy is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Philosophical Inquiry domain.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of this course 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:**

- 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.

- 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.
- Through the assignment of readings from the required textbook, students will engage with philosophical topics and figures in their historical context.
- Through the assignment of excerpts from primary texts, students will confront and interpret primary texts from the philosophical tradition.
- Through the assignment of a final paper, students will write an analytic essay treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forward an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion.

**Textbooks and Printed Resources:**

Litch, Mary. Philosophy Through Film. Routledge, 3rd edition, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-415-83932-7. Supplemental readings will be provided via D2L.

**D2L** – The course materials for this course such as syllabus, announcements, course documents, and assignments will be available to you through D2L: <https://d2l.depaul.edu/>. Films screened in class will be made available to stream afterwards on D2L ('Content'->'Screenings'->'Panopto') for online students and in-class students as a resource for your writing.

**Basis for Evaluation**

Weekly Responses .....	40
Midterm Paper .....	15
Final Paper .....	35
Attendance & Participation ....	10
Total .....	100%

A = 100 – 94, A- = 93 – 90, B+ = 89 – 88, B = 87 – 83, B- = 82 – 80, C+ = 79 – 78, C = 77 – 73, C- = 72 – 70, D+ = 69 – 68, D= 67 – 63, D- =62 – 60, F = 59 – 0.

**CLASS SCHEDULE & COURSE OUTLINE**

**WEEK 1** - Jan. 3

Introduction, Syllabus; What is Film Philosophy?

**WEEK 2** - Jan. 10

The Problem of Truth

*Nathan For You*, "Finding Frances," Fielder, 2017, USA

Read: Litch, Ch. 1, "Truth" (\*Bertrand Russell, excerpts from *The Problems of Philosophy*, pg. 279; William James excerpts from *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, pg. 282)

**WEEK 3** - Jan. 17

Skepticism

*World on a Wire*, Fassbinder, 1972, West Germany

Read: Litch, Introduction, Ch. 2 (\*Plato, *Allegory of the Cave*, pg. 276; Descartes, *Meditation One*, pg. 285)

**WEEK 4** - Jan. 24

Personal Identity: Who Are You?

*Moonlight*, Jenkins, 2016, USA

Read: Litch, Ch. 3 (\*Locke, excerpts from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, pg. 304)

**WEEK 5** - Jan. 31

Artificial Intelligence: Human All Too Human

*Robocop*, Verhoeven, 1987, USA

Read: Litch, Ch. 4 (\*Turing, *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, pg. 317)

**WEEK 6** - Feb. 7

Free Will, Determinism, and Moral Responsibility

*L'Argent*, Bresson, 1984, France

Read: Litch, Ch. 5

**WEEK 7** - Feb. 14

Ethics

*Fireworks*, Kitano, 1997, Japan

Read: Litch, Ch. 6 (\*Mill, excerpts from *Utilitarianism*, pg. 353)

**WEEK 8** - Feb. 21

Political Philosophy

*Punishment Park*, Watkins, 1971, USA/UK

Read: Litch, Ch. 7 (Mill, excerpts from *On Liberty*, pg. 365; Hobbes, excerpts from *Leviathan*, pg. 358)

**WEEK 9** - Feb. 28

The Problem of Evil

*A Serious Man*, Coens, 2008, USA

Read: Litch, Ch. 8 (\*Augustine, excerpts from *On Free Choice of the Will*, pg. 378)

**WEEK 10** - March 7

Existentialism

*Point Blank*, Boorman, 1967, USA

Read: Litch, Ch. 9 (\*Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, pg. 383); Alain Badiou, "Cinema as Philosophical Experimentation")

\*\*\*NO MEETING FINALS WEEK\*\*\* FINAL PAPERS DUE 3/19 BEFORE MIDNIGHT

### **Writing Expectations:**

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of 18 pages of writing for this course. This writing will take the form of weekly written answers to discussion questions, a midterm paper and a final research paper.

**Weekly Responses** - After each film, a set of discussion questions will be posted on D2L under 'Content' -> 'Assignment Prompts'. You must write a minimum one-page response paper (250 words total for responses to ALL questions), and upload the .doc or .pdf to the dropbox. There will be a total of ten of these assignments in the course. They are due every week before the start of the next class (ONLINE STUDENTS: Your weekly response papers are due at the same time as in-class students).

### **Assignment Breakdown & Due Dates**

Specific parameters for the assignments will be given in class and posted to D2L.

Week 1 - Response #1. Due 1/10.  
Week 2 - Response #2. Due 1/17.  
Week 3 - Response #3. Due 1/24.  
Week 4 - Response #4. Due 1/31.  
Week 5 - Response #5. Due 2/7.  
Week 6 - Midterm Paper. Due 2/14.  
Week 6 - Response #6. Due 2/14.  
Week 7 - Response #7. Due 2/21.  
Week 8 - Response #8. Due 2/28.  
Week 9 - Response #9. Due 3/7.  
Week 10 - Response #10. Due 3/14.  
Week 11 - Final Paper. Due 3/19.

**Content & Schedule Changes** – The syllabus is subject to change depending on class progress, time constraints, or material availability. This goes for the screenings as well. The overall workload, however, will not change. Make sure you pace yourself accordingly. You will be notified of any changes in the syllabus in a timely fashion.

**Grading** - Grades and/or written feedback will be given for each assignment. In order to be accepted for grading, assignments must be turned in on time (all deadlines are on the syllabus and on D2L). *Late work will receive zero points for grading.* An assignment worth 10 points (10%) is equal to one full letter grade. Failure to turn in even one assignment has a significant impact on your grade.

**Course Policies** - In addition to the DePaul University course policies (see student handbook), the following policies apply to this course:

**Attendance & Participation: IN-CLASS STUDENTS (Section 502)** - Each class consists of lecture, screenings, and discussion. Class time is most productive when everyone arrives promptly and comes prepared to discuss that week's reading and film screening. Clips and short films shown in class may not be available outside of class, and you are responsible for all of the class material. Any absences will result in a major reduction of your participation grade.

**Attendance & Participation: ONLINE STUDENTS (Section 511)** - As an online student you are required to view *every* class lecture & discussion unless I instruct otherwise. But since you don't have to *come* to class, your attendance & participation grade will be calculated through your weekly responses. If you submit your weekly response (and it is satisfactory, demonstrating that you read/watched the films & lectures) you will be marked present. If you fail to submit a weekly response, you will be marked absent for that week.

**Reading Assignments** - Reading assignments are *mandatory* and textbook readings should be completed by the date they are listed in the syllabus and referenced in your responses and papers. Lectures may introduce additional material not available in the readings, and the readings may explore concepts not mentioned in class. *Supplemental readings will also be assigned & discussed in-class.* They will be available on D2L.

**Computer/Smart Phone Use** - This course involves a mixture of lecture, discussion, as well as screenings and as such, it requires your full attention (we watch movies with our eyes, ears, and minds!). There will be no phones or computers allowed during class. Exceptions will be made on an individual basis.

**Illness** - If you are sick, please contact me by email prior to missing a class due to illness and continue to keep me posted until you return. As long as I am aware of your situation and you take an active role in catching up, absences may be excused and extensions may be granted. Every situation will be handled according to individual circumstance at the instructor's discretion. Absolutely no consideration will be given for those who request special treatment without advanced notice, even with a doctor's note.

**Academic Integrity** - Plagiarism is dishonest behavior and therefore violates collegiality as well as University policy. You should familiarize yourself with behavior that constitutes plagiarism by reviewing the University's policy regarding academic dishonesty at: <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/Resources/Students/index.html>. Any cases of plagiarism will automatically receive a zero and be reported to departmental and University officials for disciplinary action.

**Special Needs** - Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, instructors must make reasonable accommodations for students with physical, mental, or learning disabilities. Let me know at the beginning of the term if you require some modification of seating, testing, or other class adjustments so that appropriate arrangements may be made.

