

## **DC 227 FILM PHILOSOPHY Winter 2016**

DC-227-801

Time: Th 6pm - 9:15pm

Campus: Lincoln Park

Room: Student Center, Rm 0330

Instructor: Josh Wolff (Adjunct Professor), MFA-DePaul University

Office & Hours: STDC 332 Th 4pm - 5:30pm

Phone: (773) 325-3731

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### **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**

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 provided **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 forwards 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 an essay exam, weekly written answers to discussion questions, and a final research paper.

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

1. Students will write **nine, one-page response papers** on assigned readings and films, based on discussion question prompts.
2. In lieu of a final, students will write a **research paper, 5-7 pages long.** Citations and a short bibliography must be included for the paper. The paper must be submitted in .doc or .pdf format to D2L.
3. There will be a **midterm exam**, with short answer and short essay questions to be taken in class. Please let me know if you need any exam accommodations (for example, if you are a PLUS student), as soon as possible.

#### **Course Management System**

D2L

#### **Textbooks and Printed Resources**

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

#### **Assignments**

LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

##### *Discussion Question Response Papers:*

After each film, a set of discussion questions will be posted under Assignments on D2L. Write a minimum one-page (250 words total for responses to 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 nine of these assignments in the course.

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

##### *Midterm Exam:*

There will be a midterm exam, with short answer and short essay questions. Please let me know if you need any exam accommodations, as soon as possible. Makeups will only be allowed for excused absences.

### *Research Paper:*

In lieu of a final, you will write a research paper, 5-7 pages long. Citations and a short bibliography must be included for each paper.

#### Topic:

- \* Choose a philosophical question (such as What is the Meaning of Life? What is Reality? Can Intelligence be Created?, etc.)
- \* Research the primary or non-textbook secondary sources that articulate this question (you cannot use ANY textbook as a source, and you cannot use online only sources, like Wikipedia).
- \* Find any two films that deal with or illustrate this question (you cannot use a film that was shown in class or is discussed in the textbook).

#### In the paper:

- \* Briefly describe the chosen philosophical question (be sure to cite primary and non-textbook secondary sources to support your summary).
- \* Analyze the two films and describe how the films explore the question.
- \* Compare and contrast how this philosophical question and the films' treatments of that question relate to your own articulation and answer to that question. Explore what new conclusions you've made given this comparison.

### **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 and Class Participation: 40%

Midterm Exam: 25%

Final Paper: 35%

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

Read (before first class): Litch, Chapter 1; and pp. 276-278, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" under "Readings from Primary Sources"

#### **Class 1**

January 7

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

Screen in class: *Rashomon*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 2

Assignment: *Rashomon* Discussion Questions Response Paper

#### **Class 2**

January 14

Topic: Skepticism – "How do we know what is real?" "Should we be skeptical of our reality?"

Screen in class: *The Truman Show*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 3

Assignment: *The Truman Show* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 3**

January 21

Topic: Personal Identity, or "What is the Self?"

Screen in class: *Moon*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 4

Assignment: *Moon* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 4**

January 28

Topic: Artificial Intelligence/Personhood, or "What is a person?"

Screen in class: *Her*

Read (before next class) Litch, Chapter 5

Assignment: *Her* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 5**

February 4

Topic: Free Will; Moral Responsibility; Determinism – "Are our paths chosen for us? Are we agents of causation?"

**MIDTERM EXAM**

Screen in class: *GroundHog Day*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 6

Assignment: *GroundHog Day* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 6**

February 11

Topic: Ethics, or "What is right or wrong?"

Screen in class: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 7

Assignment: *Crimes and Misdemeanors* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 7**

February 18

Topic: Political Philosophy, or "Are we obligated to follow laws? What if the laws are not just? Who decides?"

Screen in class: *You Don't Know Jack*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 8

Assignment: *You Don't Know Jack* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 8**

February 25

Topic: The Problem of Evil, or "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Screen in class: *A Serious Man*

Read (before next class): Litch, Chapter 9

Assignment: *A Serious Man* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 9**

March 4

Topic: Existentialism - "Where do we find meaning in life?"

Screen in class: *American Beauty*

Assignment: *American Beauty* Discussion Questions Response Paper

**Class 10**

March 11

Topic: The Meaning of Life/Fate vs Self-Determinism  
Screen in class: *Stranger than Fiction*  
Assignment: Final Paper

Final Paper DUE to D2L During Finals Week - TBD. Late papers will not be accepted.

## **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