

Updated: 1/10/2024

Syllabus
The University of New Orleans
Dept. of Philosophy

PHIL 3260: Philosophy and Film (3 credits)

SECTION 1: LA 140, Tue/Thu 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Sara Bizarro
Office: LA 107
Office Hours: Tue 5-6pm; Thu: 4-6 pm
Office / Mobile: (504) 975-1373
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Texts

Course Book: *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures, An Anthology*, Edited by Noel Carroll and Jinhee Choi, Blackwell, 2006
Note: I will be posting all the required readings on Perusall, you do not need to purchase the book.

Course Description

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: This course is a critical study of the relation between philosophical concepts and the medium of film, which examines the unique manner in which film conveys concepts arguably too intricate for more traditional media. Through a survey of films whose content illustrate philosophical ideas, as well as a variety of philosophical sources, students learn about the palpable ways in which film can “bring to life” philosophical concepts like no other medium (as well as about how potential filmmakers might utilize philosophical ideas in the production of their own work).

COURSE OVERVIEW: In this class we will address both Philosophy of Film, Philosophy and Film, *and* Film Philosophy. All these are different approaches to the relationship between Philosophy and Film. There is one assigned film to watch per week and one assigned reading per week (the readings will be on Perusall, a social reading platform where students read, comment and interact with each other.) Whenever possible, I will provide links to the films. If it is not possible, the student needs to find the film on their own. The movies assigned are all available in DVD in the New Orleans Public Library system. I am working on scheduling a few screening throughout the year outside of class time.

Outcomes

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Have a grasp on what makes Philosophy of Film different from Film Studies in general.
- Identify several issues in Philosophy of Film that are specific to the medium.
- Be able interpret films through a philosophical lens.
- Discuss and defend philosophical interpretations of films discussed in class.
- Create a final project where an in depth interpretation of a film is presented.

Grades

Grades will be based on a 100-point scale distributed as follows:

Requirement		Final grade	
Weekly Reading Assignments	20		
Attendance and Participation	30	A	100 – 90 points
Midterm Paper	20	B	89 – 80 points
Final Project	20	C	79 – 70 points
Final Presentation	10	D	69 – 60 points
Total	100	F	59 – 0 points

*Grades over .5 will be rounded up, so 89.5 will be rounded up to 90.

LATE WORK: Reading assignments can be submitted up to 10 days after the deadline, Perusall deduces points gradually. After those 10 days extensions will only be granted in extreme and documented circumstances. In most cases no extensions will be granted. Final presentations must be done on the day scheduled. If you have a situation that you believe is an extenuating circumstance, you can only ask for consideration with written documentation and I will try to find an alternative solution. If you encounter any unexpected circumstances make sure to document it, as extensions will not be granted without documentation. Please note that the final presentations are on the day of the final exam, so no extension can be granted for those. Students can submit slides without presenting with a 50% penalty on that assignment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic honesty is essential for learning, evaluating academic performance, and to the entire educational function of a University. For this reason, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. The student code is available on Moodle and online at <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu>. Each student is required to pledge that all completed work will be submitted according to the principles of academic integrity as defined in the statement on Academic Dishonesty in the UNO Student Code of Conduct.

AI: You can use AI as a research tool, but you need to confirm all information since AI does make up information, references, and is in general not reliable. Use at your own risk. You **cannot** use AI to write your essay. AI does not write good essays, it is inaccurate and writes in very vague and empty terms and is usually not close to the research sources. Essays that include irrelevant generalizations and overly flowery empty wording that plays no role in the essay will be penalized – independently of an AI being used, although this is the style AI usually writes in.

CLASS CONDUCT: Discussion in class is encouraged, but civility must be maintained at all times. No abusive, uncivil, or inappropriate behavior will be tolerated. Devices must be kept away during class, except for notetaking. Phones must be silenced, computers need to be on note-taking programs only, no browsing or other viewing is allowed. No headphones allowed in class. Not following these rules will result in a failing grade in the participation section of this class.

READINGS: Students will be expected to keep up on the weekly reading assignments on Perusall (accessible through Canvas), you need to have read the material **before** the Thursday class. All required readings will be posted on Perusall. There is no need to purchase a course book. I will post both required and optional readings, you do not need to complete the optional readings, but you may want to use them for reference for your final project.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: I will be taking attendance in every class. Both your attendance and participation will be graded. Please volunteer to speak in class during the discussion periods so as to enhance your participation grade. You can talk anytime during class, and we will discuss the movies and readings more extensively on the Thursday class, so be ready to talk about those then.

ASSIGNMENTS

READINGS: Every week there are readings on Perusal. Always access the readings through Canvas under the Module for that week.

MID-TERM ESSAY: In the Mid-Term essay students will try their hand at a philosophical interpretation of a movie of their choice. The essays will be discussed individually with me during office hours both before and after the essay is submitted.

FINAL PROJECT: The final project will be the culmination of the topics learned in class and it will be a more ambitious philosophical interpretation of a movie of the student's choice. The final project can be an essay or a film. Students can work individually or in a group. The final project will be discussed and approved during office hours.

PRESENTATIONS: At the end of the school year students will present their final project during exam time.

OFFICE HOURS: You will need to schedule office hours to discuss both your Mid-Term essays and your Final Project. Office hours are Mondays 5-6pm and Thursdays 4-6pm. You can schedule them on Calendly here:

<https://calendly.com/sbizarro/officehours>

CONTENT NOTICE/TRIGGER WARNING: All philosophy classes are argument-based, which means there are different opinions expressed in class. There are also topics that may be problematic. Films may be explicit, violent and shocking. The films are presented for the purpose of discussion and we will learn to view films critically. We will discuss the films in the initial weeks and I will include a trigger warnings for the films in the classes. It is not possible to complete this class with a good grade without watching the films, so by maintaining your registration you are consenting to watching the films selected and listed. Films can depict violence, suicide, sexual content, critiques of religion, and other controversial topics. Issues in the films should be extensively discussed in class. For horror films you can skip through scenes if they seem too harsh or intolerable.

INCOMPLETES: Incompletes are only granted in extreme and documented extenuating circumstances and must be discussed and arranged well before the last class meeting. If a student asks for an incomplete at the end of the course, it will be denied, unless there are extreme and documented medical or other severe circumstances. If your situation is not documented, you need to find a way to officially confirm the reason why you are asking for an incomplete.

WITHDRAWALS: Check the academic calendar for withdrawal dates. You do not need to tell me anything, you can withdraw within the University rules. I understand that life happens and sometimes it is not the right time to take a class. You can always return to it next semester.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodation. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES: Please remember that both the Library and Learning Resource Center are available to assist all students regarding writing and research.

PHIL 3260 SPRING 2024 Timeline

(subject to revision)

DAY	TOPIC/READING
<p style="text-align: center;">Week 1 1/9 1/11</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet and Greet - Syllabus and Course Preview. • What is Philosophy? • The Three Philosophies of Film. • Required Film: The Pervert's Guide to Ideology (2012), Sophie Fiennes, UK • Required Reading: bell hooks, "Making Movie Magic".
<p style="text-align: center;">Week 2 1/16 1/18</p>	<p>UNIT 1 Philosophy of Film – What is Cinema?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Cinema? • Required Film: Rear Window (1954), Alfred Hitchcock, USA • Required Reading: Stanley Cavell, "The World Viewed."
<p style="text-align: center;">Week 3 1/23 1/25</p>	<p>Philosophy of Film - Narration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the Narrator in a Film? • Required Film: <i>Stranger Than Fiction</i> (2006), Marc Forster, USA • Required Reading: George M. Wilson, "Le Grand Imagier Steps Out: The Primitive Basis of Film Narration"
<p style="text-align: center;">Week 4 1/30 2/1</p>	<p>Philosophy of Film - Authorship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the Author of a film? • Required Film: <i>F for Fake</i> (1973), Orson Wells, USA • Required Reading: Pailsey Livingston, "Cinematic Authorship."
<p style="text-align: center;">Week 5 2/6 2/8</p>	<p>Philosophy of Film – Empathy and Emotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do emotions and identification function in films. Are there are special moral issues relating to this? Can films change minds? • Required Film: <i>Au Hazard Balthazar</i> (1966), Robert Bresson, FRANCE • Required Reading: Alex Neil, "Empathy and (Film Fiction)"
<p style="text-align: center;">Week 6 2/20</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2/22</p> <p>No Class, Guaranteed Income Workshop at UNO</p>	<p>Philosophy of Film – The Paradox of Horror</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything ethically questionable about enjoying horror movies? • Required Film: <i>Funny Games</i> (2007), Michael Haneke, USA • Required Reading: Noel Carroll, "Why Horror?" <p>Mid-Term Essay Due – February 25</p>

<p>Week 7 2/27 2/29</p>	<p>UNIT 2 Philosophy in Film – Philosophical Topics in Film</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do films refer to different philosophies? • How having philosophical content can make a film more interesting? • Required Films: <i>The Matrix</i>, The Wachowskis, 1999, USA and Return to the Source: Philosophy and the Matrix (2004), Josh Oreck, USA, • Required Reading: William Irwin, "Computers, Caves, and Oracles: Neo and Socrates", <i>Philosophy and The Matrix</i>, Open Court; First Edition, 2002
<p>Week 8 3/5 3/7</p>	<p>Philosophy in Film - Truth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there such a thing as truth or do <i>all views</i> depend on a <i>perspective</i>? • Required Film: <i>Rashomon</i> (1950), Akira Kurosawa, JAPAN • Required Reading: Marcos Wagner da Cunha, "Nihilism and Reality in Akira Kurosawa's Rashomon"
<p>Week 9 3/12 3/14</p>	<p>Philosophy in Film – Mind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a difference between Mind and Body? • Required Film: <i>The Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i> (1956), Don Siegel, USA • Required Reading: David Chalmers, "Zombies and the Explanatory Gap"
<p>Week 10 3/19 3/21</p>	<p>Philosophy in Film – Free Will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have Free Will? What is Free Will? • Required Film: <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> (1971), Stanley Kubrick, USA • Required Reading: Peter Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment:"
<p>Week 11 3/26 - Asynchronous. Discussion on Perusal. I will be at a conference. 3/28 – Easter Break</p>	<p>Philosophy in Film - Religion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is religion? What is its function? • Required Film: <i>PK</i> (2014), Rajkumar Hirani, INDIA • Required Reading: Stephen Cahn, "God"
<p>Week 12 4/2 4/4</p>	<p>UNIT 3 Film-Philosophy – Idleness and Creativity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is idleness required for the creative philosophical stance? • Required Film: <i>Slacker</i> (1991), Richard Linklater, USA • Required Reading: Bertrand Russell, In Praise of Idleness
<p>Week 13 4/9 4/11</p>	<p>Film-Philosophy – Ethical Issues in AI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there ethical issues that come from developing AI? What is the moral status of AI? Does AI constitute any sort of threat to humanity? • Required Film: <i>2001, A Space Odyssey</i> (1968) Stanley Kubrick, USA • Required Reading: Bostrom, Super Intelligence <p>Final Essay First Drafts Due – April 12</p>

<p>Week 14 4/16 4/18</p>	<p>Film-Philosophy - Capitalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is consumerism ethical? Does advertisement control our wants? • Required Movie: <i>They Live!</i> (1988) John Carpenter, USA • Required Reading: Foucault, "Docile Bodies."
<p>Week 15 4/23 4/25</p>	<p>Film-Philosophy – The Meaning of Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What gives life meaning? Does death take meaning away from life, or does it provide meaning? • Required Movie: <i>Ikiru</i> (1952), Akira Kurosawa, JAPAN • Required Reading: Jeffery Gordon, "Kurosawa's existential masterpiece: A meditation on the meaning of life"
<p>Presentations 4/30 and Exam Date TBA</p>	<p>Final Project Due Last Day of School – 4/30</p> <p>Final Presentations – 4/30 and Exam Day</p>