

PHILOSOPHY OF/AND FILM

315F: 41450

Gates Dell Complex (GDC) 1.406

Tuesdays & Thursdays

3:30–5:00 pm

Me: Emilie Pagano

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*I'll be in WAG 411 on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 2:00-3:15pm, but I'm *always* available by appointment – and email! – too!

DON'T PRINT ME OUT! I MIGHT CHANGE!

KINDLY, *The Syllabus*

DESCRIPTION

Films are important parts of “our” (e.g., American) culture. We spend millions of dollars every year seeing them in theatres. Film critics are revered, Rotten Tomatoes thriving. Moreover, films are philosophically interesting. They're *artifacts*; they capture important parts of what we are and in interesting ways. As a result, “we are in the midst of a heyday in the philosophy of film. ... Never before have so many philosophers...taken this measure of professional interest in the movies (Carroll, et al (2019), xxv).” *But what are they?*

Our class will be oriented around a particular question – *What's philosophically interesting about film?* – and we'll try to answer it by trying to answer several subsidiary questions:

- What is it *to be* a film?
- What are we *perceiving* when we watch films?
- What are films *about*?
- Can we *right* about which films are good/bad?
- Can films “do” philosophy?

It isn't obvious how we should answer these – and related! – questions and – predictably! – philosophers disagree in significant ways with respect to them. As a result, our class will serve as an introduction to philosophy of film; specifically, by way of an introduction to important debates in aesthetics.

IMPORTANTLY, EXPERIENCE WITH PHILOSOPHY ISN'T REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS IN THIS CLASS!

ME AND – MORE IMPORTANTLY – US!

I'm Emilie! (You should call me "Emilie"! I'm finishing my PhD in the Department of Philosophy. I'm interested in metaphysics; in particular, with respect to society.

My teaching is guided by a commitment to **collaboration**. I've found that we learn to *do* philosophy when it's genuinely collaborative. We learn a skill that promotes intellectual independence, and, so, that enables significant personal and interpersonal growth. As a result, my primary aim is to ensure *everyone* has the opportunity to engage freely, frequently, and flexibly. And this requires **a willingness to be wrong**. As a result, we'll spend time building a community. For instance:

- We'll get to know each other!
- We'll use *Persuall*!
 - This gives me the opportunity to show you how you might critically engage with arguments. In particular, it gives me the opportunity to show you how I weed through details to identify the bits on which arguments turn, and, so, the bits about which we might reasonably disagree.
 - It gives us the opportunity to respond to each other's annotations, whether to clarify or comment on the bit of text with which we're engaging.
 - It creates conversations in which *everyone* can take part. The kind of engagement *Persuall* supports appeals to us who are less inclined to speak in class. Since most of us have experience engaging online generally, it provides genuine opportunities to engage both with the text and with each other in a way that's familiar.

- I prepare detailed handouts for every meeting. Each consists of a review, a lecture, and a set of discussion questions. I prepare them with several goals in mind: to explain arguments I've extracted from the readings, to reinforce the skills I'd like you to practice in *Perusall*, and to provide a reference for discussion.
- **It's important to me that you have access to me outside of class.** As a result, I encourage you to come to office hours! You don't have to have a question or comment worked out to come. We can simply chat about your interests in and/or outside of class! **If you're not comfortable,** however, *always* feel free to send me an email with your questions and/or comments!

As a result, I don't avoid assigning difficult material. When we collaborate, there's no need; we figure it out together. More than that collaborative philosophical communities are inclusive, then, they enable rigorous philosophical engagement. And *that's* ultimately what we're after.

ASSIGNMENTS

There will be 4 kinds of assignments in this class and they will be graded according to UT-A's official scheme.

1. **Annotations [25/100]:** I ask that you annotate *every* reading I assign in *Perusall*. This will require that you **comment on one of my and/or your classmates' annotations.** I'll prepare these several days in advance and **you'll have until the end of the relevant week to complete them!** I'll excuse 5 annotations though I ask that you tell me which you intend to skip! Really, that's to make grading easy.
 - You can find detailed **directions** in "**Assignments.**"
2. **Reading responses [50 [25x2]/100]:** I ask that you write two **prompted** reading responses. They should be between **800 and 1,000 words.**
 - You can find detailed **directions** in "**Assignments.**"
3. **Oral exam [25/100]:** I lieu of a written exam, I ask that you schedule a time to meet with me between weeks 13 and 16 to talk some philosophy. I expect that we'll talk for roughly 20 minutes.
 - You can find detailed **directions** in "**Assignments.**"
4. **Extra credit [1%]:** I'll give you the opportunity to earn extra credit – over spring break! – by (a) watching *Spring Breakers* and (b) writing a film review about it!

➤ You can find detailed directions in “Assignments.”

SCHEDULE

| WEEK | DAY | IN GENERAL | IN PARTICULAR | | READ IN <i>PERUSALL</i> | WRITE | REMEMBER! |
|----------|------|---|--|---|--|-------|---------------------|
| 1 | 1/10 | Introduction | What is philosophy? | | | | |
| | 1/12 | | What is philosophy of /and film? | | | | |
| 2 | 1/17 | What will <i>we</i> be asking/not asking? | <u>Tools:</u> definition, *definition, and ground | <u>Activity!</u> Name that argument! | [1] <i>Blue Velvet</i> (Clip) [2] Ebert’s “My problem with <i>Blue Velvet</i> ” | | Annotations! |
| | 1/19 | Why should we care about film? | Films are bad for us. | Films are good for us. | [1] Plato, <i>The Republic</i> [2] Raimi’s <i>Evil Dead</i> (Clip) [3] Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> and [4] Aster’s <i>Hereditary</i> (Clip) | | |
| 3 | 1/24 | What is “art status”? | <u>Tools:</u> mind-dependence | Is art status subjective? | [1] Hume, “On the Standard of Taste” [2] Kubala, “Art and Aesthetic Properties” (Part 1) | | |
| | 1/26 | | <u>Tools:</u> mind-independence | Is art status objective? | [1] Kant, <i>Critique of Practical Reason</i> [2] Kubala, “Art and Aesthetic Properties” (Part 2) | | |
| 4 | 1/31 | Are films art? | What constrains answers to this question? | | Boardman, Film Ontology: Extension, Criteria, and Candidates (Part 1) | | |
| | 2/2 | | No! | | Scruton, “Photography and Representation” | | |

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| 5 | 2/7 | What is a film? | Realism | Boardman, Film Ontology: Extension, Criteria, and Candidates (Part 2) | | |
| | 2/9 | | Illusionism and Imaginationism | Boardman, Film Ontology: Extension, Criteria, and Candidates (Part 3) | | |
| 6 | 2/14 | | Oneirism and Symbolism | Boardman, Film Ontology: Extension, Criteria, and Candidates (Part 4) | | |
| | 2/16 | | Cognitivism | Boardman, Film Ontology: Extension, Criteria, and Candidates (Part 5) | | |
| 7 | 2/21 | | Review, Viewing, and Discussion!: Liu's <i>Minding the Gap</i> | | | |
| | 2/23 | | | | | |
| 8 | 2/28 | What are we perceiving when we watch films? | Transparency | Moura, "Show and Tell: The Identification of Documentary Film" (Part 1) | | |
| | 2/30 | | | Moura, "Show and Tell: The Identification of Documentary Film" (Part 2) | | |
| 9 | 3/7 | | Depiction | Wiltsher & Meskin, "The Moving Image" | | |
| | 3/9 | | Keating, "The Art of Cinematography" | | | |

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| | 3/14 | Spring break! | | | | Watch good films, have good food and good conversations, and <u>take a break!</u> |
| | 3/16 | | | | | |
| 10 | 3/21 | What are films “about”? | Intentionalism | | Extra credit review of Korine’s <i>Spring Breakers</i> due by 12pm CST | Annotations! |
| | 3/23 | | | Carroll, “The Intentional Fallacy: Defending Myself” (Part 1) | | |
| 11 | 3/28 | | Anti-intentionalism | [1] Carroll, “The Intentional Fallacy: Defending Myself” (Part 2) [2] Dickie “Intentions: Conversations and Art” (Part 1) | | |
| | 3/30 | | | Dickie “Intentions: Conversations and Art” (Part 2) | | |
| 12 | 4/4 | Can we be right about which films are good/bad? | No! | Uidhir & Oliveira, “Aesthetic Higher-Order Evidence for Subjectivists” (Part 1) | 2nd reading response due @ 12am CST | |
| | 4/6 | | | Uidhir & Oliveira, “Aesthetic Higher-Order Evidence for Subjectivists” (Part 2) | | |

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| 13 | 4/11 | | Yes! | [1] Kant, <i>Critique of Judgment</i> [2] Hegel, <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i> | | Oral exams! |
| | 4/13 | | | [1] Jordan's <i>Things (Clip)</i> [2] Kubrick's <i>The Shining (Clip)</i> | | |
| 14 | 4/18 | Can films "do philosophy"? | Yes! | [1] Sinnerbrink, "Filmosophy/Film as Philosophy" [2] Turvey, "Avant-Garde Films as Philosophy" [3] Laugier, "Films as Moral Education" | | |
| | 4/20 | | No! | Neiva, "Are There Definite Objections to Film as Philosophy?" | | |
| 15 | 4/25 | | Filmosophy: Love | | | |
| | 4/27 | You choose! | TBD! | | | |
| 16 | 5/2 | Conclusion | What now? | | | |
| | 5/4 | | | | | |