

WEIMAR CINEMA

ENG 6138 Studies in Film: Weimar Cinema

GET 6295 Weimar Cinema

Associate Professor Barbara Mennel

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:00-11:00am and by appointment

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Course description:

This course covers the classic cinema of the Weimar Republic organized around the tensions of modernity. We will address the origins of genre, such as science fiction, melodrama, mountain film, and the city film, while paying particular attention to gender and sexuality in such films as *Pandora's Box*, *The Blue Angel*, and *Girls in Uniform*. Urban space will feature as a central topic in discussions of *Berlin: Symphony of a City* and *The Last Laugh*. An understanding of orientalism will guide our discussion of *Prince Ahmed*. While the course offers a survey of canonical films of the period, such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Nosferatu*, *The Golem*, and *M*, it also opens up debates about avantgarde film and marginal genres, such as advertising and the interactive "rebus" films. Addressing aesthetic, institutional, and socio-political concerns, we will emphasize early and contemporary approaches to Weimar Cinema. Authors include Béla Balázs, Walter Benjamin, Lotte Eisner, Thomas Elsaesser, Sabine Hake, Anton Kaes, and Siegfried Kracauer. Knowledge of German is not required for this course.

This is a reading- and writing intensive course. Writing assignments mirror scholarly genres of the book review, abstract (or proposal or prospectus), research paper, anonymous review, and the revision process for a final paper. Because all writing assignments are related to your research, the organization of the syllabus frontloads reading, particularly in Week One. Keep in mind that the immediate immersion in the different theoretical approaches to the Weimar Republic will create time for you to conduct your own research project in the latter half of the semester. This structure also means, however, that you should think about the topic of your research paper relatively early (before deciding on the book, which you will review). This does not imply that you have to decide the topic of your final paper in detail, but it does mean that you should consider what kind of research questions you bring to the material at hand, which films interest you, what kinds of connection you see to other themes that you have studied, and, finally, that you read the secondary literature and watch the films with an eye to formulating your own project. The writing assignments, collaborative exercises, and the structure of the syllabus emulate the organizational processes of academic research and scholarly genres in film studies. In order for exchanges of work to function, all deadlines are absolutely final. Late submission will result in downgrading in assignments that receive letter grades and those that do not.

I reserve the right to modify the syllabus; I might have to adjust the syllabus in November to accommodate my attendance of a workshop. Finally, I will also attempt to have at least one screening on 16 mm.

Required Reading:

Books:

- Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory: Visible Man and The Spirit of Film.* Ed. by Erica Carter. Transl. by Rodney Livingstone. New York: Berghahn Books, 2010.
- Lotte H. Eisner. *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008 (1952).
- Thomas Elsaesser. *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary.* London: Routledge, 2000.
- Siegfried Kracauer. *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004 (1947).
- Siegfried Kracauer. *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays.* Transl., ed. and with an intro. by Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era.* Ed. Noah Isenberg. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Optional additional titles:

- Stephen J. Lee. *The Weimar Republic.* New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Karen Gocsik, Richard Barsam, and Dave Monahan. *Writing about Movies.* New York: W.W.Norton, 2013.
- Colin Storer. *A Short History of the Weimar Republic.* New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013.

Two additional articles will be able on sakai.

Grading:

Oral participation and attendance (letter grade)	10%		
Book review (letter grade)	20%	October 17	(4:05pm)
Proposal/Abstract for Final Paper (no letter grade)	10%	October 31	(4:05pm)
Draft of Final Paper (no letter grade)	10%	December 2	(5:00pm)
Response to Draft (no letter grade)	10%	December 4	(5:00pm)
Final Paper (letter grade)	40%	December 11	(5:00pm)

Electronic submission:

You may submit all written assignments electronically by the due date and time. Please make sure to be available and be able to produce a hard copy until you have received a respond email from me verifying that I received your email with your final paper and I was able to print it out. If you submit a hard copy of your paper to either of my mailboxes for any of these assignments, send a follow-up email to ensure that I have received your paper and confirm that I have received your paper.

Book review:

This assignment asks for a publishable book review of a scholarly book preferably published in 2012 or 2013 that addresses the topic of this class. The book review should be 500-1000 words (2-4 pages). We will discuss examples of book reviews in class prior to the due date. It is in your own interest to review a book that you will use in your final paper; for that purpose I also accept reviews of books with earlier publication dates.

Proposal/ abstract:

I require that you submit a proposal/abstract for your final paper, which should be about 250 words single-spaced with a bibliography (min. four titles). The proposal/abstract has to include the following:

- 1) Tentative title of your final paper
- 2) A brief description of your topic with research question(s), methodology, and the titles of the film(s) that you will discuss
- 3) A short and representative bibliography

You will hand in the proposal (abstract) to me and to a number of fellow students, depending on the course's final headcount of students. You will receive feedback from me in written form and from your fellow students in a small-group discussion. Please keep in mind that good questions are often very helpful in clarifying research projects.

Draft of Final Paper:

You will hand in a draft of your final paper to me and one other student in class and you will receive written comments from both of us. This feedback will help you revise your research paper for final submission. Because I will have provided written comments on your abstract, my comments on your draft will be in the form of track changes or hand-written comments on paper. The feedback from your fellow-student will be in form of a written response.

Response to Draft:

You will read and respond to the draft of the final paper by one of your classmates. I will provide one or two articles about how to write a productive review of an essay. Your response should point out strengths and areas of possible improvement as specific as possible. The response should be approximately 1-2 pages. You will submit one copy of your response to your fellow student and one to me. I will create pairs (and if need be, a group of three) based on your research interests.

Final Paper:

The final paper of 12-16 pages represents research on a topic related to the course.

Plagiarism and Cheating:

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of the intellectual works of others, including websources, friends' papers, published and unpublished work. I prosecute plagiarism and cheating to the fullest extend possible at UF. The minimum punishment

for plagiarism is that you will fail this class and that I will submit your name, an account of the incident, and documentation to the graduate coordinator of your major.

Classroom behavior and cell phone, ipad, and laptop use:

It is self-understood that graduate students attend all meetings on time, except for reasons of extenuating circumstances and sickness. In those cases, you should try to reach me before class meeting. Staying up late to read is not an excuse to be absent from class and an unreliable bus is not an excuse for late attendance. I also expect that graduate students are prepared in regard to assigned readings and viewings and participate in discussion regularly and voluntarily. If not, I make it a habit of calling on students. The use of cell phones, ipads, or laptops for extracurricular activity is not permitted in class. It should go without saying that in a graduate seminar texting and surfing the web is absolutely inappropriate and unacceptable.

Course outline:

Week 1

R August 22 Introduction

Week 2

Monday, August 26

Robert Wiene. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920)

Thursday, August 29

Lotte H. Eisner. *The Haunted Screen*: 9-94.

Siegfried Kracauer. *From Caligari to Hitler*: 15-76.

Thomas Elsaesser. *Weimar Cinema and After*: 3-142.

Stefan Andriopoulos. "Suggestion, Hypnosis, and Crime: Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920)." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide*: 13-54.

Week 3

Monday, September 2--No Screening: Labor Day

Watch outside of class: F.W. Murnau. *Nosferatu* (1922) [16mm screening?]

Thursday, September 5

Lotte H. Eisner. *The Haunted Screen*: 95-170.

Siegfried Kracauer. *From Caligari to Hitler*: 77-95.

Thomas Elsaesser. *Weimar Cinema and After*: 145-258.

Thomas Elsaesser. "No End to *Nosferatu* (1922)." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide*: 79-94.

Week 4

Monday, September 9

Paul Wegener. *The Golem: How He Came into the World* (1920)

Thursday, September 12

Lotte H. Eisner. *The Haunted Screen*: 171-206.Noah Isenberg. "Of Monsters and Magicians: Paul Wegener's *The Golem: How He Came into the World* (1920)." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide*: 33-54.Thomas Y. Levin. "Introduction." Siegfried Kracauer. *The Mass Ornament*: 1-30.

Week 5

Monday, September 16

F.W. Murnau. *The Last Laugh* (1924) [16mm screening?]

Thursday, September 19

Lotte H. Eisner. *The Haunted Screen*: 207-221.Siegfried Kracauer. *From Caligari to Hitler*: 96-128.Sabine Hake. "Who Gets the Last Laugh? Old Age and Generational Change in F. W. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (1924)." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide*: 115-133.Siegfried Kracauer. "The Hotel Lobby." *The Mass Ornament*: 173-185."Notes on Translation, Glossary and Abbreviations." *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory*: i-xiii.Erica Carter. "Introduction." *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory*: xv-xxvii.

Week 6

Monday, September 23

Lotte Reiniger. *The Adventures of Prince Ahmed* (1926)

Thursday, September 26

Siegfried Kracauer. "External and Internal Objects" and "The Movies." *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*: 47-140 and 281-328.*Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory*: 1-90.**By today you should have decided which book you will review, because you have to schedule time to access the title, read it, and write and edit the review.**

Week 7

Monday, September 30

Walter Ruttmann. *Berlin: Symphony of a City* (1927)

Thursday, October 3

Siegfried Kracauer. *From Caligari to Hitler*: 131-199.*Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory*: 91-158.

Nora Alter. "Berlin, Symphony of a Great City (1927): City, Image, Sound." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide*: 193-216.

Week 8

Monday, October 7

Fritz Lang. *Metropolis* (1927)

Thursday, October 10

Lotte Eisner. *The Haunted Screen*: 223-293.

Anton Kaes. "Metropolis (1927): City, Cinema, Modernity." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide*: 193-191.

Siegfried Kracauer. "Lead-In: Natural Geometry." *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*: 33-44; "The Group as Bearer of Ideas." *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*: 143-170.

Week 9

Monday, October 14

G.W. Pabst. *Pandora's Box* (1929)

Thursday, October 17

Margaret McCarthy. "Surface Sheen and Charged Bodies: Louise Brooks as Lulu in *Pandora's Box* (1929)." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide*: 217-236.

Lotte H. Eisner. *The Haunted Screen*: 295-307.

Thomas Elsaesser. *Weimar Cinema and After*: 259-292.

Due: Book review

Week 10

Monday, October 21

Arnold Fanck. *The White Hell of Pitz Palü* (1929)

Thursday, October 24

Lotte Eisner. *The Haunted Screen*: 309-345.

Thomas Elsaesser. *Weimar Cinema and After*: 295-358.

By today you should know your final paper topic and have begun research, so that you are able to submit the abstract next week.

Week 11

Monday, October 28

Josef von Sternberg. *The Blue Angel*. (1930)

Thursday, October 31

Due: Abstracts

Siegfried Kracauer. *From Caligari to Hitler*: 203-272.

Patrice Petro. "National Cinemas/International Film Culture: *The Blue Angel* (1930) in Multiple Language Versions." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide*: 255-270.

Week 12

Monday, November 4

Leontine Sagan. *Girls in Uniform* (1931)

Thursday, November 7

Richard W. McCormick. "Coming Out of the Uniform: Political and Sexual Emancipation in Leontine Sagan's *Mädchen in Uniform*." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide*: 271-289.
Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory: 159-234.

Discussion of abstracts in small groups

Week 13

Monday, November 11-No Screening-Veteran's Day

Watch Fritz Lang. *M* (1931)

Thursday, November 14

Todd Herzog. "Fritz Lang's *M* (1931): An Open Case." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Reader*: 291-301.

Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." (1936)
 [sakai]

Siegfried Kracauer. "On the Writings of Walter Benjamin." *The Mass Ornament*: 259-264.

Week 14

Monday, November 18

Shorts: DADA, Avantgarde, Rebus film, and Advertising

Thursday, November 21

Thomas Elsaesser. *Weimar Cinema and After*: 361-444.

Siegfried Kracauer. *From Caligari to Hitler*: 275-308.

Michael Cowan. "Moving Picture Puzzles: Training Urban Perception in the Weimar 'Rebus Films'." *Screen* 51: 3 (Autumn 2010): 197-218. [sakai]

Week 15

Monday, November 25--Presentations of final projects with pizza (final meeting of the semester)

Thursday, November 28 Thanksgiving—NO CLASS

Week 16

Monday, December 2

Due: Draft of final paper to one/two fellow students and to Barbara Mennel via email or alternative arrangements by 5:00pm

Wednesday, December 4 (last day of classes)

Due: Written response to final paper draft of your fellow-student to said student and Barbara Mennel in email by 5:00pm

Final paper due: Wednesday, December 11, by 5:00pm

You may submit your paper before the deadline and by the deadline via email. Consider your paper submitted successfully the moment you receive my response email that I have received your email and was able to open your attachment. Until that point, be sure to keep an electronic copy of your paper and be able to submit a hard copy if necessary.