

ENG 3121 / GET 3520: Film History 1 (Fall 2018)**Professor: Trevor Mowchun**

Class: TUR 2322—Tuesday, periods 5-6 (11:45am-1:40pm); Thursday, period 6 (12:50pm-1:40pm)

Screening: ROL 115—Monday, periods 9-11 (4:05pm-7:05pm)

Office hours (TUR 4356): Monday 12:15pm-1:45pm, and Thursday 2:30pm-4:00pm, or by appointment.

Email: tmowchun@ufl.edu Should you prefer to contact me via email please allow 24 hours for a response.

Office phone number: 352-294-2855

Description

This course charts the history of film through the complex evolution and periodic transformation of the technology and aesthetic language of the medium from its inception at the end of the 19th century to World War II. Using Siegfried Kracauer's seminal and wide-ranging text *Theory of Film* as a guide, we will consider and debate three theses: 1. The history of film is embedded within the medium of film itself as a multifarious technology and rich mode of expression. 2. The evolution of film over time, as a medium which is in constant flux, is inseparable from the history of film, also in constant flux. 3. Cinema's innate propensity for realism harbors an ethic of fidelity to historical events, yet cinema's passion for formalism suggests that history is inescapably mediated at all times by human subjectivity and the art of fiction. Informed and inspired by these hypotheses, an international and aesthetically diverse corpus of films will be put in dialogue with Kracauer's analyses of cinema's historical evolution, one which extends simultaneously outwards towards social reality and inwards towards our inner spiritual reality. We will also challenge and perhaps amuse ourselves with speculations like the following: What sort of path is the history of film walking on? Is film history bringing us closer to or further away from a sense of the real? Does each and every film wrestle with its nature as both fact and fiction? Is the shift from film to digital yet another transformation in film history, or does it mark the beginning of a new history altogether?

Required Reading

Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997) *Available on 2-hour reserve at Library West; new and used copies can be purchased through Amazon or other online sources; the opening sections of the book are available as a digital file on the course reserves tab on Canvas

Schedule

* Supplementary readings may be added during the semester

* Screenings are subject to change

- Week 1 (August 23): Introduction

- Week 2 (August 27-28, 30)
 Reading: Introduction/Chapter 1—Photography
 Screening: *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, France, 1962); *Man With a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, USSR, 1929)

- Week 3 (September 4, 6) *No screening class on Monday September 3: Labor Day **Try to view the film materials on your own
 Reading: Chapter 2—Basic Concepts
 Screening (shorts):
 Auguste and Louis Lumière (France): *Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory*, 1895; *The Arrival of the Train at la Ciotât*, 1895; *Feeding the Baby*, 1895; *The Sprinkler Sprinkled*, 1895; *Snowball Fight*, 1896
 Georges Méliès (France): *Voyage to the Moon*, 1902; *The Wonderful Living Fan*, 1904
 Screening (feature): *Sunrise* (F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1927)

- Week 4 (September 10-11, 13)
 Reading: Chapter 3—The Establishment of Physical Existence
 Screening (short): *Zero for Conduct* (Jean Vigo, France, 1933)
 Screening (feature): *Broken Blossoms* (D.W. Griffith, USA, 1919)

- Week 5 (September 17-18, 20)
 Reading: Chapter 4—Inherent Affinities
 Screening: *People on Sunday* (Robert Siodmak and Edgar G. Ulmer, Germany, 1930)

- Week 6 (September 24-25, 27)
 Reading: Chapter 5—History and Fantasy
 Screening: *Vampyr* (Carl Theodore Dreyer, Germany/France, 1932)

- Week 7 (October 1-2, 4)
 Reading: Chapter 6—Remarks on the Actor
 Screening: *The General* (Buster Keaton, USA, 1926)

- Week 8 (October 8-9, 11)
 Reading: Chapter 7—Dialogue and Sound
 Screening: *Modern Times* (Charlie Chaplin, USA, 1936)

- Week 9 (October 15-16, 18)
 Reading: Chapter 8—Music

Screening: *Swing Time* (George Stevens, USA, 1936)

- Week 10 (October 22-23, 25)

Reading: Chapter 9—The Spectator

Screening (short): *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, France, 1929)

Screening (feature): *Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1925)

- Week 11 (October 29-30, November 1)

Reading: Chapter 10—Experimental Film

Screening (shorts): *Ballet Mécanique* (Fernand Léger, France, 1924); *Anémic Cinéma* (Marcel Duchamp, France, 1926); *Le Tempêteire* (Jean Epstein, France, 1947)

Screening (feature): *The Blood of a Poet* (Jean Cocteau, France, 1932)

- Week 12 (November 5-6, 8)

Reading: Chapter 11—The Film of Fact

Screening (shorts): *The Sea Horse* (Jean Painlevé, France, 1933); *Similarities Between Length and Speed* (Jean Painlevé, France, 1937)

Screening: *Man of Aran* (Robert Flaherty, Ireland, 1934)

- Week 13 (November 12-13, 15) *No screening class on Monday November 12: Veteran's Day
**Try to view the film materials on your own

Reading: Chapter 12—The Theatrical Story, and Chapter 13—Interlude: Film and Novel

Screening (short): *The Tell-Tale Heart* (Charles F. Klein, USA, 1928)

Screening (feature): *The Rules of the Game* (Jean Renoir, France, 1939)

- Week 14 (November 19-20, 22) *No class on Thursday November 22: Thanksgiving

Reading: Chapter 14—The Found Story and the Episode

Screening: *Paisan* (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1946)

- Week 15 (November 26-27, 29)

Reading: Chapter 15—Matters of Content

Screening: *Rashomon* (Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1950)

- Week 16 (December 3-4)

Reading: Chapter 16—Film in Our Time

Screening: TBA

Coursework

* Submission of written material: I require hardcopies of all written assignments, submitted in class and on time. If you are unable to submit your work in class, please email me a PDF file on the due date. Use 1.5 or double spacing.

Two response papers (2-4 pages each): Response papers are short yet thoughtful engagements with the readings and films explored in class. The goal is not to summarize anything or toss quick and easy answers to complex artistic and historical phenomena. Rather these papers are opportunities to contemplate, experiment and build a deeper understanding of the course content in a more direct, imaginative and unsystematic way.

Final paper (6-8 pages, maximum 10 pages): The final paper will be a more formal and substantial consideration of a topic of your own choosing. You may expand and develop one of your response papers that you feel is worth pursuing in greater depth and perhaps contains the seeds of a larger research project. However, you are also free to start from scratch if a new set of ideas and connections emerge in your thinking. It is highly recommended that you discuss the overall direction and details of your final paper with me during office hours or via email, especially if you plan on pursuing ideas not yet tackled in your response papers. Refrain from blindly adopting the perspectives and convictions of the readings. Instead, use the course material as a theoretical foundation and/or inspiration for concrete analyses involving the films screened in class. Be sure to include at least 3-5 other sources of scholarship and branch your analysis beyond the films and into the context in which they were made. Please do not regurgitate readings or lecture notes—strive for a balance between your own ideas and those discussed in class. Possible directions for the final paper will be provided later in the semester.

Video essay (optional): For a final research project, students may explore the scholarly, artistic, and/or pedagogical possibilities of the video essay instead of writing a paper. The conceptualization and realization of a short video essay is also an opportunity to combine the intellectual rigor of the scholarly essay *and* the aesthetic power of a work of art. In the process, we will test to what extent a video essay can do film history and reach the depth, detail and precision of written essays. Students can proceed, for example, by activating concepts taken from the readings and/or lectures to create an audiovisual interpretation/contextualization of at least one film screened in class. Any approach will require some outside research and a proposal or script. Please note that the video essay option is an ambitious undertaking which involves more time, resources, and basic filmmaking proficiency. Let me know as soon as possible if you are interested in pursuing this option.

Participation: There are other ways to participate in this course in addition to in-class discussions. You can meet with me during office hours, write emails with questions and reflections, or present a course-specific research notebook at the end of semester.

Evaluation and Due Dates

Two response papers (2-4 pages each): 50% (Due: October 4 and November 8)

Final essay (6-8 pages, maximum 10 pages), or video essay option (4-10 minutes): 40% (Due: December 14)

Participation: 10%

Important Information

* Attendance: Regular attendance for classes and screenings is mandatory. If you have to miss a class for any reason, then please let me know ahead of time. A maximum of 2 absences will be permitted

with advance notice and a reasonable excuse. Communication with the instructor is crucial to avoid misunderstandings related to absences. These policies are consistent with the UF's attendance policies.

For more information on these policies, please visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

* I respectfully ask all students to refrain from using cell phones and internet during class and screenings.

* Please do not record any class lecture without permission from me.

* Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

* Students with disabilities who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://drc.dso.ufl.edu/>).

* For information on UF Grading policies:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

* For counseling or urgent help you may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center at 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/services/individual/>

* UF's policy on Harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty:

<https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/sexual-harassment/>