

East/West: European Art Cinema

ENG 4133 #13956

EUS 3100 #13682

Instructor: Peter Gitto

Class: MWF 5 (11:45 AM - 12:35 PM) Turlington 2322

Screening: Thursday 9 - 11 (4:05 PM - 7:05 PM) Rolfs 115

Office: Turlington 4340

Office hours: MW period 6 and by appointment

Course Description

This course will cover Eastern European films within an interdisciplinary framework. Particularly, we will study contemporary art cinema from the post-socialist (or post-communist) region and its political context.¹ We will focus on films from Russia, Poland, and Hungary. To contextualize the films' style, we will study some examples of the Western European art cinema. We also consider the films' circulation in film festivals.

Situated stylistically between Hollywood and the avant-garde, art cinema commands a heightened formalism of the image and is often created with international audiences in mind. We consider the circulation of the medium through European film festivals such as Cannes. We question, for instance, the political implications of screening at Cannes a sharp critique of Putin's Russia: does the director play to anti-Russian sentiments? A variety of readings from cinema studies, politics, and history will contextualize the films. The course includes a weekly film screening time, and students will watch some movies independently.

While primarily a film course, students will also gain knowledge of issues confronting post-socialist countries, such as privatization, corruption, economic disparity, ideological shift, nostalgia, and the political uses of history. Students will be encouraged to think in terms of international relations considering the global circulation of the art cinema. Additionally, the course models how to meld aesthetic and political critique into film analysis.

The course will begin with films that confront the Soviet period, which we place in dialogue with two opposing views: on the one hand, post-communist nostalgia and on the other, mourning for an unresolved, violent past. For instance, we will consider the Western European co-production *The Death of Stalin* (2018) and the Kremlin's censorship of the film. Next, we will study French-Polish productions which allegorize East/West relations and the move away from communism. For example, we will discuss how the representation of the French Revolution's terror in *Danton* (1983) metaphorically advocates for nonviolence in Polish Solidarity. We will also consider filmmakers' transition from communism to post-communism using Krzysztof Kieślowski as a case study.

¹ A note on terminology: The English-speaking political world tends to use the term communism to refer to the Marxist-Leninist system of governance which held power from roughly 1917-1989 in the Eurasian region. Communism as actually practiced was termed socialism, as the states believed they had not reached their definition of full communism. When discussing Eastern Europe, scholars working in English tend to use communism and socialism interchangeably.

After thinking through introductory issues about the Soviet past and the transitional period, we study the roots of art cinema, exemplified by Michelangelo Antonioni's oeuvre. We also consider contemporary permutations of the style with recent Cannes films from Western Europe. We read theory about the genre's form and history on the post-WWII political foundations of the film festival. Following this, we see how Hungarian and Russian directors appropriate the style.

In the following unit, readings will contextualize two Hungarian films around the memory of the 1956 Revolution, the image of the political corpse, and the post-socialist economic transition. Finally, we discuss Russian director Andrei Zvyagintsev's work within the context of Putin's rule, the petrostate, and the 2011-12 Moscow protests of election fraud.

Texts

Readings will consist of selected articles and PDFs of book chapters and sections, which will be distributed electronically via canvas. Students should have access to, and be able to refer to, the day's assigned reading in class. You may print out the selection or view it on your laptop or tablet.

Grading

15% Verbal Participation
 20% Reading Précis: 2 at 10% each
 20% Film Responses: 2 at 10% each
 15% Midterm take-home essays
 15% Final take-home essays
 15% Cannes Festival group project and presentation

*Papers will be submitted as stapled hardcopies and be uploaded to canvas before class. Papers should be double spaced, with 12 pt. font and 1-inch margins. Put only your name and paper topic at the top.

*Participation includes attendance, doing the assigned readings thoroughly and on time, watching the films attentively and critically, and contributing participation that enhances the quality of the class in discussions or otherwise. Verbal participation is graded on quality as well as quantity. Students should come to class prepared with valuable comments about the films, readings, and concepts.

Course Policies

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Missing class will not only put you behind in terms of course material, but will also deprive the class of your contributions to discussion. You may miss up to four class meetings or screenings (all together, a week of class) before your grade is affected. Illnesses and emergencies count as part of the excused 4 meetings. If you miss a fifth class, your final grade will be lowered one-third of a letter grade (from A- to B+, for example) for each additional absence. If you miss six class sessions regardless of circumstances, you fail the course automatically.

Attendance at screenings is mandatory for the duration of the film. If you anticipate you will be unable to attend screenings, you should choose another course section or take another class. Scheduled exams during a screening period count towards your 4 excused absences.

Tardiness: *Two tardies (arriving after class has started) =one absence*. If you are more than 10 mins late to class, that is an absence. During a double or single period, if you leave early you will be marked absent.

Attendance sign in sheet will circulate the first minute of class. If you miss this circulation, it is your responsibility to sign in as tardy after class has finished.

If you are absent, please ask a fellow student for info on what was missed. Make arrangements with a fellow student and get their contact info.

Use these absences wisely in case of extenuating circumstances. Please consult with me concerning circumstances such as major illness or family difficulties. The only exemptions are for university-sponsored activities such as musical performances and athletic competition, court-imposed obligations such as jury duty or subpoena, and religious holidays. Absences of students who participate in athletic or extracurricular activities fall under the University's "Twelve-Day Rule," and may be permitted in those conditions to make up missed work without penalty. Please note, however, that you must, whenever this is reasonably possible, discuss these absences with me in advance in order to avoid being marked absent.

Classroom Behavior: Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diverse student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own.

Phone/ technology policy: Students who text during class will face attendance-related penalties. Phones should remain in your bag or pocket during class. If I see you using your phone during class I will mark you absent. Laptops and Tablets should be used for classroom related purposes only (note-taking, viewing class readings). If you distract the instructor or a fellow student due to inappropriate use of laptop or tablet, you will be marked absent.

****During film screenings, all devices should be stowed away.** A lit monitor is highly distracting in a theater environment.

Statement on plagiarism and academic honesty: All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Graded Materials: Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a re-submission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.

Statement on harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual>

Schedule Dates are due dates for papers, assignments, and readings. Schedule and assignments may change at instructor's discretion. Attendance at screenings is mandatory. You may be assigned some additional films to view on your own.

Week 1 of Jan 7, Post-communist transition and Ostalgie

M: Course Introduction

W: Leslie Holmes, "On Communism and Post-Communism"

Thursday Screening (S): *Goodbye, Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker 2003 Germany)

F: film discussion

Week 2 of Jan 14, Mourning the Stalinist past

M: intro/photo due; Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied*—"Introduction" and "Chapter 1: Mimetic and Subversive"

W: con't Etkind

S: *Burnt by the Sun* (Nikita Mikhalkov 1994 Russia)

F: readings on *Burnt by the Sun*

Week 3 of Jan 21, Transnational critique and Russian censorship

M: Holiday, no class

W: Marc Bennetts, "Moscow police raid cinema showing *The Death of Stalin*" (The Guardian)
Bahun and Haynes, "Questioning and Questing: Restaging State Socialist Cinema"

S: *The Death of Stalin* (Armando Iannucci 2018 Britain, et al.)

F: film discussion

Week 4 of Jan 28, Kieślowski under communism

M: Aniko Imre, "Eastern European cinema from *No End* to the End"

W: Jane Curry, "Poland: The Politics of God's Playground"

S: *No End* (Krzysztof Kieślowski 1985 Poland)

F: Marek Haltof, "*No End: Requiem for Solidarity*"; film discussion

Week 5 of Feb 4, Historical Allegory and Polish Solidarity

M: Polish Solidarity and the French Revolution

W: Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (on national allegory)

S: *Danton* (Andrzej Wajda 1983 Poland/France)

F: Janina Falkowska, "The Historical Discourse in *Danton*" *The Political Films of Andrzej Wajda* (1996)

Week 6 of Feb 11, Kieślowski's Transnational turn

M: Andrew C. Janos, "From Eastern Empire to Western Hegemony: East Central Europe under Two International Regimes"

W: intro to *Three Colors* trilogy

S: *Three Colors: White* (Krzysztof Kieślowski 1994 Poland/France)

F: Marek Haltof, "Three Colours: White" *The Cinema of Kieslowski (Director's Cuts Editions)*

Week 7 of Feb 18, European art cinema: foundations and style

M: lecture—European art cinema: style and film festivals; Dudley Andrew, “Forward to Global Art Cinema”

W: Galt and Schoonover, “Introduction to *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories*”

S: *L’eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni 1962 Italy)

F: Gilberto Perez, “*L’eclisse*: Antonioni and Vitti”

Week 8 of Feb 25, Film festivals as public spheres

M: Wong, “Publics and counterpublics: Rethinking film festivals as public spheres”
“History of the Cannes Festival (Cannes website)”

W: in-class: work on essays

S: no screening

F: Midterm essays due

Week 9 Spring BreakWeek 10 of Mar 11, Contemporary art cinema

M: lecture—European art cinema: films and international scope

W: Randall Halle, “Offering tales they want to hear: Transnational European film funding as Neo-Orientalism”

S: *The Square* (Ruben Ostlund 2017 Sweden)

F: film discussion

Week 11 of Mar 18, Demodern Aesthetics and Hungarian history

M: Antoine DeBaecque, “Demodern Aesthetics: Filming the End of Communism” in *Camera Historica: the Century in Cinema*

W: con’t DeBaecque reading

S: *Taxidermia* (György Pálfi 2006 Hungary)

F: Steven Shaviro, “Body Horror and Post-Socialist Cinema: György Pálfi’s *Taxidermia*”

Week 12 of Mar 25, Representations of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution

M: in class: group work on presentations

W: James Wood, “Madness and Civilization: The Very Strange Fictions of László Krasznahorkai”

S: *Werckmeister Harmonies* (Béla Tarr 2000 Hungary)

F: Beverly James, *Imagining Postcommunism: Visual Narratives of Hungary’s 1956 Revolution*, “The Destruction of the Stalin Monument”

Week 13 of April 1, Contemporary Russia: economic disparity and protest

M: presentations;

W: Alexander Etkind, “Genres and genders of protest in Russia’s petrostate” in *Cultural Forms of Protest in Russia*; watch *My Perestroika* (dir. Robin Hessman 2010) independently before today’s class.

S: *Elena* (Andrei Zvyagintsev 2011 Russia)

F: film discussion

Week 14 of April 8, Allegories of Putin's Russia

M: presentations

W: Anna Arutunyan, *The Putin Mystique: Inside Russia's Power Cult*, "Introduction"

S: *Leviathan* (Andrei Zvyagintsev 2014 Russia)

F: film discussion

Week 15 of April 15, Allegories of Putin's Russia

M: presentations

W: Vlad Strukov, "Theorizing Contemporary Russian Cinema"

S: *Loveless* (Andrei Zvyagintsev 2017 Russia)

F: Sergey Dobrynin, "*Loveless*" *Kinokultura*

Week 16 of April 22

M: in-class: work on essays; Shekhovtsov, "Conventional bedfellows: The Russian propaganda machine and the Western Far Right"

W: Last day of course; Final essays due