

## **Work in Film**

ENG 4936 (3119) Honors Seminar

Associate Professor Barbara Mennel

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-2:00pm, Thursdays 2:00-4:00pm and by appointment

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Course meetings: Wednesdays periods 9-11 (4:05-7:05pm) in TUR 2322

Film screenings: Monday periods E1-E3 (7:20-10:10pm) in TUR 2322

### **Course description:**

The course will offer an overview of the depiction of work in cinema. The course addresses the intersection of time/motion studies in visual culture and industrial production, such as Taylorism and Fordism. We will investigate the role of work for political cinema and in socialist realism of the former East Bloc. We will study important examples of feminist films about housework and wage labor. We discuss how films respond to exploitation, unemployment, and the shift from industrial to post-industrial labor. How can film, a medium associated with entertainment, capture the drudgery of work without losing its audience or its appeal? In answering this question, we will survey some of the most important documentaries about work and some of cinema's key genres, such as the comedy and melodrama. The course will provide a historical overview of the filmic depiction of work. Readings will include texts from film studies, but also sociology, political science, anthropology, labor studies, management studies, and history.

### **Course Goals and Objectives:**

As an honors seminar in English, this advanced undergraduate seminar prepares students for graduate work in the discipline of English, in this case particularly film studies. Based on the premise that students in this course possess skills of scholarly reading, writing, conversation, research, and analysis, the course asks students to engage with the topic of the filmic representation of work in the context of film studies, in particular, and in the humanities, in general. Course goals include knowledge about the scholarly debate concerning work and film. Objectives include the ability to ask original research questions, conduct scholarship independently, and produce a substantive research paper, as well as to write an abstract, give a presentation, and respond to another student's draft of a research paper.

### **Required Reading:**

Course Pack: Available at Xerographic Copy Center, 927 NW 13<sup>th</sup> Street

Ph: (352) 375-0797 Email: [xerocopy@bellsouth.net](mailto:xerocopy@bellsouth.net)

I do not require that you purchase the course pack. But it is your responsibility to have the text in front of you during class session in some kind of format (electronic or paper).

**Grading:**

Oral participation	10%
Written response to readings	10%
Abstract for research paper	10%
Presentation	10%
Draft of research paper	20%
Response to another student's draft research paper	10%
	30%

**Grading Scale:**

A	95-100	950-1000
A-	90-94	900-949
B+	87-89	870-899
B	83-86	830-869
B-	80-82	800-829
C+	77-79	770-799
C	73-76	730-769
C-	70-72	700-729
D+	67-69	670-699
D	63-66	630-669
D-	60-62	600-629
F	0-59	000-599

**Attendance:**

Attendance in class and at the screenings is mandatory. It is your responsibility to show me documentation for excused absences as soon as possible after your return to class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to make up the material covered in class, which includes viewing the films you have missed and getting notes from class discussion.

Absences will be excused in accordance with UF policy. Acceptable reasons for absence from class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate, court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena), and the twelve-day rule:

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

Absence for religious reason do not require written documentation, but please let me know that you will miss or have missed class because you observe a religious holiday. Also, please communicate with me in advance, if I have scheduled an assignment on a religious holiday that you observe.

**Graded and Submitted Materials:**

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned work until they have received their final grades on ISIS. Should the need for a review of the grade arise, it is the student's responsibility to have

and make available all returned assignments and quizzes, as well as documentation for acceptable absences.

**Special Dispensations:**

If you have a learning disability, hardship, or other dispensation approved by the Office of Student Affairs, please meet with me to discuss your requirements as early in the term as possible. The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodation for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

**Technology Use in Class:**

Cell phones and hand-held devices that are not used for reading class materials must be silenced and invisible during class time. Should I see that you use your electronic device at any point during class time for any activity not related to the course materials or note-taking on this course, your use of individual electronic media will be banned for the rest of the semester.

**Statement on Harassment:**

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sexual, racial, ethnic, gender, and religious discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguie/studentconductcodephp#s4041>

**ASSIGNMENTS:****Response to Readings:**

There are 13 weeks of readings in this class. Each of you has to hand in a written response by Wednesday morning 9:00 am electronically to me for 10 weeks of the semester. Each submission is worth 10 points. Please use the format of an annotated bibliography, listing the title of the reading first and then adding one single-spaced paragraph in which you can mention the article's main ideas, arguments, theses, and methodology. You can address how one article relates to films or how it relates to other articles. Feel free to include questions about passages or phrases or pose larger questions for discussion. As the class goes on, these responses can become a place for you to work out your own research question and argument for your research paper. As I will have these responses at my disposal while I prepare for class, feel free to point me to difficult passages in a reading or aspects you find important for class discussion.

**Writing assignments:**

All writing assignments in the class except for the final submission of the research paper are also exchanged with at least one other student. In order for the exchange and collaboration to work successfully, there will be no extensions of deadlines. Should you experience extenuating circumstances, it is your responsibility to communicate with me

and your fellow student(s) with whom you are exchanging your work prior to the due date, and make alternative arrangements.

**Oral participation and attendance:**

It is self-understood that students attend all sessions and are thoroughly prepared to discuss the readings and the film screenings. Should you not be able to do so because of extenuating circumstances, please inform me in a timely manner. Oral participation is one of the scholarly skills that you should have acquired at this point as an undergraduate. I might ask participants to pose discussion questions. In my many years of teaching, students always have had interesting and insightful things to say: so please neither hold back, nor dominate discussion, but share your knowledge, insight, and questions in a way that is productive for our mutual work.

**Abstract for research paper and presentation:**

The course requires that you submit an abstract for your research paper and presentation, which should be the standard length of max. 250 words and has to include the following:

- 1) Tentative title of your final paper
- 2) Description of your topic
- 3) The film(s) that you will discuss
- 4) Your theoretical approach and methodology
- 5) A bibliography and filmography of five scholarly titles and the films you discuss

You will hand in the abstract to me and to two fellow students (the number might vary according to enrollment) and you will receive written feedback from me and oral feedback from your fellow students in class. The abstract is due as email attachment to two or three fellow students in class and to me.

**Draft of Final Paper:**

You will hand in a draft of your final paper to me and one other student, for which you will receive a formal written review from your fellow student and marginal comments from me. These comments will help you revise your final paper for final submission. Please submit the draft both as email attachment and as hard copy in class.

**Response to Draft:**

You will read and respond to one draft of a final paper that you will exchange with your fellow classmate. Your response should be productive, pointing out strengths and areas of possible improvement. The response should be approximately 1-2 pages single-spaced. On the last day of class, you will give one hard copy of your response to your fellow student and one to me. If we decide to use track changes as well, please email the paper with track changes to both of us.

**Final Research Paper:**

The final research paper should 10-15 pages long, addressing a topic related to the course. Standard format is 12 pt font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced, page numbered,

and undone justification on the right margin. I am open to students producing work for my class that will part of a larger project (e.g. honors thesis) or a writing sample for application to graduate school as long as you submit **10-15 pages of original work** on the topic of the seminar. You may write a longer research paper, but if it is significantly longer please let me know in advance.

### **Plagiarism and Cheating:**

For a complete definition of plagiarism, please see the UF honors code.

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

In short, plagiarism includes the intentional or unintentional use of the intellectual works of others, for example from sources from the web, friends' papers, published and unpublished work, including purchased papers. I prosecute plagiarism and cheating to the fullest extent possible at UF. Plagiarism in this course would result with you failing this course. I would also bring your plagiarism to the attention of the undergraduate coordinator and Chair of English and file an incident report with the Judicial Programs at the Dean of Students. Please be aware that the charge of plagiarism is equally serious, no matter what the size or weight of the assignment.

### **Course outline:**

#### **Introduction**

Week 1

W August 27 Introduction

Week 2

M September 1--NO SCREENING-LABOR DAY

Fritz Lang. *The Complete Metropolis* (Germany, 1927, 148 min)

W September 3

Elsbeth Brown. "Introduction" and "Industrial Choreography: Photography and the Standardization of Motion." *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture: 1884-1929*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005: 1-22 and 65-118.

Anton Kaes. "*Metropolis* (1927): City, Cinema, Modernity." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*. Ed. Noah Isenberg. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009: 173-191.

Friedrich Engels. "The Industrial Proletariat (1845)." *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009: 32-35.

## Week 3

M September 8

Yasurjo Ozu. *I was born but...* (Japan, 1932, 100 min)

W September 10

Alistair Phillips. "The Salaryman's Panic Time: Ozu Yasujirō's *I Was Born, But...* (1932)." *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*. Eds. Alistair Phillips and Julian Stringer. London: Routledge, 2007: 25-36.

Harootunian, Harry. Section from: "The Persistence of Cultural Memory: The Panic of the Everyday." *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000: 202-221.

Kracauer, Siegfried. "Preface," "Unknown Territory," "Selection," "Short Break for Ventilation." *The Salaried Masses. Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany* (1930). London: Verso, 1998: 23-46.

## Week 4

M September 15

Charlie Chaplin. *Modern Times* (US, 1936, 87 min)

W September 16

André Bazin. "Charlie Chaplin." *What is Cinema?* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, 2005: 144-153.

Tom Gunning. "Chaplin and the Body of Modernity." *Early Popular Visual Culture* 8.3 (2010): 237-245.

Michael J. Golec. "Motionmindedness: The Transposition of Movement from Factory to Home in Chaplin's *Modern Times*." *Home Cultures* 7.3 (2010): 287-312.

## Week 5

M September 22

Vittorio De Sica. *Bicycle Thieves* (Italy, 1948, 93 min)

W September 24

André Bazin. "Bicycle Thief" and "De Sica: Metteur En Scène." *What is Cinema?* 2 Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, 2005: 47-78.

Frank P. Tomasulo. "Bicycle Thieves: A Re-Reading." *Cinema Journal* 21.2 (Spring 1982): 2-13.

Karl Schoonover. "Spectacular Suffering: De Sica's Bodies and Charity's Gaze." *Brutal Vision: The Neorealist Body in Postwar Italian Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012: 149-183.

## Week 6

M September 29

Herbert J. Biberman. *Salt of the Earth* (US, 1954, 94 min)

W October 1

Jennifer L. Borda. "Introduction" and "Rising Up Against the Dominant: The Multiple Transgressions of *Salt of the Earth*." *Women Labor Activists in the Movies: Nine Depictions of Workplace Organizers, 1954-2005*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2011: 1-46.Marx, Karl. "Wage Labor and Capital." *Wage Labor and Capital*. New York: New York Labor News Company, 1902: 19-60.

## Week 7

M October 6

Douglas Sirk. *Imitation of Life* (US, 1959, 125 min)

W October 8

Berlant, Lauren. "National Brands, National Body: *Imitation of Life*." *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008: 107-144.Hughes, Langston. "Limitations of Life." (1938) *Black Theatre USA: Plays by African Americans, The Recent Period 1935-Today*. Eds. James V. Hatch and Ted Shine. New York: The Free Press, 1974, 1996: 223-25.Koch, Gertrud. "From Detlef Sierck to Douglas Sirk." *Film Criticism* 23.2-3 (Winter/Spring 1999): 14-32.

## Week 8

M October 13

Public Talk at the Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere

The Work of the Humanities: Critical Thinking in Life and Labor

Evan Selinger (Rochester Institute of Technology)

"The Outsourcing Illusion: Why Tempting Technology Can Lead to Dangerous Delegation"

5:30pm, Smathers Library 100

Konrad Wolf. *Divided Heaven (Der geteilte Himmel)*, East Germany, 1964, 116 min)

W October 15

Feinstein, Joshua. "Straddling the Wall: Socialist Realism Meets the Nouvelle Vague in *Der geteilte Himmel*." *The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in*

*the East German Cinema, 1949-1989*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002: 110-136.

Week 9

M October 20

Helke Sander. *The All-round Reduced Personality* (West Germany, *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit*, 1977, 98 min)

W October 22

Judith Mayne. "Female Narration, Women's Cinema: Helke Sander's *The All-Round Reduced Personality/Redupers*." *New German Critique* 24/25 (Fall 1981/Winter 1982): 155-171.

Silvia Federici. "Wages against Housework (1975)." *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. Oakland: PM Press, 2012: 15-22.

Arendt, Hannah. "Labor." *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958: 79-93.

Week 10

M October 27

Charles Burnett. *Killer of Sheep* (US, 1979, 83 min)

W October 29

Masilela, Ntongela. "The Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers." *Black American Cinema*. Ed. Manthia Diawara. New York: Routledge, 1993: 107-117.

Bishetta D. Merritt. "Charles Burnett: Creator of African American Culture on Film." *Journal of Black Studies* 39.1 (2008): 109-128.

Ongiri, Amy. "Charles Burnett: A Reconsideration of Third Cinema." *Nka* 21 (2007): 82-89.

**Due: Abstracts**

Week 11

M November 3

Jason Reitman. *Up in the Air* (US, 2009, 109 min)

W November 5

Mazierska, Ewa. "Introduction: Work, Struggle, and Cinema." *Work in the Cinema: Labor and the Human Condition*. Ed. Ewa Mazierska. London: Palgrave, 2013: 1-25.

Fraser, Ian. "Affective Labor and Alienation in *Up in the Air*." *Work in the Cinema: Labor and the Human Condition*. Ed. Ewa Mazierska. London: Palgrave, 2013: 29-48.

Gregg, Melissa. "Introduction: Work's Intimacy: Performing Professionalism Online and On the Job" and "Working from Home: The Mobile Office and the Seduction of Convenience." *Work's Intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity, 2011: 1-22 and 39-55.

**Discussion of abstracts in class**

Week 12

M November 10

Jia Zhangke. *The World* (China, 2005, 139 min)

W November 12

Wagner, Keith B.. "Jia Zhangke's Neoliberal China: The Commodification and Dissipation of the Proletarian in *The World*." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 14.3 (2013): 362-377.

Brennan, Timothy. "Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism." *New Left Review* 7 (2001): 75-84.

Archibugi, Daniele. "Demos and Cosmopolis." *New Left Review* 13 (2002): 24-38.

Week 13

M November 17

Sebastián Silva. *The Maid (La Nana)*, Chile/Mexico, 2009, 94 min)

W November 19

Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, Encarnación. "Introduction: Sensing Domestic Work." *Migration, Domestic Work and Affect: A Decolonial Approach on Value and the Feminization of Labor*. London: Routledge, 2010: 1-17.

Boris, Eileen and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas. "Introduction." *Intimate Labors: Cultures, Technologies, and the Politics of Care*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010: 1-13.

R November 20

Public Talk at the Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere

The Work of the Humanities: Critical Thinking in Life and Labor

Christopher Michaelson (University of St. Thomas)

"Narratives of Capitalism: Reading and Writing the Future of the Global Economy."

5:30pm, Hough Hall 150

Week 14

M November 24

Alejandro González Iñárritu. *Biutiful* (Mexico, Spain, 2010, 147 min) with discussion and pizza

Guy Standing. "The Precariat." and "Why the Precariat Is Growing." *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011: 1-99.

W November 25--CLASS CANCELLED THANKSGIVING

Week 15

M December 1

Lake Bell. *In a World...* (US, 2013, 93 min)

W December 3

Discussion of *In a World* and presentations on two panels

R December 4

Optional:

Public Talk at the Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere

The Work of the Humanities: Critical Thinking in Life and Labor

Wendy Chun. "Uncertain Actions, Inexperienceable Evidence: Towards New Practices of the Future."

5:30 pm, Smathers Library 100

Week 16

M December 8

No screening

**Due: 5:00pm draft of final paper via email to one student and me--ABSOLUTELY NO EXTENSIONS!**

W December 10

Presentations on three panels

**Due: Response to draft: hard copy to one student and me  
ABSOLUTELY NO EXTENSIONS!**

M December 15

**Due: 9:00am Final Research Paper--ABSOLUTELY NO EXTENSIONS!**