

History of Film, Part 3: Cinema of the 80s/90s/00s

Section 1PB1 Class #24729



When, on May 25, 1977, George Lucas' *Star Wars* was released and quickly became a surprise commercial hit, it symbolically marked the end of New Hollywood and the beginning of a new era. After a decade of artistic inventiveness and small-budget movies, the 1980s signaled the return of blockbusters – large-budget films with wide commercial appeal and massive advertising campaigns. At the same time, the 1980s and 1990s also saw the transition to digital (first in distribution with VCRs and DVDs, and later in the production process with digital cameras), where declining production costs made it possible for smaller-budget films to reach new markets through home video, and for independent art-house films to gain distribution through a network of art-house theaters and film festivals. Finally, beginning in the late 2000s, the film industry was revolutionized once again by the emergence of streaming media platforms and a new mode of consuming media and images.

In this course, we will study the history of film from the early 1980s until the beginning of the 21st century. The course will be divided into four sections: we will begin with the return of the blockbuster in American cinema at the end of the 1970s (*Star Wars* by George Lucas); then move on to study European and Asian art-house cinema of the 1980s (Krzysztof Kieślowski, Abbas Kiarostami, Hou Hsiao-hsien); the third section, which will be the largest, will focus on cinema of the 1990s (Coen Brothers, Quentin Tarantino, Paul Thomas Anderson, Pedro

Almodóvar, Gus Van Sant, Michael Haneke); and, in the final section, we will explore the recent transition to digital in the 2000s.

Instructor Name: Pietro Bianchi

Course meeting times: Tuesday Period 4 (10:40 AM - 11:30 PM) – Thursday Period 4-5 (10:40 PM - 12:35 PM) Turlington 2334

Screenings: T Period E1 – E3 (7:20 PM – 10:10 PM) Rolfs Hall 0115

Office Hours: Tuesday (2:30 – 4:30) at Turlington 4342 or on Zoom (personal ID: 561 851 9876). (NB: Zoom appointments have to be scheduled in advance by email, even during office hours).

Course website: elearning.ufl.edu

Instructor Email: pietrobianchi@ufl.edu

Course Objectives

Through active and persistent engagement with course materials, activities, and class discussions, students will:

- Gain familiarity with the history of film from the late 1970s to the digital age.
- Develop the ability to contextualize, both historically and geographically, the cinema of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.
- Acquire advanced skills in reading and interpreting theoretical works related to film theory, film history, and film studies.
- Learn to view films from a variety of critical perspectives.
- Enhance critical analysis skills in the process of analyzing and writing about films.
- Understand the philosophical dimensions and implications of film, including the ethics of filmmaking, the ontology of cinema, and the ways in which creating a film reflects the pursuit of knowledge.
- Locate and utilize scholarly research on film theory, critical theory, and film studies in an academic essay.

Required Readings and Films

All readings will be available on Canvas in the Files section of the website. While the number of pages may not be substantial, they must be read and studied thoroughly and with extreme care.

Since the readings will inform much of our work, it is crucial that you keep up with them, devoting the necessary time and energy to understanding them. The readings will consist of reviews and scholarly articles that provide interpretations or analyses of the films, as well as book chapters and essays that offer a historical overview and general reflection on cinema from the 1980s to the beginning of the 21st century. Some readings will be more theoretical and challenging, while others will be more accessible. You are expected to come to class prepared and capable of not only faithfully summarizing the content of every assigned article or book chapter but also critically reflecting on them. If you encounter difficulties with the readings, please schedule an appointment with me or visit during office hours.

The films required for this class will be screened every Tuesday evening at 7:20 PM in Rolfs Hall 0115 (the screenings will be managed by Isabella Motta-Zack). These screenings are an essential part of the class, and attendance is mandatory. Films must be watched with care and attention. It is strictly prohibited to use laptops or cell phones during the screenings, and you should always keep a notebook to write down your impressions and notes during the viewing. **Many of the films required for this course include scenes of menace, violence, sexual violence, and the deaths of humans and other living beings. Some may also include nudity and scenes of sexual activity.**

All assigned materials (readings, films, and lectures) will form the basis for class assignments, in-class discussions, presentations, two in-class quizzes, and a final paper. Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

Calendar of the screenings

T Period E1 – E3 (7:20 PM – 10:10 PM) Rolfs Hall 0115

1/21 *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977)

1/28 *Close Up* (Abbas Kiarostami, 1990, Iran)

2/4 *Dekalog, jeden* (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1988, Poland) *Dekalog, sześć* (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1988, Poland)

2/11 *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1989, Taiwan)

2/18 *Miller's Crossing* (Coen brothers, 1990, United States)

2/25 *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994, United States)

3/4 *All About My Mother* (Pedro Almodovar, 1999, Spain)

3/25 *Elephant* (Gus Van Sant, 2003, United States)

4/1 *Caché* (Michael Haneke, 2005, Austria)

4/8 *The Master* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 2012, United States)

4/15 *Don't Expect Too Much From the End of the World* (Radu Jude, 2023, Romania)

Organization of the Class

This is a discussion-based course where participation is vital and will be significantly factored into the final grade. Students are strongly encouraged to participate actively in class discussions by asking questions, drawing attention to passages in the readings, or offering possible interpretations. In general (though exceptions may occur, so always check the schedule of classes), the course will be organized as follows: On Tuesday, I will introduce the readings and the film of the week and provide a historical contextualization. On Tuesday evening at 7:20 PM, the film will be screened in Rolfs Hall 0115. On Thursday, during the first 50-minute period, two or three students will briefly introduce the class with a five-minute presentation, sharing their reflections on the assigned film and readings and initiating a discussion where everyone should contribute. In the second part of the class, I will comment on the film and/or the readings and may present additional sources or excerpts from other films.

Attendance and Participation (10%)

The core of this class will be the in-class discussions, where your active participation will not only be graded but will also serve as a fundamental component for the success of the course. *I firmly believe that, more than an individual performance, a university class is a collective effort to enhance the knowledge of everyone, and we should all share responsibility for its success.* Please be an active participant in this class! Additionally, be aware that, especially in this course, discussions will often include reviews of materials not listed among the assigned texts or films. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential, and attendance is mandatory.

No more than three unexcused absences for personal reasons will be tolerated (this includes screenings). Each additional unexcused absence will reduce your total final grade by 3 percentage points (for example, if your final grade is 91% and you have five unexcused absences, your final grade will be 85%). **More than six unexcused absences will result in the automatic failure of the class. (Note: keep in mind that being absent during a double-period class on Thursday will count as two absences.)**

For any other absences (due to medical reasons or family emergencies), you must provide documentation as soon as possible and make up the material covered in class, including viewing films and obtaining notes from class discussions. Absences for religious reasons do not require written documentation, but students must inform me in advance so that credit for attendance can be reflected appropriately. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. If a student arrives after attendance is taken **within the first five minutes**, they will be considered tardy. Three instances of tardiness will count as one unexcused absence. Latecomers who arrive after the first five minutes of class will be marked as absent but must see me after class to confirm their attendance.

Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies, which can be found at:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies>.

Post on Canvas and short introduction to the class discussion (20% + 5%)

1. Every Tuesday (though in some instances it will be on Thursday, so always check the class schedule on the syllabus), you will be required to post a short paragraph (around 150 words) in the Discussion section of Canvas. This post should include a brief reflection and/or a few questions regarding the material assigned for the day. The purpose of this assignment is not to test your knowledge of the reading or film (you are not required to summarize them!) but to encourage you to share what you find to be the most interesting issues and questions that arise from them. This can take the form of a question or a series of questions. An original post or a response to someone else's post will both be counted (discussions are encouraged!). The deadline for the posts on Canvas is typically **Wednesday at 4:00 PM**. You are allowed to skip this assignment once during the semester without penalty. However, any post uploaded after 4:00 PM on the due date will not be considered and will receive a grade of 0%.
2. Once during the semester, you will be asked to give a **5-minute presentation** in which you will share your reflections on the assigned reading and initiate a discussion with the class. On most Thursdays, the class will begin with two or three students introducing and presenting the assigned material. A calendar for these presentations will be provided during the second week of the course.

Short Quizzes (20% + 20%)

Twice during the semester there will be a short quiz based on few open-ended questions on the readings and films analyzed in that section of the semester. They can cover general or specific topics related to the readings, films and discussions held in class.

Final research essay (25%)

A final 1,500-2,500 words research paper on a research topic related to the material covered in class. The paper is a research project, wherein you will have the opportunity to further expand upon, analyze in more detail, or take in new directions the material covered in the course. You may want to explore in more depth one of the topics that we analyzed; make connections between several of them; examine a specific theme or issue that emerges in a number of different works; compare and contrast the arguments of different scholars; or try something else altogether. **All paper topics must be approved in advance by the instructor (either coming to office hours – which is strongly encouraged – or by email) and submitted before March 27.** The essay is due the last day of classes (April 22).

Evaluation

Evaluation method in this course is consistent with UF's policies on grading

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

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A 93–100	A- 90–92	
B+ 88–89	B 83–87	B- 80–82
C+ 78–79	C 73–77	C- 70–72
D+ 68–69	D 63–67	D- 60–62

A grade of 59 or below is a failing grade (E). A minimum final grade of C is required for General Education Credit.

Cell phones and Computers

The use of personal computers and other electronic devices in class is acceptable only for purposes related to class discussion and collaboration. Casual web browsing, emailing, chatting, texting, etc. unrelated to class activities will not be tolerated.

Plagiarism and Cheating

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code”. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Here](#), you can read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Policies on the use of GenerativeAI in this class

U-M GPT, ChatGPT, and other similar technologies are advancing rapidly and there are many instances where they will be key tools in your schoolwork and career. For the purposes of this class, we are asking all students to pledge that they will *not* use these technologies. We believe this is key for this learning environment because we want you to learn how to *critically engage with* the material we’ll be discussing, including learning how to search for and identify relevant sources, synthesize these materials, and make recommendations without the aid of technology. Artificial Intelligence cannot do this learning for you. Students who are found to have used GenerativeAI or the like to complete their assignments will receive a grade of zero for that assignment.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in 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.

Online Course Evaluation Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273- 4450.

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392- 1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- [Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.
- [Teaching Center](#): 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- [Writing Studio](#): Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138 | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; [Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information](#).

- Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): [View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information.](#)

Schedule of class

Week 1

1/14

Explanation of the syllabus

1/16

Introduction to the course/Cinema of the 80s/90s/00s

PART I: The end of the New Hollywood and the birth of the modern Blockbuster

Week 2

1/21

David Bordwell, Krystin Thompson, *American Cinema and the Entertainment Economy: The 1980s and After*

1/21

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977)

1/23

Discussion on *Star Wars* and on David Bordwell, Krystin Thompson, *American Cinema and the Entertainment Economy: The 1980s and After*

Presentation #1

Discussion post #1

Part II: Global Auteur Cinema of the 1980s

Week 3

1/28

Introduction to Abbas Kiarostami

1/28

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *Close Up* (Abbas Kiarostami, 1990, Iran)

1/30

Discussion on *Close Up* (Abbas Kiarostami, 1990, Iran)

(reading) Cristina Vatulescu, "*The Face to Face Encounter of Art and Law*": *Abbas Kiarostami's Close-Up*

(reading) Agnès Devictor, Amélie Neuve-Eglise, *Soft Epiphanies: The Multilayered Narratives in Abbas Kiarostami's Film Close-Up (1990)* (optional)

Presentations #2

Discussion Post #2

Week 4

2/4

Introduction to Krzysztof Kieślowski

2/4

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *Dekalog, jeden* (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1988, Poland); *Dekalog, sześć* (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1988, Poland)

2/6

Discussion on *Dekalog, jeden* and *Dekalog, sześć*

(reading) Joseph G. Kickasola, *The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski. The Liminal Image* (Ch. 4 - The Decalogue: Intro, 1 and 6)

Discussion Post #3

Presentations #3

Week 5

2/11

Introduction to Hou Hsiao-hsien

2/11

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1989, Taiwan)

2/13

Discussion on *A City of Sadness*

(reading) James Udden, *History in Its Place: City of Sadness*

(reading) Ming-Yeh Rawnsley, *Cinema, Historiography and Identities in Taiwan: Hou Hsiao-Hsien's A City of Sadness* (optional)

Discussion Post #4

Presentations #4

Part III: Cinema of the 1990s

Week 6

2/18

Introduction to the Coen brothers

2/18

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *Miller's Crossing* (Coen brothers, 1990, United States)

2/20

Discussion on *Miller's Crossing*

(reading) Jeffrey Adams, *Miller's Crossing: 'A Handsome Movie about Men in Hats'*

(reading) Erica Rowell, *Miller's Crossing: A Hat* (optional)

Discussion Post #5

Presentations #5

Week 7

2/25

Quiz #1

2/25

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994, United States)

2/27 (online)

Discussion on *Pulp Fiction*

(reading) Dana Polan, *Pulp Fiction* (excerpts)

Discussion Post #6

Presentations #6 (Mariana Oliveira, Samuel Courtney, Nakamura Pak)

Week 8

3/4

Introduction to Pedro Almodovar

3/4

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *All About My Mother* (Pedro Almodovar, 1999, Spain)

3/6

Discussion on *All About My Mother*

(reading) Paul Julian Smith, *All About My Mother*

(reading) Julian Daniel Gutierrez-Albilla, *Im-Possibility of Not-Sharing. Todo sobre mi madre*

Discussion Post #7

Presentations #7

Week 9

3/11

Introduction to *Cinema Futures* (Michael Palm, 2016)

(reading) Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Pixels*

3/11

No screening

3/13 (online)

(to watch at home) *Cinema Futures* (Michael Palm, 2016)

How to prepare for the final papers

18-20/3

SPRING BREAK

PART IV: The Cinema of the 00s

Week 10

3/25

Introduction to Gus Van Sant

3/25

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *Elephant* (Gus Van Sant, 2003, United States)

3/27

Discussion on *Elephant*

(reading) Max Bowens, *A Mood of Dissonance: Unpinning Ambiguity in Gus Van Sant's Elephant*

(reading) Neera Scott, *Sublime Anarchy in Gus Van Sant's Elephant*

(reading) Vincent LoBrutto, *Elephant*

Discussion Post #8

Presentations #8

Week 11

4/1

Introduction to Michael Haneke

4/1

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *Caché* (Michael Haneke, 2005, Austria)

4/3

Discussion on *Caché*

(reading) Jennifer Burris, *Surveillance and the indifferent gaze in Michael Haneke's Caché (2005)*

(reading) Niels Niessen, *The Staged Realism of Michael Haneke's Caché*

Discussion Post #9

Presentations #9

Week 12

4/8

Quiz #2

4/8

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *The Master* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 2012, United States)

4/10

Discussion on *The Master*

(reading) George Toles, *Form and Formlessness in The Master*

Discussion Post #10

Presentations #10

PART V: The Digital Image and the era of the streaming platforms

Week 13

4/15

Introduction to Radu Jude

4/15

(screening at Rolfs Hall 0115, 7.20pm) *Don't Expect Too Much From the End of the World* (Radu Jude, 2023, Romania)

4/17

Discussion on *Don't Expect Too Much From the End of the World*

(reading) Julia Gunnison, *Awaiting Apocalypse at a Red Light: On Radu Jude's "Do Not Expect Too Much from the End of the World"*

Andrei Gorzo, Veronica Lazăr, *Radu Jude's Intertextual Network in Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World*

Discussion Post #11

Presentations #11

Week 14

4/22

Submission Final Papers