

ENG 4135 National Cinemas: Weimar Cinema (Section 8BM1-26029)
GET 3520 Early German Cinema – 1945 (Section GWCB-27134)
Fall Semester 2025

Professor Barbara Mennel

Office Hours: M 11:30am-12:30pm and F 9:00am-10:30am

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Meeting times: MWF 4th period (10:40-11:30am) TUR 2334

Screening period: Screening: T 9-11 (4:05-7:05pm) Rolfs 0115

Course Description:

The course offers an historical overview of the most influential films of German cinema of the Weimar Republic (1918-1933). We will discuss the classic cinema of the Weimar Republic, addressing early genre films, such as horror and the city film. We will also pay attention to the coming of sound in such films as *The Blue Angel*, *M*, and *Girls in Uniform*. We will discuss animation with the film *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*. While the course offers a survey of canonical films of the period, such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Nosferatu*, and *M*, it also introduces debates about avantgarde and experimental films, as well as marginal genres, such as advertising and the interactive “rebus” films. In order to trace the continuities and discontinuities from the Weimar Republic to National Socialism, we conclude the class with a case study of the work by Leni Riefenstahl from the mountain film to the propaganda film.

Course Goals and Objectives:

Students will be familiar with German films from the 1920s in Germany, with an outlook to filmmaking under the Nazis. They will be able to identify classic early cinema and understand the transformation from silent to sound film. They will be able to apply the methodology of film studies, as well as skills of critical reading, research, and writing about film.

Required Reading:

All readings and all films will be available through Canvas and/or the Library reserve.

Grading:

Attendance	5%
Participation	5%
10 Response papers	10%
Midterm Paper	30%
Proposal for Final Paper	10%
Final Paper	40%

Grading Scale:

A	93-100
A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9
C	73-76.9
C-	70-72.9
D+	67-69.9
D	63-66.9
D-	60-62.9
F	0-59.9

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

Due Dates:

Response papers	Week 4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14 (Canvas closes on Thursdays at 5pm)
Midterm Paper	Week 8: Friday, October 10 at 5pm
Final Paper Proposal	Week 12: Friday, November 7 at 5pm
Final Paper	Week 17: Wednesday, December 10 at 5pm

Attendance:

Attendance at all class periods is required and will be checked with the attendance function in Canvas, which amounts to 5% of your grade. If you arrive late to class or leave early, I will use the "late attendance" function.

If you have an excused absence, I will mark you as attended and keep track of the excused absence separately. Please make sure that you have a track record of your excuse (e.g. email or written documentation) and that you keep track of those excused absences before I assign your final grade.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies.

See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for:

Attendance Policies

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#absencestext>

Religious Holidays

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#religiousholidaystext>

Illness Policy

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#illnesspolicytext>

Twelve-Day Rule

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#twelvedayruletext>

Participation:

Academic conversation is one of the skills that you should acquire in college and thus need to practice. Your oral participation will reflect the consistency of your contributions, the precision of your analysis, the level of attention to details, the complexity of questions that drive your academic inquiry, the application of the vocabulary that pertains to film studies, the level of preparedness, engagement with the course materials, such as viewings and readings, and the quality and quantity of your contributions to the class, including the productive engagement with your classmates. I will give you an oral participation grade at the midterm point that reflects your performance up to that point in the semester.

Reflection Papers:

Reading carefully, consistently, and thoroughly is as important as viewing the films. Completing assigned readings is the basis for an informed and engaged discussion. Hence, you will have to submit ten response papers throughout the semester that discuss readings and films.

Write a one-page response paper due for the reading of the following day and submit either by Sunday 5 pm for the Monday reading, Tuesday by 5pm for the Wednesday reading, or Thursday by 5pm for the Friday reading. Do not submit response papers for readings that have already been covered in class. Canvas closes at 5pm on Thursdays in the week that response papers are due, except when there is no reading assignment for Friday and the reflection paper is due on Tuesday by 5pm for the Wednesday reading.

Week 4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14 (Canvas closes on Thursdays at 5pm)

Midterm Paper:

The midterm paper focuses on an analysis of one or two films from class, while addressing a particular topic related to the materials covered before mid-semester. No outside research is necessary. The paper should include formal close readings and advance a coherent argument. Length: 4-6 pages double-spaced in 12pt font with 1 inch margins. The paper needs to include your name, a title, and page numbers.

Due: Week 8 Friday, October 10 at 5pm

Proposal for final paper:

Students need to submit a proposal for the final paper, which consists of a tentative title, an abstract, and a bibliography of at least two scholarly sources. The proposal should be approximately one-two paragraphs in length (150-250 words).

A complete proposal has to include the following:

1. Tentative title of your final paper

2. One-two paragraph description of your topic, including your research questions
 3. A list of titles of the films that you will discuss
 4. A bibliography, including at least two scholarly texts not covered in class
- Scholarly texts can only be taken from the web, if they are included in a web-based scholarly journal. You may not include materials from blogs or other personal websites. The abstract has to be typed in 12pt font, single-space with 1 inch margins and include your name.

Due: Week 12: Friday, November 7 at 5pm

Final Paper:

The final paper is 6-8 pages long on a research topic related to the course. You should develop the topic throughout the semester, and your argument should go beyond class discussion. Your paper can focus on films that we have seen in class or films that we have not seen in class from the period or a Weimar film in comparison to a contemporary remake, e.g. *Nosferatu*. The final paper has to integrate at least two outside sources of scholarly texts that we did not read in class. The final paper has to be typed in 12pt font, double-spaced with 1 inch margins, include your name and page numbers.

If you want to submit a longer paper, e.g. for graduate school application, you can integrate the midterm paper in a final paper of minimum 10 pages. For such a case, make sure to take into account feedback on the midterm and revise the introduction and conclusion of your midterm. Also make sure to clarify this in your abstract for your final paper.

Due: Week 17 Wednesday, December 10 at 5pm

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. See the UF Conduct Code website for more information. <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/> If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with me.

Special Dispensations:

If you have a learning disability, hardship, or other dispensation approved by the Office of Student Affairs, please provide documentation 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/>

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. See the “Get Started With the DRC” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site:

<https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>

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 about 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. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

1. The email they receive from GatorEvals,
2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or
3. The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>

Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

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>

Class demeanor expected by the professor

I expect you to arrive on time and stay until the end of class. I expect you to focus on the topic of class and not surf the internet either on your phones or laptops. I expect you to be prepared for class.

In-class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal education use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and deliver by an instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentation such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty during a class

session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless, of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Week 1 Introduction to the Class

Friday, August 22

Introduction: Syllabus

Week 2 The Weimar Republic and the Social Hygiene Film

Monday, August 25

The Weimar Republic

Tuesday, August 26 Screening. Richard Oswald. *Different Than the Others (Anders als die Anderen, 1919)*

Wednesday, August 27

Read: James D. Steakley. “Cinema and Censorship in the Weimar Republic: The Case of *Anders als die Anderen*.”

Friday, August 29

Art of the Weimar Republic

Week 3 Expressionism

Monday, September 1 HOLIDAY

Tuesday, September 2 Robert Wiene. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920)*

Wednesday, September 3

Read: David Robinson. *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari (1997)*: 1-41.

Friday, September 5

Read: David Robinson. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1997): 41-end.

Week 4 The Vampire and the Horror Genre—Reflection Paper 1 due

Monday, September 8

In-class screening:

Hans Richter. *Rhythmus 21* (*Rhythm 21*) (1921) (3 min)

Viking Eggeling. *Symphonie Diagonale* (*Diagonal Symphony*) (1924) (7min)

Oskar Fischinger. *An Optical Poem* (1938, 7:07 minutes)

2017 Doodle on Oskar Fischinger

Read: Joel Westerdale. "The Musical Promise of Abstract Film."

Tuesday, September 9 *Nosferatu: Symphony of Horror* (1922)

Wednesday, September 10

Read: Kevin Jackson. *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (2013): Introduction to end of Chapter Three.

Friday, September 12

Read: Kevin Jackson. *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (2013): Chapter Four to the end.

Week 5 Animation and Exoticism—Reflection Paper 2 due

Monday, September 15

In-class screening: Lotte Reiniger. *The Secret of the Marquise* (1921)

Walter Ruttmann. *Der Sieger* (1922)

Reading: Michael Cowan. "The Ambivalence of Ornament: Silhouette Advertisements in Print and Film in Early Twentieth-Century Germany."

Tuesday, September 16 Screening. Lotte Reiniger. *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926)

Wednesday, September 17

Read: Christiane Schoenfeld. "Lotte Reiniger and the Art of Animation."

Friday, September 19

Read: Katherine Rochester. "Visual Music and Kinetic Ornaments: Lotte Reiniger and the Animation Avant-Garde in Weimar Berlin."

Week 6 Metropolis Berlin—Reflection Paper 3 due

Monday, September 22

Read: Anton Kaes. "Metropolis (1927): City, Cinema, Modernity."

Tuesday, September 23

Fritz Lang. *The Complete Metropolis* (1927) (149 minutes)

Wednesday, September 24

Read: Thomas Elsaesser. *Metropolis*. London: BFI, 2000: 1-42.

Friday, September 26

Read: Thomas Elsaesser. *Metropolis*. London: BFI, 2000: 42-end.

Week 7 Metropolis Berlin (continued)—Reflection Paper 4 due

Monday, September 29

In-class screening: Hans Richter. *Vormittagspuk (Ghosts Before Breakfast)* (1928) (9 min)

Read: Tristan Tzara (1896-1963). "Dada Manifesto 1918."

Richard Huelsenbeck (1892-1974). "First German Dada Manifesto."

Tuesday, September 30

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

Wednesday, October 1

Read: Nora Alter. "Berlin, Symphony of a Great City (1927): City, Image, Sound."

Friday, October 3

Read: Michael Cowan. "The Cross-Section: Images of the World and Contingency Management in Ruttmann's Montage Films of the Late 1920s (1927-1929)."

Week 8 Metropolis Berlin (continued) Due: Midterm Paper and Reflection Paper 5 due

Monday, October 6

In-class screening of *Rebus Film Nr.1* (Paul Leni, 1925)

Read: Michael Cowan. "Moving Picture Puzzles: Training Urban Perception in the Weimar 'Rebus Films'."

Tuesday, October 7

Screening: Kurt and Robert Siodmak, Edgar G. Ulmer, Fred Zinnemann. *People on Sunday* (1930)

Wednesday, October 8

Reading: Jon Hughes. *People on Sunday (Menschen am Sonntag)*. London: Bloomsbury, 2025: Chapter 1-3.

Friday, October 10

Reading: Jon Hughes. *People on Sunday (Menschen am Sonntag)*. London: Bloomsbury, 2025: Chapter 4-end.

Due: Midterm at 5pm

Week 9: Sound—No reflection paper due this week

Monday, October 13

Reading: Lutz Koepnick. "The Bearable Lightness of Being: *People on Sunday* (1930)."

Tuesday, October 14

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

Wednesday, October 15

Read: S.S. Prawer. *The Blue Angel (Der blaue Engel)*: Prologue and Chapters 1 -3.

Friday, October 17

HOMECOMING – NO CLASS!

Week 10 Sound (continued)—Reflection paper 6 due

Monday, October 20 Read: S.S. Prawer. *The Blue Angel (Der blaue Engel)*: Chapter 4 – End.

Tuesday, October 21

Fritz Lang. *M* (1931)

Wednesday, October 22

Read: Anton Kaes. *M* (2000): 1-38.

Friday, October 24

Read: Anton Kaes. *M* (2000): 38-end.

Week 11 Sound (continued)—Reflection paper 7 due

Monday, October 27

Read: Todd Herzog, "Fritz Lang's *M* (1931): An Open Case."

Tuesday, October 28

Screening: Leontine Sagan. *Girls in Uniform* (1931)

Wednesday, October 29

Read: Barbara Mennel. *Mädchen in Uniform*: 1-63.

Friday, October 31

Read: Barbara Mennel. *Mädchen in Uniform*: 64-end.

Week 12 Left-Wing Politics Due: Proposal (abstract) for final paper and Reflection Paper 8 due

Monday, November 3

Read: Richard W. McCormick. "Coming Out of Uniform: Political and Sexual Emancipation in Leontine Sagan's *Mädchen in Uniform*."

Tuesday, November 4

Slatan Dudow. *Kuhle Wampe, or Who Owns the World?* (1932)

Wednesday, November 5

Reading: Marc Silberman. "Whose Revolution? The Subject of *Kuhle Wampe* (1932)."

Friday, November 7

Introduction and beginning of in-class screening of Leni Riefenstahl. *The Blue Light* (1931)

Due: Proposal for final paper at 5pm

Week 13 From the Weimar Republic to Fascist Aesthetics: The Case of Leni Riefenstahl Response paper 9 due

Monday, November 10

In-class screening of Leni Riefenstahl. *The Blue Light* (1931)

Tuesday, November 11: Veterans Day: No screening

Wednesday, November 12

Read: Seth Peabody. "Leni Riefenstahl, Struggle in Snow and Ice (1933) --Excerpts."

Friday, November 14

Read: Eric Rentschler. "A Founding Myth and a Master Text: *The Blue Light* (1932).

Week 14 From the Weimar Republic to Fascist Aesthetics: The Case of Leni Riefenstahl (continued) Response paper 10 due

Monday, November 17

Reading: Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey. "The Cult of the Cold and the Gendered Body in Mountain Films."

Tuesday, November 18

Screening: Arnold Fanck. *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* (1929) (2:19)

Wednesday, November 19

Read: Arnold Franck. "He Directed Glaciers, Storms, and Avalanches: A Film Pioneer Recounts (1973) – Excerpts."

Friday, November 21

Read: Wilfried Wilms. "'The Essence of the Alpine World Is Struggle': Strategies of Gesundung in Arnold Fanck's Early Mountain Films."

Week 15 Thanksgiving: No class

Week 16 From Weimar Republic to Fascist Aesthetics: The Case of Leni Riefenstahl (continued)

Monday, December 1

In-class screening: excerpts of Leni Riefenstahl. *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and read: Susan Sontag. "Fascinating Fascism." *New York Review of Books* (February 6, 1975)

Tuesday, December 2

Screening: Leni Riefenstahl. *Olympia* (1938)

Wednesday, December 3

Final Discussion

Week 17 FINAL PAPER

Final Paper due: Wednesday, December 10 at 5pm

