

ENG 3115 INTRODUCTION TO FILM THEORY
Section 4C14 Class #12525



What happens when, after leaving a movie theater, we talk to our friends about the film we have just seen? And what happens when at the end of a movie seen on Netflix we send a text message to a friend sharing our thoughts on what we have just experienced? What do we do when we write a post on a social network about a film, or maybe when we write a review for a journal or a website? A movie is (usually) experienced in silence, but what follows are discourses and words (and texts, articles and books) that try to understand it, to reflect on it, even to philosophize and create theories on it. Film theory and film criticism are two different practices that deal with the production of discourses on films and on the cinematographic art as a whole.

This course will offer a survey of the different ways in which films have been conceived, defined, studied, and observed from the beginning of the XX Century to the digital age of streaming platforms. We will also inquiry how the thought of cinema interacted with other areas of culture and with society in general. After a couple of weeks of introduction of the basic themes of the semester, we will follow a chronological order with a focus on specific theorists and schools of thought: we will familiarize with terms such as modernism, realism, semiotics, structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism, ideology, race and we will also learn what does it mean to write (i.e. producing *words*) about cinema (i.e. *experiencing images*).

Instructor Name: Pietro Bianchi

Course meeting times: M, W, F Period 5 (11:45 AM - 12:35 PM) Turlington 2334

Screenings: M Period E1 - E3 (7:20 PM - 10:10 PM) Rolfs Hall 0115

Office Hours: Wednesday (1:00 – 2:30) 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 discussion in class students will:

- Become familiar with the history of film theories
- Be able to historically contextualize the different theories of cinema throughout the 20th and 21st century
- Develop advanced skills in reading and interpreting philosophical and theoretical works of film theory, philosophy of film and film studies.
- Learn how to view films from a variety of critical perspectives
- Improve critical analysis capabilities in the process of analyzing and writing on films.
- Learn to recognize the philosophical dimensions and implications of film, including the ethics of filmmaking, the ontology of the cinema, and how the creation of a film reflects the pursuit of knowledge
- Find and use scholarly research on film theory, critical theory and film studies in an academic essay.

Required Readings and Films

Only one book is required, which is Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 8th Edition), which can be bought, rented or borrowed in any available form (hardcover, paperback, pdf, epub). If you prefer to track down the textbook readings in other sources, then you may do so as long as the readings are complete and the search does not delay your reading progress. Most of these texts are available online also in other formats. You are solely responsible to arrive in class prepared and with the right readings at hand.

All other readings will be available on Canvas in the Files section of the website. Please do remember and consider that this is a course devoted to the study of film *theory*. The texts even more than the films will be the core of our inquiry. Most of the readings will be complex and often challenging: some of them will be heavily abstract and some will adopt philosophical and theoretical lexicon. Since the readings will be informing much of our work, it is crucial that you keep up with them, devoting the necessary time and energy to their understanding. The same holds for the assigned films. All the assigned material will be the subject of class assignments, in-class discussions, presentations and two in-class quizzes. You are expected to come to class prepared and be able to faithfully summarize the content of every assigned article or book chapter. If you will encounter particular difficulties with the reading, schedule an appointment with me or come to office hours.

The films required for this class will be screened every Monday evening at 7:20 PM in Rolfs Hall 0115 (the projections will be taken care by Brooke Whitaker). The screenings should be

considered an essential part of this class and attendance is mandatory. Films need to be watched with care and attention (avoiding taking breaks, avoiding check the cell phone while watching them, always keeping a notebook where to write down your impressions during the viewing etc.). Some films required for this course might include scenes of menace, violence, and the deaths of humans and other living beings. Some of them might include nudity and scenes of sexual activity.

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.

Organization of the Class

This is a discussion-based course, where participation is vital and it will be significantly considered for the final grade. Students are strongly encouraged to participate actively in class discussions by asking questions, draw class attention to passages of the reading, or offering a possible interpretation. In general (but there will be exceptions, so always check the schedule of classes!) the course will be organized as follow: on Monday I will introduce the readings of the week and offer a historical contextualization; on Monday evening there will be the screening at Rolfs Hall 0115; on Wednesday, the class will be briefly introduced by two or three of you where you will share – with a 5 minutes presentation – your reflections on the assigned readings, and open up the discussion with the class; on Friday we will continue the discussion and I will eventually present extra sources or excerpts from other films.

Attendance and Participation (10%)

The core of this class will be the discussions in class, where your active participation will not only be graded but will be a fundamental component for the success of the class. *I firmly believe that more than an individual performance, a university class is a collective effort to increase the knowledge of everyone and regarding which we should all be considered responsible.* Please be an active participant of this class! Also, be aware that, **especially in this class**, discussions will often include review of materials not 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 (screenings are included). Each additional unexcused absence will reduce your total final grade by 3 percentage points (for instance, if your final grade is 91% and you have 5 unexcused absences, your final grade will be 85%). **More than 6 unexcused absences will result in the automatic failure of the class.**

For every other absence (for medical reason or family emergencies) you should provide documentation as soon as possible, and make up the material covered in class, which includes viewing films and getting notes from class discussion. Absences for religious reasons do not require written documentation, but students should inform me timely so that they reflect credit for attendance. I will take attendance at the beginning of class. If a student arrives after attendance is taken **within the first five minutes**, they are considered tardy. Three counts of tardiness is the equivalent of one unexcused absence. Latecomers can receive partial absences, and must see me after class so I know you attended. Students who arrive after five minutes after the beginning of the class will be considered absent.

Requirement for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that 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 Wednesday (but in some instances it will be on Friday or Monday, so always check the class schedule on the syllabus), you will be asked to post a short paragraph (around 150 words) on the Discussion section of Canvas with a short reflection and/or a few questions regarding the reading assigned for the day. The purpose of this assignment is not to test your knowledge about the reading (you do not have to summarize them!) but ask you to share with the class what you believe are the most interesting problematics and questions that emerge from them. This can also have the form of a question or a series of questions. An original post or a response to someone else's post will equally be counted (discussions are encouraged!). The deadline of the posts on Canvas is **Wednesday at 9:00 am** (or Monday or Friday, when that will be the day of the assignment). You have the possibility to skip this assignment once in the semester without penalty. After that, every post uploaded after 9:00am of the due date will not be considered and receive a failed grade.
2. Once in the semester you will be asked to give a **5-minute presentation** where you will share your reflections on the assigned reading and open up the discussion with the class. Every Wednesday, the class will be opened by two or three of you who will introduce and present the assigned material (a calendar will be given in the second week).

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 1,500-2,000 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 Thanksgiving Break.** The essay is due the last day of class.

Evaluation

Evaluation method in this course is consistent with UF's policies on grading <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A 90–100	A- 87–89	
B+ 84–86	B 80–83	B- 77–79
C+ 74–76	C 70–73	C- 67–69
D+ 64–66	D 60–63	D- 57–59

A grade of 56 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.

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/>.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

(C) = item available on Canvas; (FTC) = from *Film Theory and Criticism*

Presentation of the course

August 24-26

1.Early Cinema

August 29

Mike Cousin, *The Story of Film. An Odyssey. Episode 1* (excerpts shown in class)

August 29 (evening)

*(screening): Martin Scorsese, *Hugo Cabret*

August 31

Mike Cousin, *The Story of Film. An Odyssey. Episode 1* (excerpts shown in class)

Lumière Brothers, *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*

Lumière Brothers, [Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory](#)

Georges Méliès, [The Impossible Voyage](#)

Georges Méliès, [A Trip to the Moon](#)

Georges Méliès, [The Devil's Castle](#)

Georges Méliès, [Cinderella](#)

Maxim Gor'ky on the Lumiere Program (1896) (C)

Georges Méliès, *Cinematographic Views* (C)

Remy De Gourmont, *Epilogues: Cinematograph* (C)

September 2

Mike Cousin, *The Story of Film. An Odyssey. Episode 2* (excerpts shown in class)

Lumière Brothers, [The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station](#)

Lumière Brothers, [Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory](#)

Georges Méliès, [The Impossible Voyage](#)

Georges Méliès, [A Trip to the Moon](#)

Georges Méliès, [The Devil's Castle](#)

Georges Méliès, [Cinderella](#)

Maxim Gor'ky on the Lumiere Program (1896) (C)

Georges Méliès, *Cinematographic Views* (C)

Remy De Gourmont, *Epilogues: Cinematograph* (C)

September 5

(no class) Labour Day

2.Jean Epstein. From Literature to Photogénie

September 7

Jean Epstein, *The Fall Of the House of Usher* (to watch at home - available in the files section of Canvas)

Christophe Wall-Romana, *From Literary Modernism to Photogénie* (C)

Robert Farmer, *Jean Epstein, Senses of Cinema*

Discussion post #1
Presentations #1

September 9

Jean Epstein, *The Fall Of the House of Usher*

Christophe Wall-Romana, *From Literary Modernism to Photogénie* (C)

Robert Farmer, *Jean Epstein, Senses of Cinema*

3.Soviet Montage

September 12

Introduction to Soviet Montage

September 12 (evening)

*(screening): Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin*

September 14

Sergei Eisenstein, *Beyond the Shot [The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram]* (FTC)

Sergei Eisenstein, *The Dramaturgy of Film Form [The Dialectical Approach to Film Form]* (FTC)

Vsevolod Pudovkin, *On Editing* (FTC)

Discussion post #2

Presentations #2

September 16 (continued)

Sergei Eisenstein, *Beyond the Shot [The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram]* (FTC)

Sergei Eisenstein, *The Dramaturgy of Film Form [The Dialectical Approach to Film Form]* (FTC)

Vsevolod Pudovkin, *On Editing* (FTC)

4.The Body of the Comic Actor

September 19

Introduction to the Body of the Comic Actor

Rae Beth Gordon, *From Charcot to Charlot: Unconscious Imitation and Spectatorship in French Cabaret and Early Cinema* (C)

September 19 (evening)

*(screening) Clyde Bruckman, Buster Keaton, *The General*

September 21

Noël Carroll, *Notes on the Sight Gag* (C)

Discussion post #3

Presentations #3

September 23 (continued)

Noël Carroll, *Notes on the Sight Gag* (C)

5. Cinema and Reality I

September 26

Introduction to the cinematographic theories of realism

September 26 (evening)

*(screening): Vittorio De Sica, *Ladri di biciclette*

September 28

Francesco Casetti, *Cinema and reality* (C)

Discussion post #4

Presentations #4

September 30 (continued)

Francesco Casetti, *Cinema and reality* (C)

Cinema and reality II – André Bazin

October 3

Introduction to André Bazin

October 3 (evening)

*(screening) Orson Welles, *Citizen Kane*

October 5

André Bazin, *The Evolution of the Language of Cinema* (FTC)

André Bazin, *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* (FTC)

André Bazin, *The Myth of Total Cinema* (FTC)

Discussion post #5

Presentations #5

October 7 (continued)

André Bazin, *The Evolution of the Language of Cinema* (FTC)

André Bazin, *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* (FTC)

André Bazin, *The Myth of Total Cinema* (FTC)

Cinema and reality III – Siegfried Kracauer

October 10

Introduction to Siegfried Kracauer

October 10 (evening)

*(screening) Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon*

October 12

Siegfried Kracauer, *Systematic Considerations* (C)

Siegfried Kracauer, *Basic concepts* (FTC)

Siegfried Kracauer, *The Establishment of Physical Existence* (FTC)

Discussion post #6

Presentations #6

October 14: Quiz #1

6. Cinema and language I – Christian Metz

October 17

Introduction to the Semiotics of Cinema

Francesco Casetti, *Cinema and Language* (C)

October 17 (evening)

*(screening) John Ford, *Stagecoach*

October 19

Francesco Casetti, *Semiotics of Cinema* (C)

Discussion post #7 (on Casetti's text)

Presentations #7 (on Casetti's text)

October 21

Christian Metz, *Some Points in the Semiotics of Cinema* (FTC)

Christian Metz, *Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film* (FTC)

October 24

Christian Metz, *Some Points in the Semiotics of Cinema* (FTC)

Christian Metz, *Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film* (FTC)

Discussion post # 8

Presentations #8

Cinema and language II – The Apparatus Theory

October 24 (evening)

*(screening) David Lynch, *Mulholland Dr.*

October 26

Francesco Casetti, *Politics, Ideology, and Alternatives* (C)

October 28

Jean-Louis Baudry, *The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema* (FTC)

Noël Carroll, *Jean-Louis Baudry and "The Apparatus"* (FTC)
Discussion Post #9
Presentations #9

October 31

Jean-Louis Baudry, *The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema* (FTC)

Noël Carroll, *Jean-Louis Baudry and "The Apparatus"* (FTC)

7. Cinema and Ideology

October 31 (evening)

*(screening) Slavoj Žižek, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*

November 2

Introduction to Slavoj Žižek, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*

November 4

Slavoj Žižek, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*

Discussion post #10

Presentations #10

8. Feminist Film Theory

November 7

Introduction to Feminist Film Theory

Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (FTC)

November 7 (evening)

*(screening): King Vidor, *Duel in the Sun*

November 9

Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (FTC)

Laura Mulvey, *Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by King Vidor's Duel in the Sun (1946)* (C)

Discussion post #11

Presentations #11

November 11

(no class) Veteran Day

9. The Oppositional Gaze: Black Film Theory

November 14

Introduction to bell hooks, *The Oppositional Gaze* (C)

November 14 (evening)
*(screening) Julie Dash, *Daughters of the Dust*

November 16
bell hooks, *The Oppositional Gaze. Black Female Spectators* (C)
Discussion post #12
Presentations #12

November 18: Quiz #2

November 21
Asynchronous online class

November 22-27 (Thanksgiving Break)

10. Post-cinema?

November 28
Introduction to Post-Cinema?

November 28 (evening)
*(Screening): Michael Palm, *Cinema Futures*

November 30
Anne Friedberg, *The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change* (FTC)
Lev Manovitch, *Digital Cinema and the History of a Moving Image* (FTC)
Philip Rosen, *From Change Mummified* (FTC)
Discussion post #13
Presentations #13

December 2
Anne Friedberg, *The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change* (FTC)
Lev Manovitch, *Digital Cinema and the History of a Moving Image* (FTC)
Philip Rosen, *From Change Mummified* (FTC)

Conclusions

December 5
Final remarks

December 7 (11.59pm)
Final Paper submission

Campus Resources

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.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

COVID-19 Policies

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.ufl.edu for screening / testing and vaccination opportunities.

- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.
- As with any excused absence, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up missed work.

Make a Plan to Vote

All eligible students are urged to exercise their right to vote. You must be registered in order to vote. You have a right to register to vote at the address you consider the place where you live, whether that is your family's home or the place where you attend school. You should make sure you are registered at the voting address you prefer. You may only be registered and vote in one location.

- Register by October 11 to vote in the November 8 General Election
- Early voting for the general election is October 24-November 5th. All Alachua County voters can early vote at the Reitz Union

Make a Plan to Vote. Register, check your registration status, or update your address here: TurboVote. You can also register in person or get assistance with voting-related matters at the Bob Graham Center for Public Service, 220 Pugh Hall M-F 8:30 AM-4:00 PM.

In-Class Recording Policy

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 educational 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 delivered by any 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 presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer 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.