Cinema, Television & Philosophy: Visual Narratives, the Self and Society
Professor Alhelí Alvarado

Maribel Verdú and Vincent Gallo in a scene from Francis Ford Coppola's Tetro (2009)

Cinema, Television & Philosophy: Visual Narratives, the Self and Society will address the intersections between ethics, television and modern cinema. The course will offer students the opportunity to analyze parallels between philosophical and visual narratives, paying attention to the allegorical power of film and television series in representing polemical philosophical concepts and protagonists in conflict. Students will reflect on the visual portrait of the following themes: guilt, taboo, solitude, political contradiction, racial conflict, sexual identities, personal memory, individual rights and social protest. Devoting each session to the discussion of one film or television series and selections from pertinent philosophical texts, Cinema, Television & Philosophy will promote critical analysis and insight for students interested in interpreting films and tv series as moral narratives and metaphors of timeless existential questions. How does philosophy inspire cinema and television? How does cinema and television series revisit perennial questions of morality? Why and how are cinema, television and philosophy connected? These are some of the questions that Cinema, Television & Philosophy will confront throughout the semester.
Required Textbooks

Robert Arp, *Homeland and Philosophy* (Open Court, 2014)
Kristin Hole, *Towards a Feminist Cinematic Ethics: Claire Denis, Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016)

Course Objectives

*Cinema, Television and Philosophy* will teach students to connect films with philosophical texts. Students will learn to analyze films and television series as visual narratives and philosophical statements. Students will develop writing and speech as film critics, establishing connections between cinema and other cultural fields such as ethics, literature and politics. Each student will have the opportunity to present an original interpretation of one of the assigned films from the program, demonstrating the afterlives of films for viewers inside and outside academia. Students will produce two essays of criticism and a final paper comparing two of the films/television series discussed in the semester.

Evaluation and Grade Breakdown

30% Class Participation (Active Oral Discussion & Weekly Responses in Forum)
20% Mid-Term and Final Exams
25% Essay I
25% Essay II

Failure to submit work by the established deadline automatically receives an F.
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Reading Program

Week 1: Guilt, Punishment and Fear of God

Decalogue (Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1989)
*Excerpts from Exodus & Augustine

Week 2: Tyranny and Underground Culture

Tony Manero (Pablo Larraín, 2008)
Post-Mortem (Pablo Larraín, 2010)
*Kristin Sorensen, “Television: Self-Censorship, Sensationalism and Structured Absences in Media, Memory and Human Rights in Chile

Week 3: Hidden Desires and the Uncanny (I)

Mulholland Drive (David Lynch, 2001)

Week 4: Hidden Desires and the Uncanny (II)

The Holy Girl (Lucrecia Martel, 2005)
Oscar Jubis, The Films of Lucrecia Martel: The Salta Trilogoy (Verlag, 2010)

Week 5: Hidden Desires and the Uncanny (III)

Twin Peaks (David Lynch, 1990-1991)
Slavoj Zizek, “From Reality to the Real”, “Two Ways to Avoid the Real of Desire”, Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture

Week 6: Ambiguous Intruders

The Intruder (Claire Denis, 2004)
Kristin Hole, Towards a Feminist Cinematic Ethics: Claire Denis, Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy
Jacques Rancière, “Politics in Film”, The Intervals of Cinema
Week 7: The Conflicted Self (I): Virtues and Vices of Tony Soprano

The Sopranos (David Chase, 1999-2007)
Richard Greene, Peter Vernezze, *The Sopranos and Philosophy: I Kill Therefore I Am*

Week 8: The Conflicted Self (II): Virtues and Vices of Francis Underwood

House of Cards (Beau Willimon, 2013–)
*Excerpts from Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Week 8: The Conflicted Self (III): Virtues and Vices of Carrie Mathison

Homeland (Howard Gordon, Alex Gansa, 2011-2015)
Robert Arp, *Homeland and Philosophy* (Open Court, 2014)
*Excerpts from Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Week 9: The Conflicted Self (IV): Virtues and Vices of Maria Vial

White Material (Claire Denis, 2009)
*Cornelia Ruhe, “Beyond Colonialism? From Chocolat to White Material?” in Marjorie Vecchio *The Films of Claire Denis: Intimacy on the Border*
*Selections from Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Week 10: Unleashing Desires (I): *The Dreamers*

The Dreamers (Bernardo Bertolucci, 2003)
*Selections from Raoul Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*
* Kristin Ross, “Different Windows, Same Faces”, May 68 and its Afterlives

Week 11: Unleashing Desires (II): *Tetro*

Tetro (Francis Ford Coppola, 2009)
Slavoj Zizek, “How Real is Reality”, “The Unconscious is Outside”, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*
Excerpts from Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*

Week 12: Unleashing Desires (III): Kika

Kika (Pedro Almodóvar, 1993)
* Mark Allinson, “Context”, “Content”, *A Spanish Labyrinth: The Films of Pedro Almodóvar*
* Judith Butler, “Subversive Bodily Acts”, *Gender Trouble*
Week 13: The Ambiguity of Life and Death: The Returned

The Returned (Fabrice Gobert, 2012 - )
*Excerpts from *Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture
*Christopher Moreman and Cory James Rushton, “The Zombie in Humanity”, *Zombies are Us: Essays on the Humanity of the Walking Dead*

Week 14: Choosing between Life and Death: Euthanasia Debates in Film

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly (Julian Schnabel, 2007)
The Sea Inside (Alejandro Amenábar, 2004)/
*Excerpts from Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling
Derek Humphry, “The Most Difficult Decision”, “The Cyanide Enigma”, “The Will to Die”, “When is the Time to Die?”, *Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying*
*Jean-Dominique Bauby, “The Alphabet”, “The Dream”, “A Day in the Life”, Season of Renewal”, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*

Week 15: Choosing between Memory and Denial

Waltz with Bashir (Ari Folman, 2008)
*Yael Munk, “The Privatization of War Memory in Recent Israeli Cinema” in Mimi Talmon and Yaron Peleg, *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion*

* Readings marked with * will be posted online in our course’s website