

Philosophy 21100/ 31301 / Art History 27301/37301
Professors: James Conant and Joel Snyder
Course Assistants: Jay Elliott and Dan Wack

Philosophy, Photography, Film

*** Syllabus ***

Course Description

This will be a course in both philosophy (in particular, that branch of philosophy known as aesthetics or the philosophy of art) and art history (in particular, the history of the theory of film and photography). We will be concerned with a variety of interrelated and overlapping philosophical questions that arise in connection with photography and film. Our two guiding questions will be: What is a photograph?, and: What is a movie? In the course of exploring various answers to these two questions, among the further sorts of question we will take up will be the following: questions in the theory of visual representation (e.g., what makes something a visual representation *of* something (else)?, what is the difference between how paintings and photographs represent?), questions of realism (e.g., what makes one photograph, or film *more* realistic than another?, are photographs inherently more realistic than paintings?, does the very idea of a 'realistic' representation rest on a philosophical confusion?), questions of meta-aesthetics (what makes something a work of art?, are photographs works of art?, is film an art?, or are only *some* films works of art?), questions of aesthetic medium (what is an aesthetic medium?, how does the medium of photography differ from that of paint on canvas and what, if any, is the aesthetic significance of that difference?, is anything that happens to have been recorded by a movie camera a film?, do documentary films and Hollywood narrative films explore the same aesthetic medium or different media?), questions about the supposed peculiarity of the photographic medium (does something which appears in a photograph have a different sort of ontological status than something which appears in, say, a painting or a cartoon?, does it make a difference to what sorts of aesthetic objects photographs are that they can be used as evidence in a courtroom?), and, finally, questions of normative aesthetics (what makes something a *good* photograph or film?, does the achievement of realism confer aesthetic value on a painting?, does the overcoming of realism confer aesthetic value on a photograph?, or are issues of realism irrelevant to the assessment of aesthetic value?).

Prerequisites

The only formal prerequisite for this course is at least one previous course in either philosophy or art history (or the equivalent thereof in the Committee on Visual Arts). The course will be open to both undergraduate and graduate students.

Course Requirements

The course requirements for undergraduates will be a short (2 page) weekly writing assignment and a longer (8 page) final paper. The breakdown of the course grade for undergraduates and further details concerning weekly writing assignments will be explained in the first meeting of undergraduate recitation section.

The course requirements for graduate students will be a final paper (10-15 pages) and a take-home final exam B each worth 50% of your final grade.

Readings

The following books are required for the course and can be purchased at the Seminary Co-Op Bookstore:

Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, Vol. 1

Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*

Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*

Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film*

V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film*

George Wilson, *Narration in Light*

In addition to the books, there will also be assigned articles for the class. Some of these are available on electronic reserve at Regenstein library and the rest are on Chalk.

Recitations and Screenings

In addition to the twice-weekly course meetings on Tuesday and Thursday from 1:30-2:50pm, every undergraduate taking the class for credit is also required to attend a weekly recitation section. The recitation sections will be taught by the course assistants. Sign-up for recitation sections will be during the first meeting of the course. Recitations will begin meeting the second week of the quarter. If you are an undergraduate taking the course for credit and you have not been assigned to a recitation section, you must get in touch with one or the other of the teaching assistants immediately!

In addition, starting the first week of the quarter, there will be a weekly screening at 7pm on Wednesday evenings in CWAC 157. If necessary, there will be an alternate screening on Tuesday evenings (also at 7pm in CWAC 157) for those unable to attend the Wednesday screenings. Students can also view most of the films at the Film Studies Center, in Cobb 306, and are encouraged to go there and treat themselves to second and third viewings of the required films for the course.

Schedule of Course Meetings

January 7	Introductory Remarks. What is a photograph?
January 8	Screening: <i>Lady in the Lake</i>
January 9	What is a movie?
January 14	The context of the advent of photography
January 15	Screening: <i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> (opening sequence); <i>Dark Passage</i>
January 16	The early reception of photography
January 21	Baudelaire on photography
January 22	Screening: <i>Rear Window</i>
January 23	Trying to make sense of photography
January 28	Kracauer's theory of photography
January 29	Screening: <i>Michael Caine on Film Acting</i>
January 30	The ontology of the photographic image
February 4	The ontology of the photographic image continued

- February 5 Screening: *The End of St. Petersburg*
- February 6 Diderot and Fried on absorption and theatricality
- February 11 Diderot and Fried on absorption and theatricality continued
- February 12 Screening: *Lady from Shanghai*
- February 13 Montage and Expressionist theories of film
- February 18 Kracauer's theory of film
- February 19 Screening: *Days of Heaven*
- February 20 Camera reality and cinematographic realism
- February 25 Theater vs. cinema, stage vs. screen acting
- February 26 Screening: *The Bicycle Thief*
- February 27 Bazin on Italian Neo-Realism
- March 4 Cavell's *The World Viewed*
- March 5 Screening: *Short Cuts*
- March 6 Subjective and Objective Camera
- March 11 Narrative Film Worlds
- March 12 No screening
- March 13 Optional class: General Discussion.

Schedule of Reading Assignments

In the schedule of readings below, readings that are on electronic reserve are marked with

a single asterisk; readings that are on Chalk are marked with a double asterisk. All other reading assignments are from the required texts for the course.

- January 7 Introductory meeting.
- January 9 No reading assignment
- January 14 Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art* (excerpts)**
“Self-Operating Processes of Fine Art, the Daguerrotype”**
- January 16 Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, *A Photography@* (excerpt)*
Frank Howard, “Photography as Connected with the Fine Arts”**
M. A. Belloc, “The Future of Photography”**
- January 21 Charles Baudelaire, *ASalon of 1859*, Parts I-IV*
- January 23 William G. Fitzgerald, “Some Curiosities of Photography” Parts I and II**
“The Legal Relations of Photography”**
Rudolf Arnheim, “The Nature of Photography”*
Joel Snyder and Neil Allen, “Photography, Vision, and Representation”*
Joel Snyder, “Picturing Vision”*
- January 28 Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, chapter 1
- January 30 André Bazin, *AThe Ontology of the Photographic Image@*
- February 4 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*, chapters 1-3
Joel Snyder, *AWhat Happens By Itself in Photography?”**
- February 6 Denis Diderot, *ANotes on Painting@**
Denis Diderot, *ASalon of 1767”**
Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*, chapter 1
- February 11 Denis Diderot, *AConversations on The Natural Son@**
Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*, chapter 2
Michael Fried, *Courbet=s Realism*, pp. 1-52, 278-283*
- February 13 Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (excerpts)*
V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film* chapter 1
George Wilson, *Narration in Light*, pp. 1-3, 51-61, 200-207
Noel Carroll, *AThe Specificity Thesis@**

- February 18 Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, Preface & chapters 2, 3, 4, 15 & 16
- February 20 Nestor Almendros, *A Days of Heaven*@*
V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film* chapter 2
- February 25 Leo Braudy, *The World in a Frame* (excerpt)*
Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*, chapter 4
André Bazin, *A Theater and Cinema*@
- February 27 André Bazin, *A Bicycle Thief*@*
André Bazin, *A De Sica: Metteur en Scène*@*
- March 4 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*, chapters 5-11, 14-17
- March 6 Jean Mitry, “Subjective Camera”*
Karel Reisz, *Fundamental Principles of Film Editing* (excerpt)*
George Wilson, *Narration in Light* (selections to be assigned)
Selected reviews of *Lady in the Lake**
- March 11 V. F. Perkins, “Where is the World?: The Horizon of Events in Movie Fiction”***
V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film* (selections to be assigned)
- March 13 General Discussion. No reading assignment

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*** Schedule of Screenings ***

January 8 *Lady in the Lake*

January 15 *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (opening sequence); *Dark Passage*

January 29 *Michael Caine on Film Acting*

February 5 *The End of St. Petersburg*

February 12 *Lady from Shanghai*

February 19 *Days of Heaven*

February 26 *The Bicycle Thief*

March 5 *Short Cuts*

March 12 No screening