

English 720 Essential Films: The "A" List  
Summer II, 2012, TR 1-4:50, HL 203  
Duchovnay

**Course Description:**

During the five-week semester we will be looking at representative "essential" films from a variety of national cinemas. There are hundreds of "essential" films, but no one class can cover even a good percentage of them. What we will do, then, is look at key, representative films for what they say about a country's national cinema, the time they were released, their social and political and thematic importance, their place as related to a particular director, and aspects of film aesthetics and film history.

The course in general will provide us with the opportunity to learn about trends in national cinemas that have not received attention in other film courses offered previously on our campus. Your particular work will be very focused and, based on the option you choose for your final project, should provide you with the basis for well documented research, a conference presentation, or a scholarly article on your film.

**Course Objectives:**

1. to examine and define the notion of national cinema;
2. to place films in their historical and critical contexts as related to national cinemas and film history;
3. to become familiar with some of the essential films in film history;
4. to gain experience in researching scholarly materials related to a particular film;
5. to prepare ONE of these three: 1) an annotated bibliography related to a particular film; 2) an 8-10 page paper suitable for a conference presentation focused on a single film; or 3) a draft of a scholarly article suitable for journal submission on a particular film and its national cinema.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

As per university guidelines, learning outcomes are what you are able to do as a result of the activities, readings, and instruction that have occurred in this course. These are my expectations for you, the learner in this course:

1. You will demonstrate a knowledge of the place of an "essential" film to its national cinema;
2. Through your written materials and oral comments, you will demonstrate a familiarity with ways of discussing and evaluating national cinema and a particular film as a reflections of film history;
3. You will demonstrate skills in critical cinematic literacy – being able to read film criticism and apply it to presenting information on the film that is the subject of your research;
4. You will participate in a "community" interested in discussing/analyzing films and film criticism beyond the surface level of narrative or character;
5. You will demonstrate research and bibliographic skills in cinematic studies by completing a researched final project.

**Attendance:** You should try to not miss class. We will be discussing a substantial amount of material in a short period of time. Class discussions, cannot be duplicated, no matter how thorough someone's notes might be.

In some quarters there is the notion that some absences are excused and others are not. I consider any absence an absence--car trouble, a doctor's appointment, a family emergency, etc. Excessive absences (beyond two) will contribute to the lowering of your grade. Four absences--unless for extraordinary circumstances and appropriate notification to your

instructor--will result in your being dropped from the class. *Those who are dropped from class without having attended regularly and who are on financial aid may be required to repay their financial aid.*

**Major Projects:** Prior to our first class meeting, you have chosen one film to focus on during the course. You will present a twenty-minute oral on aspects of this film related to the SLOs and Course Objectives (above); then, for your final project, you will have the choice of one of three options: 1) An annotated bibliography with a brief introductory survey on the scholarship on the film, the national cinema, and the director; 2) an essay of 8-10 pages suitable for a conference presentation on your film; or 3) a draft of a scholarly article suitable (after revisions) for submission to a refereed scholarly journal. These options will be discussed in class.

**Late Papers:** Unless other deadlines have been worked out ahead of time with your instructor, because of the nature of this class, late submissions may be accepted, but at the cost of a lowered grade.

**Textbook:** *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Ed. Jonathan Hill and Pamela Church. Oxford UP, 1998. ISBN: 13: 978-0198711247

**Other Materials:**

On-line videos

Handouts, pdfs, or on-line documents

Books on Reserve, (see Reserve List for English 720 or English 432)

There are many good books that deal with film theory, several that give overviews of national cinemas and others that focus on the cinema or particular countries. Also beneficial is access to films and film clips via Netflix, Youtube, the Media Services in our library, or Blockbuster or Amazon or other such sources. Here are two recommendations for overviews of film theory & film terms:

Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. London & New York: Routledge, 2006.

Stam, Robert. *Film Theory: An Introduction*. Malden, MA & Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2000.

**Background Material:** If you don't have much experience with film studies, you might consider looking at the following texts: Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*. 12<sup>th</sup> edition. Boston: Allyn/Bacon, 2011. (Earlier editions are okay and are relatively inexpensive.) Two copies, one each of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> editions, are on reserve under either English 720 or English 432. Another good textbook is: David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's *Film Art: An Introduction*. 9<sup>th</sup> Ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2009 (earlier versions are fine).

**Evaluation Materials:** The evaluation for this course will consist primarily of oral and written assignments, including responses/commentaries to our readings/presentations, a short analysis of the single best source on your film, class participation, and ONE of the following: 1) an annotated bibliography with brief introductory essay, or 2) an 8-10 page paper suitable for a conference presentation, or 3) a draft of a scholarly essay suitable for publication in an academic journal.

**Responses**— You will be asked to write 1-page responses to some (not all) selected readings assigned or films viewed or presentations. You will be encouraged to bring questions to class about things you may not understand in the readings or about the presentations by your peers.

**The Writing Center.** The Writing Center is dedicated to helping writers take advantage of all opportunities for learning related to the writing process; to that end, the Center can assist writers at any stage of the writing process. In addition to your instructor, this is the place to go for additional assistance with your reading and writing projects at TAMU-Commerce. The Center can help you with your papers and digital texts for your classes. The Center has two locations: (1) on the ground floor of the Hall of Languages (room 103), and (2) by the circulation desk in Gee Library. To schedule an appointment, come to HL 103 or call (903) 886-5280, or check out the hours at the Gee Library.

**Evaluation/Grades:** Your grade will be based on your assignments and work in class. Specifically, your final project=50%; responses to readings=15%; Class Participation =15%; Oral presentations=15%; Misc (possibly your choice)=5%. As in all graduate courses, the collaborative sharing of ideas and responses will be important throughout the term.

**Common Decency:** All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. In addition, you are requested to turn off your cell phones, ipads, and other forms of technology before entering the classroom, unless it is being used to support the work we are doing in class. Common courtesy says you do not receive or answer calls during class. Restrooms in the Hall of Languages are on the first and third floors. You do not need to ask your instructor for permission to leave to use the restroom.

**Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services / Texas A&M University-Commerce/ Gee Library, Room 132 / Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148**  
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

**Academic Honesty:** Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3])

**Plagiarism:** Our word plagiarism is derived from a word that means "to kidnap." Plagiarism is a form of kidnapping someone else's ideas, opinions, arguments, or research, and presenting them as your own. Plagiarism "includes (but is not limited to) failure to indicate the source with quotation marks or footnotes where appropriate if any of the following are reproduced in the work submitted: 1. A phrase, written or musical; 2. A graphic element; 3. A proof; 4. Specific language; 5. An idea derived from the work, published or unpublished, of another person" or group.

Much of the confusion and unintentional dishonesty in undergraduate and graduate papers results from ignorance or carelessness with regard to attribution of sources. When you borrow from what others have said, you are obligated to acknowledge your sources. We all solicit opinions about our writing from family, friends, or colleagues. Your indebtedness to others for sharing ideas with you about your paper or for reading and commenting on it can be indicated in an acknowledgements page accompanying formal assignments. If you go beyond conversations with friends or colleagues to other outside sources, you need to acknowledge these sources in your paper and in a Works Cited page. If you are uncertain about your documentation, please see

your instructor before you submit your paper. Intentional plagiarism will result in a zero for the work and appropriate disciplinary action.

**Schedule:** Please consider this a tentative schedule. We may need to make some changes (deletions, additions) as we move through the short summer term. **Due dates for assignments:** Written and oral assignments are due on the assigned day. By not being in class, you will be impacting what you and others will learn from the commentary and analysis of that day. If you know you will be gone a particular day and you are scheduled to present, please let me know immediately so we can make adjustments.

Note: OGFS=*Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (our text for the class)  
OHWC=*Oxford History of World Cinema* (on reserve/pdfs maybe)  
WCS=*World Cinema Since 1945* (on reserve or via PDFs)

**Note: The readings listed in WCS are optional except if the reading focuses on YOUR country. This particular text (WCS) goes into detail about the country and lists many more film titles than you need to know. But the selections are useful for their "fullness" and references. Some will be sent to you as pdfs to have as reference material.**

Other books on reserve that you want to consult, though not for films or directors who appeared after the late 70s (*IDFF*) or mid-80s (*WFD*):

*World Film Directors, Vols. 1 & 2*

*International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers, Vol 1, Films; Vol. II, Filmmakers*

**\*\*\*\*\*Please Read Before We Meet for our first class\*\*\*\*\***

OGFS: "Concepts of National Cinema," 385-394

"Issues in European Cinema," 440-448

Wk 1 July 10 & July 12

July 10: Course Introduction / Film & Class as a Collaborative Process

Film: *Day for Night*

Read for next class: OGFS, "Jean Renoir," 486-487

OHWC, "Jean Renoir," 338-339

Bert Cardullo, pdf, "Re-Reading the Rules: Renoir's *La Règle du jeu*  
Reconsidered" *Post Script* 30.1 (Fall 2011): 58-69. (pdf)

July 12--The Influence of Cinematic Realism and Jean Renoir

Looking at Film: Ways In--Jean Renoir's Short Film: *A Day in the Country*

Is a director's work "all of a piece?" ---*Rules of the Game*

Read for next class: OGFS, Jill Forbes, "French Nouvelle Vague," 461-465

OHWC, "Popular Art of French Cinema," 344-353

OGFS, Ulrike Sieglöhr, "New German Cinema," 466-470

OHWC, "Germany: Nazism and After," 374-382

**Optional:** WCS, Dudley Andrew, "France," 170-207 (reserve, or pdf)

Eric Renstschler, "Germany," 208-251 (reserve, or pdf)

Wk 2 July 17 & July 19

July 17: France (New Wave) and Germany (New German Cinema)

Presentations

*Shoot the Piano Player*, France, Francois Truffaut

*The Marriage of Maria Braun*, German, Rainer Fasssbinder  
Film: Marcel Carne's *Children of Paradise* or *Marriage of Maria Braun*

Read for next class: OGFS, Daniel Goulding, "East Central European Cinema," 471-477  
OHWC, East Central Europe Before WW II, 383-389; "Changing States in East  
Central Europe," 632-640

**Optional:** WCS, John Mosier, "Hungary," 287-300; "Poland," 476-489

July 19: East Central Europe  
Presentations

*Mephisto*, Istvan Szabo, Hungary  
*Blue*, Krzysztof Kieslowski, Poland/Switzerland/France  
Film: *Mephisto* or *Blue* or *Ashes and Diamonds*

Read for next class: OGFS, Simona Monticelli, "Italian post-war cinema and  
Neo-Realism," 455-465  
OHWC, "Italy," 31-361, "Auteurs and After," 586-595  
OGFS, Chris Drake, "Ingmar Bergman," 488-489  
OHWC, Bergman, 572-573  
*Post Script*, issue on Storaro, comments on *The Conformist*

**optional:** WCS, Peter Bonanella, "Italy," 347-379  
Frederick J. Marker and Lise-Lone Marker, "Sweden," 514-541

Wk 3 July 24 & July 26  
July 24 Italy and Sweden  
Presentations

*La Dolce Vita*, Federico Fellini, Italy  
*Fanny and Alexander*, Ingmar Bergman, Sweden  
Film: Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (Italy/France/West Germany)  
Read for next class: OGFS, Wimal Dissanayake, "Issues in World Cinema," 527-534  
OHWC, Dreyer, 102-103;  
Denmark--TBA & South Korea--TBA

July 26 Denmark and South Korea  
Presentations

*Babette's Feast*, Gabriel Axel, Denmark  
*Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, and Spring*, Ki-duk Kim, South Korea  
Film: Dreyer's *Passion of Joan d'Arc*  
On Your Own--Youtube Film: *Nanook of the North* & Documentary Tradition

Read for next class: OGFS, John Izod and Richard Kilborn, "The Documentary," 426-433  
OGFS, Bérénice Reynaud, "Chinese Cinema," 543-549  
OHWC, "China After the Revolution," 693-703  
"Bunuel," 432-433  
"Latin American Cinema" (incl. Mexico), 427-432

**optional:** WCS, Esther Yau, "China," 116-139; Dennis West, "Mexico," 447-466

Wk 4 July 31 & Aug 2  
July 31: Mexico and China

Presentations

*Exterminating Angel*, Luis Buñuel, Mexico

*Farewell My Concubine*, Chen Kaige, China

Film: *Raise the Red Lantern* or *Farewell My Concubine*

Read for next class: OGFS, Will Straw, "Canadian Cinema," 523-526

, Elizabeth Jacka, "Australian Cinema," 516-522

Inma Lyons, Introduction, "Representing Masculinities in Spanish Cinema," *Post Script* 31.3 (Summer 2012): 3-7. (pdf)

Virginia Higginbotham, "Afterword: A Search for the Future" *Post Script* 31.3 (Summer 2012): 89-91. (pdf)

OHCW, "Spain After Franco," 596-603

, "New Australian Cinema," 722-730

, "Canadian Cinema," 731-740

**optional:** WCS, Piers Handling, "Canada," 86-115

, Neil McDonald, "Australia," 35-61

Aug 2

Presentations

*Year of Living Dangerously*, Peter Weir, Australia

*Videodrome*, David Cronenberg, Canada

Film: *All About My Mother*

Wk 5 Aug 7 & 9

Aug 7 More "Essentials": *Wings of Desire* or *The Battle of Algiers*

**Due Next Time: Final Projects**

Aug 9 National Cinemas--Retrospective or Recent AA winner: *The Secret in their Eyes* (Argentina) or *In A Better World* (Denmark) /End of Course Celebration