

English 489.002 (83164), Independent Study: Math(ematicians) on Film: Myth vs Reality
Instructor: Gerald Duchovnay

Description: Independent studies most often develop as a result of a student's desire to continue studies pursued in a course or a new interest that is not accommodated by normal course offerings. This independent study has developed as a result of a the student's interest in how films portray math and mathematicians.

Plan of Study: The student and I will meet once every two weeks or thereabouts to discuss the readings and the writings on the topic of how math and mathematicians are portrayed in films. These meetings will involve discussions and analysis of the films and the critical material (scholarly materials, reviews) available on the films and the topic. Since this is an independent study, the student will work independently on readings and writings suitable to what might be taught in a film class that focuses on this particular topic.

Objectives:

- 1) To achieve an overview and understanding of the films of films about mathematicians;
- 2) To understand the critical reception of these films;
- 3) To prepare a substantive essay focusing on motifs or themes related to the topic in one or more of these films studied;
- 4) To prepare a list of reference sources (reviews, scholarly articles, etc.) on this topic.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Student will demonstrate an understanding of key aspects of films about mathematicians and math via discussion of ideas about math and mathematicians on film;
2. Student will demonstrate skills in visual literacy related to these filmed texts by writing a suitable documented paper of 15-20 pages on the topic of the independent study.
3. Student will demonstrate research skills by presenting a selective list of scholarly and critical materials on the films and filmmakers under consideration.

Required Work:

- 1) Biweekly meetings with the instructor to discuss films viewed and progress on the project;
- 2) A selective bibliography of scholarly critical materials and reviews related to films focusing on math and mathematicians;
- 3) An viewing of numerous films, with summaries, on the topic, and then selecting those most suitable for a final paper;
- 4) A paper (approximately 14-20 pages) examining how math and mathematicians, myths and realities, as presented in selected films