

FM 215

Living at the Edge: Outsiders in Film

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst

Email: m.hurst@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours (P 98, Room 003): Tuesday, 13.30 – 15.00, or by appointment

Course Times: Monday, 17.30 – 19.00; Monday, 19.30 – 22.00 (weekly film screening); Wednesday, 17.30 – 19.00

Course Description

“The mass crushes beneath it everything that is different, everything that is excellent, individual, qualified and select. Anybody who is not like everybody, who does not think like everybody, runs the risk of being eliminated,” the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset once wrote. In film history, the “outsider” is, paradoxically, a standard trope. Whether because exceptionally gifted, criminal, perverse, victimized, or simply not in conformity with social expectations, this alienated figure holds a mirror up to the world around them, and is the centerpiece of a journey that may lead either to destruction or reconciliation. In this course we introduce film analysis and interpretation through an examination of the trope of the outsider in a number of different contexts. A core text will be Colin Wilson’s seminal study *The Outsider* (1956) and other literary works by Henri Barbusse (*Hell*, 1908), Jean-Paul Sartre (*Nausea*, 1938) and Albert Camus (*The Stranger*, 1942) will support the exploration of existential aspects of the outsider. Among the films addressed will be *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1972, George Roy Hill), *Steppenwolf* (1974, Fred Haines), *Fear Eats the Soul* (1974, Rainer Werner Fassbinder), *Vagabond* (1985, Agnès Varda), *An Angel at My Table* (1990, Jane Campion), *Moonlight* (2016, Barry Jenkins), *Joker* (2019, Todd Phillips). As these and other examples show, “outsiders” can be marginalized or suppressed by prejudices related to mental health, economic disadvantage, and sexuality. The challenge their stories pose can also extend—in unwelcome as well as transformative ways—beyond the medium of film itself.

Colin Wilson. *The Outsider*. [1956] London: Phoenix, 2001, will be made available in PDF copies.

Requirements

No prerequisites.

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Students are expected to come to seminars and film screenings punctually and prepared, to participate actively in the class discussions and to do all the course assignments on time.

* Please, do not use cell phones, smart phones or similar electronic devices during seminars and screenings!

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes and film screenings is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

More than two absences will affect the grade for the course.

Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness is registered as absence. Students should notify the instructor if they are unable to attend class.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused.

The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Special considerations for Fall 2021: Students must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. The instructors will make all reasonable efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assessment / Writing Assignments

Individual presentations in class, based on the film screenings.

Two screening reports (1000 words each), due in week 3 (deadline for screening report 1: Wednesday, September 15, 2021, 5.00 pm) and in week 7 (deadline for screening report 2: Wednesday, October 13, 2021, 5.00 pm) – The topics of the screening reports will be announced.

A final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15, Friday, December 17, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm) – The topic of the final essay will be a film analysis/interpretation, based on one of the films screened or discussed throughout the semester.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Participation:	25 %
Screening Reports:	25 %
Presentation:	25 %
Final Essay:	25 %

If one of these components is graded F, the final course grade cannot be higher than C-.
If two components are graded F, the final grade will be F (i.e. the whole class will be failed).

Schedule

* Tentative schedule depending on official Corona policies and students' choice of presentations

Week 1

Introduction: Outsiders

Film as a cultural phenomenon, narrative art and form of social commentary (1)

No film screening in week 1!

Week 2

Film as a cultural phenomenon, narrative art and form of social commentary (2)

Edward Scissorhands (1990, Tim Burton)

Week 3

Film analysis: Basic model – Story and Discourse

Structural analysis: The means and elements of filmic storytelling (1)

Primitive Mode of Representation (PMR), Cinema of Attractions

Slaughterhouse-Five (1972, George Roy Hill)

Screening report # 1 (deadline: Wednesday, September 15, 5.00 pm)

Week 4

Structural analysis: The means and elements of filmic storytelling (2)
Mise-en-scène and montage, Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR), Cinema of Narrative Integration

Harold and Maude (1971, Hal Ashby)

Week 5

Structural analysis: The means and elements of filmic storytelling (3)
Descriptive Montage, Montage of Attractions, Intellectual Montage

Steppenwolf (1974, Fred Haines)

Week 6

Film semiotics: Signs and codes; denotation and connotation of signs (1)

Fear Eats Soul (1974, Rainer Werner Fassbinder)

Week 7

Denotation and connotation of signs (2); paradigmatic and syntagmatic connotations

Fearless (1993, Peter Weir)

Screening report # 2 (deadline: Wednesday, October 13, 5.00 pm)

Fall Break: October 18 – 24, 2021

Week 8

The Wave (2008, Dennis Gansel)

Taxi Driver (1976, Martin Scorsese)

Week 9

Film Interpretation (1)

Vagabond (1985, Agnès Varda)

Week 10

Film Interpretation (2)

An Angel at My Table (1990, Jane Campion)

Week 11

Film Interpretation (3)

The Legend of 1900 (1998, Giuseppe Tornatore)

Week 12

Film Interpretation (4)

Dogville (2003, Lars von Trier)

Week 13

Film Interpretation (5)

Moonlight (2016, Barry Jenkins)

Week 14

Film Interpretation (6)

Joker (2019, Todd Phillips)

Week 15:

Completion Week (December 13 – 17, 2021)

Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): Friday, December 17, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

Literature:

Allen, Richard, and Murray Smith (eds.). *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute, 2004.

Barbusse, Henri. *Hell*. [1908] New York: Turtle Point Press, 1995.

Baudry, Jean-Louis. "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema." In: Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 299-318.

Bazin, André. *What is Cinema?* Vol. I & II. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of

California Press, 1971.

Bazin, André. "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." In: André Bazin. *What Is Cinema?* Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 9-16.

Bazin, André. "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema". In: André Bazin. *What Is Cinema?* Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 23-40.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In: Leo Braudy / Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 731-751.

Bergstrom, Janet (ed.). *Endless Night. Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1999.

Blandford, Steve, Barry K. Grant and Jim Hillier. *The Film Studies Dictionary*. London/New York: Arnold, Oxford University Press, 2004.

Bordwell, David. "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures." In: Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 17-34.

Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. London/New York: Routledge, 1990.

Braudy, Leo, and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. Seventh Edition. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

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Burch, Noël. "A Primitive Mode of Representation?" In: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.). *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI 1990, pp. 220-227.

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. [1942] New York: Vintage International /Random House, 1989.

Carroll, Noël. *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Elsaesser, Thomas, and Warren Buckland. *Studying Contemporary American Film. A Guide to Movie Analysis*. London: Arnold Publishers, 2002.

Frampton, Daniel. *Filmosophy*. London: Wallflower Press, 2006.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. 24 Volumes. London: Vintage/Random House, 2001.

Freud, Sigmund. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. Translated and edited by James Strachey. New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989.

Freud, Sigmund. "The 'Uncanny'." In: *Art and Literature. Jensen's Gradiva, Leonardo da Vinci and Other Works*. The Penguin Freud Library Vol. 14, edited by Albert Dickson. London/New York: Penguin, pp. 335-376.

Gibbs, John. *Mise-en-Scène. Film Style and Interpretation*. London/New York: Wallflower Press 2003.

Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attractions. Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." [1986] In: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.). *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI 1990, pp. 56-62.

- Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies. The Key Concepts*. Third Edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Hill, John, and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.). *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Hockley, Luke. *Cinematic Projections. The Analytic Psychology of C.G. Jung and Film Theory*. Luton: University of Luton Press, 2001.
- Indick, William. *Movies and the Mind. Theories of the Great Psychoanalysts Applied to Film*. Jefferson/NC: McFarland & Company, 2004.
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- Jung, Carl Gustav. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Second Edition. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. *The Essential Jung. Selected Writings*. Selected and introduced by Anthony Storr. London: Fontana Press/Harper Collins Publishers, 1998.
- Kaplan, E. Ann (ed.). *Psychoanalysis & Cinema*. New York/London: Routledge, 1990.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality*. [1960] Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1997.
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- Litch, Mary M. *Philosophy Through Film*. New York/London: Routledge, 2002.
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- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1994.
- Metz, Christian. *Film Language. A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
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Wilson, Colin. *The Outsider*. [1956] London: Phoenix, 2001.

Essay Deadlines

Deadline for screening report 1 (1000 words): Week 3, Wednesday, September 15, 2021, 15, 5.00 pm

Deadline for screening report 2 (1000 words): Week 7, Wednesday, October 13, 2021, 5.00 pm

Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): Week 15, Friday, December 17, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)