

FM 271

The Films of Wim Wenders

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst

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

Course Times: Friday, 14.00 – 17.15; Wednesday, 19.30 – 22.00 (weekly film screening)

Course Description

Wim Wenders is one of Germany's best known and most prolific filmmakers. He was a major representative of New German Cinema and the so-called *Autorenfilm* in the 1970s and 1980s, and an important artistic voice for the post-war generation. In addition, he became a celebrated figure in international cinema, making films in locations all over the world, and contributing to the genre of documentary as well as the development of the feature film. As film historians have noted, Wenders is notoriously difficult to classify in terms of cultural traditions or cinematic movements; thus exploring Wenders's development as filmmaker implies looking at different aesthetic and narrative approaches to cinema, from *auteur* cinema to modern and postmodern film. His two most famous works *Paris, Texas* (1984), set in the desolate American West, and *Wings of Desire* (1987), a gripping portrait of the divided city of Berlin, encapsulate his wide-ranging scope and experimental power. We will consider these two works within Wim Wenders's career, which includes *Alice in the Cities* (1974), *Kings of the Road* (1976), *The American Friend* (1977), *The End of Violence* (1997), *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999), *The Million Dollar Hotel* (2000), *Land of Plenty* (2004), *Don't Come Knocking* (2005), *Every Thing Will Be Fine* (2015), *Submergence* (2017).

Requirements

Basic knowledge of film history, film theory and film analysis.

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 individual research

Midterm essay (1500-2000 words), due in week 7, Saturday, October 16, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

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 %

Midterm Essay: 25 %

Presentations: 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, availability of films and students' choice of presentations

Week 1

Introduction: Wim Wenders, German Cinema and *Auteur* Theory (1)
No film screening in week 1!

Week 2

Wim Wenders, German Cinema and *Auteur* Theory (2)
Alice in the Cities (1974)

Week 3

Wrong Move (1975)

Week 4

Kings of the Road / In the Course of Time (1976)

Week 5

The American Friend (1977)

Week 6

Nick's Film: Lightning Over Water (1980)
The State of Things (1982)

Week 7

Paris, Texas (1984)

Deadline for midterm essay (1500-2000 words): Saturday, October 16, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

Fall Break: October 18 – 24, 2021

Week 8

Wings of Desire (1987)

Week 9

The End of Violence (1997)

Buena Vista Social Club (1999)

Week 10

The Million Dollar Hotel (2000)

Week 11

Land of Plenty (2004)

Don't Come Knocking (2005)

Week 12

Pina (2011)

The Salt of the Earth (co-directed with Juliano Ribeiro Salgado, 2014)

Week 13

Every Thing Will Be Fine (2015)

Week 14

Submergence (2017)

Pope Francis: A Man of His Word (2018)

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.

Bazin, André. *What is Cinema?* Vol. I & II. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971.

Bergfelder, Tim, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk (eds.). *The German Cinema Book*. London: British Film Institute, 2002.

Bergfelder, Tim, Erica Carter, Deniz Göktürk and Claudia Sandberg (eds.). *The German Cinema Book*. Second Edition. London/New York: Bloomsbury Publishing/British Film Institute, 2020.

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

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

Brockman, Stephen. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010.

Campbell, Neil. *Post-Westerns. Cinema, Region, West*. Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013. (Chapter on *Dont Come Knocking*, pp. 240-271)

Cook, Roger F. and Gerd Gemünden (eds.). *The Cinema of Wim Wenders. Image, Narrative and the Postmodern Condition*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.

Corrigan, Timothy. *New German Cinema. The Displaced Image*. Revised and expanded edition. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Delers, Olivier, and Martin Sulzer-Reichel. *Wim Wenders: Making Films That Matter*. New York/London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.

Elsaesser, Thomas, and Michael Wedel (eds.). *The BFI Companion to German Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.

Elsaesser, Thomas. *New German Cinema. A History*. Houndmills/London: Macmillan Education/BFI, 1989

Elsaesser, Thomas: *Weimar Cinema and After. Germany's Historical Imaginary*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000.

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

Graf, Alexander. *The Cinema of Wim Wenders. The Celluloid Highway*. London/New York: Wallflower Press, 2002.

Hake, Sabine. *German National Cinema*. London/New York: Routledge, 2004.

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.

Knight, Julia. *New German Cinema. Images of a Generation*. London/New York: Wallflower Press, 2004.

Kolker, Robert Phillip, and Peter Beicken. *The Films of Wim Wenders. Cinema as Vision and Desire*. [1993] Cambridge/New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*. Revised and expanded edition. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1997.

Kreimeier, Klaus. *The UFA Story. A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company 1918-1945*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1996.

Monaco, James. *How To Read a Film. Movies, Media, Multimedia*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Nelmes, Jill (ed.). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. Third edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2003.

Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey (ed.). *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Rentschler, Eric. *The Use and Abuse of Cinema. German Legacies from the Weimar Era to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Rosen, Philip (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Scharf, Inga. *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema. Homeless at Home*. New York/London: Routledge, 2009.

Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell. *Film History. An Introduction*. Second edition. New York: McGraw-Hill (Higher Education), 2003.

Wenders, Wim. *On Film .Essays and Conversations*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001.

Essay Deadlines

Midterm essay (1500-2000 words): Week 7, Saturday, October 16, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

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