

FM 177

Viral: Introduction to Film Studies

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst

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

Course Times: Monday, 14.00 – 15.30; Monday, 19.30 – 22.00 (weekly film screening); Wednesday, 14.00 – 15.30

Course Description

As commentators on the extraordinary situation presented by the COVID-19 epidemic have suggested, many societies in the world had almost completely lost the non-metaphorical sense of “viral,” believing that the measure of shutting down everyday activity because of disease belonged entirely to the past. Film, however, has frequently used the specter (as well as the metaphor) of contagion to explore essential issues, and to develop its visual language. In this introduction to film studies, we explore the genres and styles of cinema through its representation of this motif, as well as different approaches to film analysis and interpretation. We also consider the extent to which the works we examine raise questions and conflicts that have reemerged in our contemporary experience of global contagion. Films to be considered – depending on availability – could be quite different in genre, tone and connotations and may include *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, Don Siegel), *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964, Roger Corman), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968, George A. Romero), *The Andromeda Strain* (1971, Robert Wise), *The Omega Man* (1971, Boris Sagal), *Death in Venice* (1971, Luchino Visconti), *The Crazies* (1973, George A. Romero), *Shivers* (1975, David Cronenberg), *The Thing* (1982, John Carpenter), *Philadelphia* (1993, Jonathan Demme), *Outbreak* (1995, Wolfgang Petersen), *I Am Legend* (2007, Francis Lawrence), *Pontypool* (2008, Bruce McDonald), *Blindness* (2008, Fernando Meirelles), *Carriers* (2009, Alex and David Pastor), *Contagion* (2011, Steven Soderbergh), *World War Z* (2013, Marc Forster), *Climax* (2018, Gaspar Noé).

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 SPRING 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

Two screening reports (1000 words each), due in week 3 (deadline for screening report 1: Wednesday, February 17, 14.00) and week 7 (deadline for screening report 2: Wednesday, March 17, 14.00)

and a final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15 (deadline for final essay: Wednesday, May 19, midnight*). The topic of this final essay will be a film analysis/interpretation, based on one of the films screened or discussed throughout the semester.

* Senior Students: Deadline for final essay: week 15, Monday, May 17, midnight (11.59 pm)

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:	33,3 %
Screening Reports:	33,3 %
Final Essay:	33,4 %

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 availability of films

Week 1:

Introduction – Film as a cultural and artistic phenomenon and form of social commentary (1)

Suggested Reading:

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

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

John T. Caldwell. "Welcome to the Viral Future of Cinema (Television)". In: *Cinema Journal* Vol. 45. No. 1 (Autumn 2005), pp. 90-97.

Searle Kochberg. "Cinema as Institution." In: Jill Nelmes (ed.). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. Third edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 3-50.

Siegfried Kracauer. *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality*. [1960] Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1994.

Hugo Münsterberg. "The Photoplay. A Psychological Study." [1916] Excerpt in: Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 401-407.

Erwin Panofsky. "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures." [1934/1947] In: Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 279-292.

No film screening in week 1!

Week 2:

Film as a cultural and artistic phenomenon and form of social commentary (2)

Viruses, Contamination, Epidemic as media topics

Reading:

Dahlia Schweitzer. *Going Viral. Zombies, Viruses, and the End of the World*. New Brunswick/Camden/London: Rutgers University Press, 2018, "Introduction" (pp. 1-37)

Screening: *Contagion* (2011, Steven Soderbergh)

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

Suggested Reading:

David Bordwell. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. London/New York: Routledge, 1990.
Larry A. Brown. *How Films Tell Stories. The Narratology of Cinema*. Nashville: Creative Arts Press, 2016.
Noël Burch. "A Primitive Mode of Representation?" In: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.). *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI 1990, pp. 220-227.
Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland. *Studying Contemporary American Film. A Guide to Movie Analysis*. London: Arnold Publishers, 2002.
Tom Gunning. "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.
James Monaco. *How To Read a Film. Movies, Media, Multimedia*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
Allan Rowe and Paul Wells. "Film Form and Narrative." In: Jill Nelmes (ed.). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. Third edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 53-90.
Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell. *Film History. An Introduction*. Second edition. New York: McGraw-Hill (Higher Education), 2003.

Screening: *The Andromeda Strain* (1971, Robert Wise)

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

Suggested Reading:

André Bazin. "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.
David Bordwell. "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.
Larry A. Brown. *How Films Tell Stories. The Narratology of Cinema*. Nashville: Creative Arts Press, 2016.

Screening: *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964, Roger Corman)

Week 5:

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

Suggested Reading:

David Bordwell. *The Cinema of Eisenstein*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
Ian Christie and Richard Taylor (eds.). *Eisenstein Rediscovered*. London/New York: Routledge, 1993.

Eisenstein, Sergei. *Writings, 1922-1934. Selected Works, Vol. 1.* Edited by Richard Taylor. London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010.

Mark Joyce. "The Soviet Montage Cinema of the 1920s." In: Jill Nelmes (ed.). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. Third edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 389-420.

Al LaValley and Barry P. Scherr (eds.). *Eisenstein at 100. A Reconsideration*. New Brunswick/New Jersey/London: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

Anne Nesbet. *Savage Junctures. Sergei Eisenstein and the Shape of Thinking*. London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003.

Screening: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, Don Siegel)

Week 6:

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

Suggested Reading:

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

Christian Metz. *Film Language. A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Monday, March 8, 2021: Public Holiday!

No class, no film screening on Monday, March 8, 2021!

Week 7:

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

Screening: *Death in Venice* (1971, Luchino Visconti)

Week 8:

Modes of film interpretation (1)

Screening: *Shivers* (1975, David Cronenberg)

Spring Break: Monday, March 29 – Monday, April 5, 2021

Week 9:

Modes of film interpretation (2)

No class, no film screening on Monday, April 5, 2021!

Week 10:

Modes of film interpretation (3)

Screening: *The Omega Man* (1971, Boris Sagal)

Week 11:

Modes of film interpretation (4)

Screening: *Carriers* (2009, Alex and David Pastor)

Week 12:

Modes of film interpretation (5)

Screening: *Blindness* (2008, Fernando Meirelles)

Week 13:

Modes of film interpretation (6)

Screening: *World War Z* (2013, Marc Forster)

Week 14:

"Language Is A Virus"

Screening: *Pontypool* (2008, Bruce McDonald)

Week 15: Completion Week (May 17 – May 21, 2021)

Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): Wednesday, May 19, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

* Senior Students: Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): Monday, May 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.

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 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.

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.

Brown, Larry A. *How Films Tell Stories. The Narratology of Cinema*. Nashville: Creative Arts Press, 2016.

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

Butler, Octavia: "Speech Sounds" In: *Bloodchild and Other Stories*. Second edition. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005, pp.87-110.

Caldwell, John T. "Welcome to the Viral Future of Cinema (Television)". In: *Cinema Journal* Vol. 45. No. 1 (Autumn 2005), pp. 90-97.

Camus, Albert. *The Plague*. London: Penguin Books, 2013.

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

Defoe, Daniel. *A Journal of the Plague Year*. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

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 '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, 2000.

Kaplan, E. Ann (ed.). *Psychoanalysis & Cinema*. New York/London: Routledge, 1990.

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*. [1960] Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Lebeau, Vicky. *Psychoanalysis and Cinema. The Play of Shadows*. London: Wallflower Press, 2002.
- Litch, Mary M. *Philosophy Through Film*. New York/London: Routledge, 2002.
- Matheson, Richard. *I Am Legend*. London: Gollancz/Orion Publishing Group, 2004
- McFarlane, Brian. *Novel to Film. An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press/Clarendon Press, 1996.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1994.
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier. Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Metz, Christian. *Film Language. A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Monaco, James. *How To Read a Film. Movies, Media, Multimedia*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 198-209.
- Neale, Stephen. *Genre and Hollywood*. London/New York: Routledge 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.
- Outka, Elizabeth. *Viral Modernism. The Influenza Pandemic and Interwar Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Masque of the Red Death" In: *The Short Fiction of Edgar Allen Poe*. Edited by Stuart and Susan Levine. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1976, pp.461-470.
- Porter, Burton F. *Philosophy Through Fiction and Film*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education/Prentice Hall, 2004.
- Read, Rupert, and Jerry Goodenough (eds.). *Film as Philosophy. Essays in Cinema after Wittgenstein and Cavell*. Houndmills Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Rosen, Philip (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Schweitzer, Dahlia. *Going Viral. Zombies, Viruses, and the End of the World*. New Brunswick/Camden/London: Rutgers University Press, 2018.
- Smith, Murray, and Thomas E. Wartenberg (eds.). *Thinking Through Cinema. Film as Philosophy*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2006.
- Stewart, George R. *Earth Abides*. London: Gollancz/Orion Publishing Group, 1999.
- Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell. *Film History. An Introduction*. Second edition. New York: McGraw-Hill (Higher Education), 2003.
- Wartenberg, Thomas E., and Angela Curran (eds.). *The Philosophy of Film. Introductory Text and*

Readings. Oxford/Malden: Blackwell, 2005.

Essay Deadlines

Deadline for screening report 1 (1000 words): week 3, Wednesday, February 17, 2021, 14.00 (2.00 pm)

Deadline for screening report 2 (1000 words): week 7, Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 14.00 (2.00 pm)

Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): week 15, Wednesday, May 19, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

* Senior Students: Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): week 15, Monday, May 17, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)