

FM 304

The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of John Carpenter

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst

Course Times: Friday 14:00 – 17:15; Wednesday 19:30 – 22:00 (weekly film screening)

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 13.30 – 15.00

Course Description

“In France, I’m an auteur. In England, I’m a horror movie director. In Germany, I’m a filmmaker. In the US, I’m a bum.” (John Carpenter)

This course explores the films of John Carpenter – winner of the Directors’ Fortnight *Carrosse d’Or* Award at Cannes Film Festival 2019 – who started his career as film director (of mostly horror and science fiction films) in the 1970s and was at that time as popular, successful and promising as Steven Spielberg. But his work since the mid-1980s is increasingly tainted by critical and financial failures, although many of his films are today considered cult classics. In this class we will discuss the topics, style and aesthetics of Carpenter’s films and his contested reputation as both auteur and genre director with a focus on contemporary film reviews and media coverage as specific way of practicing film criticism.

Credits: 8 ECTS, 4 U.S. credits

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 III Academic Misconduct.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Absences will significantly 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.

Notification via e-mail or in-person is required for all excused absences. After four such absences, additional documentation is required (i.e. doctor's note, proof of court date, military obligation etc.) in order for the absence to be excused.

Bard College Berlin cannot offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, whether the absences are on documented medical grounds or not.

Please see the Student Handbook for college policies on absences due to serious illness or other important cause (Leave of Absence request).

Assessment / Writing Assignments

Two screening reports/film reviews (1000 words each), due in week 3 and week 7 (Deadline for screening reports: Friday, February 14, noon / Friday, March 13, noon)

Presentations in class

A final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15 (Deadline for final essay: Wednesday, May 13, 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.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

All assignments and written work must be submitted electronically and on time. Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded 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 and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Participation:	25 %
Screening Reports:	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

Week 1

Introduction: Genre Film and Auteur Theory (1)

Dark Star (1974)

Week 2:

Genre Film and Auteur Theory (2)

Assault on Precinct 13 (1976)

Week 3:

Halloween (1978)
Screening report 1
No Class on Friday, February 14!

Week 4:

The Fog (1980)
Presentations (1)

Week 5:

Escape from New York (1981)
Presentations (2)

Week 6:

The Thing (1982)
Presentations (3)

Week 7:

Christine (1983)
Starman (1984)

Screening report 2
Presentations (4)

Week 8:

Big Trouble in Little China (1986)
Presentations (5)

Week 9:

Prince of Darkness (1987)
Presentations (6)

Week 10:

They Live (1988)
Memoirs of an Invisible Man (1992)

Presentations (7)

Spring Break: Monday, April 6 – Monday, April 13, 2020

Week 11:

In the Mouth of Madness (1994)
Presentations (8)

Week 12:

Village of the Damned (1995)
Escape from L.A. (1996)

Presentations (9)

Week 13:

Vampires (1998)

Ghosts of Mars (2001)

No class on Friday, May 1!

Week 14:

The Ward (2010)

No class on Friday, May 8!

Week 15: Completion Week:

Class on Monday, May 11, 14.00 – 17.15!

Presentations (10)

Deadline for final essay: Wednesday, May 13, midnight

Literature:

Boulenger, Gilles. *John Carpenter. The Prince of Darkness*. Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2003.

Conrich, Ian, and David Woods (eds.). *The Cinema of John Carpenter. The Technique of Terror*. London/New York: Wallflower, 2004.

Le Blanc, Michelle, and Colin Odell. *John Carpenter*. Kamera Books, 2011.

Muir, John Kenneth. *The Films of John Carpenter*. Jefferson/London: McFarland & Company, 2000.

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.

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.

Baudry, 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.

Caughie, John (ed.). *Theories of Authorship. A Reader*. London/New York: British Film

Institute/Routledge, 2001.

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

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

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.

Hillier, Jim (ed.). *Cahiers du cinéma 1: The 1950s. Neo-realism, Hollywood, The New Wave*. London: British Film Institute/Routledge, 1985.

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.

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.

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.

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

Smith, Murray, and Thomas E. Wartenberg (eds.). *Thinking Through Cinema. Film as Philosophy*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2006.

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, Friday, February 14, noon (12.01 pm)

Deadline for screening report 2 (1000 words): week 7, Friday, March 13, noon (12.01 pm)

Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): week 15, Wednesday, May 13, midnight (11.59 pm)