

# FM 206: 24 Times a Second: Life, Death, and Truth in Narrative Films (Introduction to Film Studies)

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 13.30 – 15.00 or by appointment

Course Times: Monday, 15:45 – 17:15; Monday, 19:30 – 22:00 (film screening); Wednesday, 15:45 – 17:45

## Course Description

According to French film director Jean-Luc Godard "Cinema is truth 24 times a second." In the light of his assertion this introductory course addresses existential topics of human experience – life, love, death, and truth – in classic international films of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (for instance *Citizen Kane* by Orson Welles, *Rashomon* by Akira Kurosawa, *8½* by Federico Fellini, *The Silence* by Ingmar Bergman, *Blow-Up* by Michelangelo Antonioni, *Day For Night* by François Truffaut, and *After Life* by Hirokazu Kore-Eda). Basic knowledge and conceptions of film history, film theory and film analysis as well as different approaches to film interpretation will help us to understand how narrative films represent and comment on life and death and truth, i.e. the tensions between objective and subjective realities of the human condition as informed by the historical and cultural experiences of (post)modernity, and, not least, how films convey aspects of critical self-reflection of the medium itself and its visual, ontological and empirical “truth”.

## 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 highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. 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 2022:** Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

### **Assessment / Assignments**

Short individual presentations in class, based on the film screenings.

Two screening reports (1000 words each), due in week 2 (deadline for screening report # 1: Wednesday, September 7, 2022, 3:30 pm) and in week 7 (deadline for screening report # 2: Wednesday, October 12, 2022, 3:30 pm) – The topics of the screening reports will be announced before the screenings.

A final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15, Friday, December 16, 2022, noon (i.e. 12:01 pm) – \* Please note: Senior students -- Deadline for final essay: Week 15, Monday, December 12, 2022, midnight! \*

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 a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. 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 %
Screening Reports:	33 %
Final Essay:	34 %

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 intensity of class discussions

### **WEEK 1:**

Film and Life – What is film? Film as a historical, cultural and ‘anthropological’ phenomenon

(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.

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.

Laura Mulvey. *Death 24x a Second. Stillness and the Moving Image.* London: Reaktion Books, 2006, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

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:**

Real life vs. reel life

*La Nuit américaine (Day For Night, 1973, François Truffaut)*

**WEEK 3:**

Different styles of filmic presentation, different styles of film language, mise-en-scène and montage (film narration from the late 19th century to the postmodern age)

Primitive Mode of Representation (PMR), Cinema of attractions, Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR)

(Suggested) Reading:

Béla Balász. "The Close-Up" In: Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 304-311.

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.

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

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.

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.

*La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc (The Passion of Joan of Arc, 1928, Carl Theodor Dreyer)*

*Vivre sa Vie (My Life to Live, 1962, Jean-Luc Godard)*

**WEEK 4:**

Basic model of film analysis

Structural analysis: The means and elements of filmic storytelling

(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.

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

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

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

*Citizen Kane* (1941, Orson Welles)

*Sans toi ni loi (Vagabond)*, 1985, Agnès Varda)

### **WEEK 5:**

Descriptive montage, montage of attractions, intellectual montage

(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.

Herbert Marshall (ed.). *Sergei Eisenstein's The Battleship Potemkin*. New York: Avon, 1978.

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

Richard Taylor. *The Battleship Potemkin. The Film Companion*. (KINOfiles Film Companion 1) London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000.

*Rashōmon* (1950, Akira Kurosawa)

### **WEEK 6:**

**No class, no film screening on Monday, October 3: Public Holiday!**

Film semiotics: Signs and codes; denotation and connotation of signs

(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.

**WEEK 7:**

Denotation and connotation of signs; paradigmatic and syntagmatic connotations

(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.

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

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

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

*Otto e mezzo* (8½, 1963, Federico Fellini)

**WEEK 8:**

**Modes of film interpretation (1): Biographical interpretation; *auteur* theory, *cinéma des auteurs***

(Suggested) Reading:

John Caughie (ed.). *Theories of Authorship. A Reader*. London/New York: British Film Institute/Routledge, 2001.

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

*Tystnaden* (*The Silence*, 1963, Ingmar Bergman)

**Fall Break: October 24 – October 30, 2022**

**WEEK 9:**

**Modes of film interpretation (2)**

*Blow-Up* (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni)

**WEEK 10:**

### **Modes of film interpretation (3)**

(Suggested) Reading:

Jean-Louis Baudry. "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.

Luke Hockley. *Cinematic Projections. The Analytic Psychology of C .G. Jung and Film Theory*. Luton: University of Luton Press, 2000.

William Indick. *Movies and the Mind. Theories of the Great Psychoanalysts Applied to Film*. Jefferson/NC: McFarland & Company, 2004.

Vicky Lebeau. *Psychoanalysis and Cinema. The Play of Shadows*. London: Wallflower Press, 2002.

Christian Metz. *The Imaginary Signifier. Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982.

*Lost Highway* (1997, David Lynch)

### **WEEK 11:**

#### **Modes of film interpretation (4)**

*The Truman Show* (1998, Peter Weir)

### **WEEK 12:**

#### **Modes of film interpretation (5)**

*Magnolia* (1999, Paul Thomas Anderson)

### **WEEK 13:**

#### **Modes of film interpretation (6)**

*Les Plages d'Agnès (The Beaches of Agnès)*, 2008, Agnès Varda)

### **WEEK 14:**

#### **Modes of film interpretation (7): Conceptual approach; film as philosophy**

(Suggested) Reading:

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

Mary M. Litch. *Philosophy Through Film*. New York/London: Routledge, 2002.

Burton F. Porter. *Philosophy Through Fiction and Film*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey:

Pearson Education/Prentice Hall, 2004.

Rupert Read and Jerry Goodenough (eds.). *Film as Philosophy. Essays in Cinema after Wittgenstein and Cavell*. Houndmills Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

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

Thomas E. Wartenberg and Angela Curran (eds.). *The Philosophy of Film. Introductory Text and Readings*. Oxford / Malden: Blackwell, 2005.

*After Life* (1998, Hirokazu Kore-Eda)

**WEEK 15:** Completion week

Essay Deadline: Friday, December 16, 2022, noon (i.e. 12:01 pm)

### Reading / Selection:

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. "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.

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

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*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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.

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

Dowd, James J. *Social Life in the Movies: How Hollywood Imagines War, Schools, Romance and Social Inequality*. London/New York: Routledge, 2021.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

Lebeau, Vicky. *Psychoanalysis and Cinema. The Play of Shadows*. London: Wallflower Press,

2002.

Litch, Mary M. *Philosophy Through Film*. New York/London: Routledge, 2002.

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. *Film Language. A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier. Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982.

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.

Mulvey, Laura. *Death 24x a Second. Stillness and the Moving Image*. London: Reaktion Books, 2006.

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.

Panofsky, Erwin. "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.

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.

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**

Screening report No. 1 (1000 words): Week 2, Wednesday, September 7, 2022, 3:30 pm

Screening report No. 2 (1000 words): Week 7, Wednesday, October 12, 2022, 3:30 pm

Final essay (3000-3500 words): Week 15, Friday, December 16, 2022, noon (i.e. 12:01 pm) –

Please note: Senior students -- Deadline for final essay: Week 15, Monday, December 12, 2022, midnight!