

UPPER DIVISION GENERAL EDUCATION NEW COURSE PROPOSAL
FOR AREA CC – HUMANITIES

Please Read Instructions on Next Page of This Form

Course Number: 332

Course Title: Philosophy in Film

- ☐ This is a new course. A FORM C is being filed concurrently.
☒ This is an existing course not currently satisfying an UDGE requirement, which is not being changed.
☐ This is an existing course not currently satisfying an UDGE requirement, which is undergoing change. A FORM C-2 is being filed concurrently.
☐ This is an existing course currently satisfying an UDGE requirement which is being submitted for recertification. A FORM C-2 is required only if the course is being changed.

1. Please attach a syllabus or draft syllabus of the course.
2. How many units is this course? 3 (Upper-Division General Education courses are limited to 3 units.)
- 3.a. Does this course have (a) prerequisite (s) other than completion of LDGE requirements?
yes X no
- b. Does this course fulfill requirements for a major by the academic unit in which the course is offered? Check the YES box even if the course counts as an elective in the major.
yes X no
- c. If you answered "yes" to 3.a. or 3.b., then the course is an exception to the definition printed on the next page of this form, and you must explain why the GE committee should make an exception for this course. Please describe how this course is designed to provide valuable and appropriate learning experiences to both majors and non-majors.

Read Questions 4-8 in the instructions on the next page of this form and submit your answers as attachments. The instructions do not have to be printed or submitted.

Originator

Program Director

General Education Coordinator

General Education Committee Chair

Signatures

Date

Date

Date

Date

11/28/16

Mar 6, 2017



BY:

8/30/2004

PS
RP

Tracker ✓

Upper Division General Education Course Proposal (UDGE-CC)
PHIL 332 (3 units)
“Philosophy in Film”

Allison Merrick

4. This course is designed to introduce students to philosophical questions, issues, and themes as they are evidenced in film. So, for example, in one unit of the course students will grapple with the philosophical question: are humans free? To help address and answer this question we will read and discuss John-Paul Sartre’s “Existentialism is a Humanism,” David Hume’s “Of Liberty and Necessity” as well as Lucas’ “Determinism” before turning to watch *Minority Report* (2002) to see not only how the issues and themes are present and treated in the film, but also to see how the film under consideration attempts to answer the particular philosophical question. As such, over the course of the term, students will gain knowledge of key figures and perennial questions in several of the major subfields of Philosophy, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and political theory. In addition, students will be able to formulate critical, philosophical analysis of film.
5. This course will draw on materials from the ancient period (e.g. Plato’s *Symposium* and *The Republic*) the modern period (e.g. Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*) and the post-modern or contemporary period (e.g. Judith Butler “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in the Phenomenology of Feminist Theory”) of the philosophical tradition. Students will gain an appreciation for the development of philosophical thought throughout history, and the manner in which the tradition may be called upon to help us to address current questions and concerns.
6. This course requires students to engage in close readings of texts and practice critical analysis of films, so addresses the both cognitive and affective aspects of the human experience. So, for instance, the course content in the first three units of the course, in particular, will address directly the cognitive aspects of human experience and ask: what kinds of things can humans know with certainty? Further, reading assignments and in-class discussions will also address the ways in which humans have answered these questions in the past and whether those responses might be useful for us today. In addition we will also focus on theorizing our own affective responses to films by looking philosophically at the topics of humor, and sentimentality.
7. As noted above in response to question five, the readings in the course are drawn from diverse historical contexts (the ancient, modern, and postmodern periods) and are readily applied to film. So, for example, in isolating the unit on “Love, Romance, and Sentimentality” we will read selections from Plato’s *Symposium* next to a more contemporary piece “Families, Friends, and Special Obligations” (1998). Further we will look for ways in which theoretical views are both treated and used in the film *Lost in Translation* (2003).
8. See attached film critiques (1), and a midterm examination (2)

1. **Film critiques** (assignment prompt is attached) will be used to assess the ability to: (1) reconstruct and apply the texts under consideration (e.g. reading comprehension); (2) discuss

and distinguish philosophical arguments; (3) evaluate the material under consideration (both texts and films); and (4) construct original arguments.

2. Midterm examination (study guide is attached) will be used to assess the ability to: (1) identify philosophical issues as they are presented in film; (2) outline philosophical arguments; (3) compare and contrast different theories and approaches to philosophical problems; (4) critically evaluate theories and their implications; and (5) apply this analysis to their own experiences.

Philosophy in Film

Philosophy 332

Film Critique Assignment

Seven times over the course of the term you will be asked to submit film critiques aimed at a more focused consideration of the texts, films and issues covered in class. In no more than three pages, each film critique should include the following:

1. **A brief overview of the reading(s)**

What is the central philosophical issue or theme?

What were the primary topics of discussion?

What interesting questions were raised?

What conclusions, if any, were reached?

2. **A synopsis of the film**

How does the film relate to the reading(s) under consideration?

How did the main philosophical points or ideas manifest in the film?

3. **An evaluation of the philosophical success of the film**

Did the film adequately treat the philosophical topic? Why or why not?

Philosophy in Film

Philosophy 332
Midterm Examination Study Guide

Part I: Key Concepts

*In a short paragraph (4-5 sentences) define each concept **and** explain its importance to philosophy by offering an example of its use in one of the films we have watched.*

(Five of the following terms will appear on the examination)

Rationalism	Existentialism
Empiricism	Humanism
<i>Cogito Ergo Sum</i>	Existence Precedes Essence
Deontology	Utilitarianism
Free Will	Libertarian
Determinist	Compatibilist
Problem of Evil	Race
Gender	Sexuality

Part II: Short Answers

Your response to each question should be at least five paragraphs in length.

(Two of the following questions will appear on the examination)

1. Is the plot of *Minority Report* consistent with genuine human freedom? Compare and contrast how a hard determinist, a libertarian, and a compatibilist would answer that question.
2. If in *Minority Report*, the pre-cogs are able to know which people would commit crimes in the future (if not apprehended in advance), would it make sense to hold them responsible for what they would have done? Why or why not?
3. Can one reconcile the plot of *Dogma* with the hypothesis that God is perfect? Why or why not?
4. If you were God, could you think of a way of allowing humans free will while insuring no evil to innocents occurs? Why or why not?
5. It has been argued that the Lenny's Polaroid pictures, his tattoos, and his notes, serve as a kind of surrogate memory throughout the film *Memento*. If this were right, would Locke and Hume argue that Lenny is indeed the same person over the course of the film? Why or why not?
6. Nagel claims that the deliberate killing of noncombatants in war is wrong. How does he distinguish combatants from noncombatants and how does he justify the claim that killing noncombatants is wrong? Apply this argument to the film *Good Kill* (2016).

Part III: Reflection Essay

(Please bring your reflection essay with you to the midterm examination)

In his landmark essay, "Existentialism is a Humanism," Sartre lays bare the so-called first "principle of existentialism" namely that "man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself." In no more than four pages reflect on this principle in light of our unit on "Racial Identity" as well as our unit on "Sex, Gender, and Sexuality." Over the course of your reflection essay please address the following questions:

1. What is the philosophical nature of race, sex, gender, and sexuality?
2. When considering these aspects of the human experience, does it make sense to claim: "existence precedes essence"? Why or why not?
3. How do your findings relate to your own experience?

PHILOSOPHY IN FILM: A THEMATIC APPROACH

California State University, San Marcos
PHILOSOPHY 332
Tu 2:30PM - 5:15PM
Arts Building, 220

Instructor: Dr. Allison Merrick

Email: amerrick@csusm.edu

Office: SBSB 3118

Office Hours: noon-2:00 pm T, 8:00-9:00am Thursday, and by appointment

Course Webpage: Cougar Courses (CC)

Course Description

It is widely assumed that in addition to being entertaining films can, at times, raise profound philosophical questions. Indeed, we can readily note a few such questions:

- a. What can we know with certainty?
- b. Are humans free?
- c. Do memories make you who you are?
- d. Is there a God?
- e. Can war ever be just?
- f. What are the proper ends of sport?
- g. What is race, gender, or class?
- h. What is the nature of love or of humor?
- i. Are documentaries ever "true"?

In taking these key questions of Philosophy as our fuel, our task over the course of the term is to see how they are both evidenced and, perhaps, answered in film.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to explain the key figures, themes, as well as some of the most perennial questions in several of the major subfields of philosophy, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and political theory. Additionally, students will be able to formulate critical, philosophical, analyses of film.

Required Texts

Introducing Philosophy Through Film: Key Texts, Discussions, and Film Selections (IPTF)

Additional materials will be made available on Cougar Courses.

Course Requirements

- I. **Participation and Attendance:** All students are expected to both attend and participate in every class. In order to be able to actively participate in class discussions students are expected to arrive to class on time having completed the assigned reading. Students are expected to bring all relevant course materials (e.g., the text or supplementary readings) to class.
- II. **Film Critiques:** Seven times over the course of the term you will be asked to submit film critiques aimed at more focused consideration of the material, as well as engage in further discussion about the

texts, films and issues covered in class. One of the aims of the critiques is to provide me a sense of how well students have understood the material under consideration. The critiques should be at least two pages in length and must incorporate at least one of that week's reading materials.

- III. **Midterm Examination:** The midterm examination will focus upon the work of the first eight weeks of the course. A study guide will be provided prior to the examination. Unless documentation is provided (such as a doctor's note), no make-up examinations will be given.

Midterm Examination: 25 October

- IV. **Final Examination:** The final examination will be cumulative but further details regarding the structure of the examination will be discussed in class. Unless official documentation is provided to the instructor, no make-up examinations will be administered.

Final Examination: 13 December

Grading Scale

A 100.00-93.00%
 A- 92.99-90.00 %
 B+ 89.99-87.00%
 B 86.99-83.00%
 B- 82.99-80.00%
 C+ 79.99-77.00%
 C 76.99-73.00%
 C- 72.99-70.00%
 D+ 69.99-67.00%
 D 66.99-63.00%
 D- 62.99-60.00%
 F 59.99% or less

Grade Breakdown

Participation	5%
Film Critiques (7)	35%
Midterm Examination	30%
Final Examination	30%

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations must be approved for services by providing appropriate and recent documentation to the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS). This office is located in Craven Hall 4300, and can be contacted by phone at (760) 750-4905, or TTY (760) 750-4909, and by email sent to dss@csusm.edu. Students authorized by DSS to receive reasonable accommodations should meet with me during my office hours in order to ensure confidentiality.

Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments

Each class meeting will consist of three parts: lecture on the day's reading(s), screening of the day's film, and discussion.

Week One: Introductions

Tuesday, 30 August: General Introduction: Central Problems and Guiding Questions

Week Two: Minds and Metaphysics

Tuesday, 7 September: Is there a "self"?

Reading: Descartes, *Second Meditation* IPTF 133-137

Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity" IPTF 192-202

Hume, "On the Immortality of the Soul" IPTF 229-234

Film: *The Prestige* (2006)

Week Three: Free Will and Determinism

Tuesday, 13 September: Are humans free?

Reading: Sartre “Existentialism is a Humanism” (CC)

Hume “Of Liberty and Necessity” IPTF 514-517

Lucas “Determinism” IPTF 533-540

Film: *The Minority Report*

Film Critique 1 Due

Week Four: Time, Memory, and Mortality

Tuesday, 20 September: Do your memories make you who you are?

Reading: Chisolm and Taylor, “Making Things Happen” IPTF 477-480

Richard Taylor “Space and Time” IPTF 481-491

Film: *Memento* (2000)

Week Five: Religion, God, and Spirituality

Tuesday, 27: Is there a God?

Reading: Pascal, “The Wager” IPTF 595-602

Russell, “Why I am not a Christian” IPTF 603-611

Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” IPTF 595-602

Film: *Dogma* (1999)

Film Critique 2 Due

Week Six: War

Tuesday, 4 October: Can war be just?

Reading: Kant “Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals” IPTF 258-280

Kagan “Intending Harm” IPTF 331-340

Nagel “War and Massacre” IPTF 354-368

Film: *Good Kill* (2016)

Film Critique 3 Due

Week Seven: Sport

Tuesday, 11 October: What are the ends of sport?

Reading: Schwartz “John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Sport” (CC)

Wallace “Federer as Religious Experience” (CC)

Film: *Kobe Bryant’s Muse* (2016)

Week Eight: Racial Identity

Tuesday, 18 October: What is race?

Reading: Mills *Blackness Visible* (selections on CC)

Coates “The Case for Reparations” (CC)

Film: *Bamboozled* (2000)

Film Critique 4 Due

Week Nine: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

Tuesday, 25 October: What is gender?

Reading: Butler “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in the Phenomenology of Feminist Theory” (CC)

Foucault: “The Repressive Hypothesis” (CC)

Film: *But I’m a Cheerleader* (1999)

Midterm Examination

Week Ten: Wealth, Class, and Power

Tuesday, 2 November: What is class?

Reading: Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (selections on CC)

Foucault “The Subject and Power” (CC)

Film: *The Big Short* (2016)

Week Twelve: **Love, Romance and Sentimentality**

Tuesday, 8 November: What is the nature of love?

Reading: Jeske "Families, Friends, and Special Obligations" IPTF 435-451

Plato *Symposium* (selections on CC)

Film: *Lost in Translation* (2003)

Film Critique 6 Due

Week Thirteen: **Humor**

Tuesday, 15 November: What is humor?

Reading: Critchley *On Humor* (selections on CC)

Film: *The Hangover* (2009)

Film Critique 7 Due

Week Fourteen: **Documentary Truth**

Tuesday, 30 November: Are documentaries ever "true"?

Reading: Herzog "On the Absolute, Sublime and Ecstatic Truth" (CC)

Plato "Allegory of the Cave" from *Republic* (CC)

Film: *F is for Fake* (1973) or *Exit Through the Gift Shop* (2010)

Week Fifteen: Conclusions: How might we understand the relationship between philosophy and film?

Tuesday, 6 December: Conclusions and Final Examination Study Guide Distributed

Tuesday, 13 December: Final Examination 4:00-6:00pm

Bibliography

Butler, J. (1988) "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in the Phenomenology of Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40: 519-531.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi (2014) "The Case for Reparations" *The Atlantic* June Issue

Critchley, S. (2000) *On Humor*, New York: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* trans. R. Hurley, New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1982) "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8: 777-795

Herzog, W. (2010) "On the Absolute, the Sublime, and Ecstatic Truth," *Arion* 17: 1-12

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Sartre, J.P. (1965) "Existentialism is a Humanism," in W. Baskin (ed.) *Essays in Existentialism*, New Jersey: The Citadel Press.

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