

Philosophy 596

Philosophy of Film



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Schedule #22267
T&TH 12:30pm-1:45pm
PSFA 325

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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OFFICE HOURS:

Wheeler

T&TH: 1:45pm – 4:00pm

By appointment at any other time.

TEXTS:

Required:

Image and Mind, by Gregory Currie (Cambridge UP)

Cinema 1: The Movement Image, by Gilles Deleuze (Minnesota UP)

Cinema 2: The Time Image, by Gilles Deleuze (Minnesota UP)

Suggested:

Deleuze and Cinema: The Film Concepts, by Felicity Colman (Berg Publishers)

During the semester, other suggested readings will be made available through Aztec Shops, the SDSU Library, and Blackboard.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The main goal of the course is to investigate the nature of film from a philosophical perspective.

Students will master:

- (1) major concepts and arguments in the philosophy of film,
- (2) philosophical methods as applied to films, and
- (3) major problems and standard solutions in the philosophy of film.

Students will display this mastery through written work and oral presentation.

Each student is required to pursue in depth research into one of the main topics addressed in the course. The main topics include: the metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and ethics of film. Among the philosophical problems we will consider are: the differences among the philosophy of film, film theory, film criticism, the history of film; the nature of film; the world of film; film authorship; cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions of film; the logic of film narration, the temporality of film, and the spatiality of film; film as a tool for social critique; the relationship between film and reality; and the difference between fiction and nonfiction films.

CLASS FORMAT:

The class will meet twice a week for 1 hour and fifteen minutes. We will discuss the assigned readings and consider them in relation to concrete examples.

During the first half of the semester, the instructor will lecture. Students are encouraged to engage in discussion. Students are expected to participate actively in class discussion.

During the second half of the semester, the instructor and the graduate students will lead the class discussion. The class will function like a seminar. Graduate students will be required to lead a part of at least one class session (see below). Undergraduate students are encouraged to lead the class discussion as well, but are not required to do so.

Each week, outside of class, we will screen films on campus relevant to the material discussed in class. We will watch the films and discuss them. Attending this film series is not mandatory.

GRADED WORK:

Class participation: Attendance is mandatory. A student may miss one session without penalty. Every unexcused absence after the first missed session will lower the student's final grade by a half a grade point.

Class participation is worth 10% of your final grade. Class participation is defined as engaging in class discussion by either raising insightful questions or arguing for or against a particular claim. During each class session I will keep track of who asks questions and who develops arguments.

Papers

General Guidelines for All Papers:

- a. The paper must have a title page with your name or red i.d. on it.
- b. The paper must be delivered digitally in a normal format.
- c. You must use a font *no larger than* 12 point.
- d. The paper must be double spaced.
- e. You must number all of the pages.
- f. There must be fewer than 3 misspellings.
- g. There must be fewer than 5 grammatical mistakes (not including misspellings).
- h. The paper must be handed in on time.

Short Papers

Undergrads: Undergraduates will write 4 short papers. Each paper is worth 10% of the final grade. Each paper must focus on one of the assigned topics for the class.

1. You must locate in the required textbook an argument that you find interesting and that you think might serve as a topic for your paper.
2. You must meet with me outside of class to discuss the argument you find interesting. I may not approve your chosen argument as a topic for your paper, so I advise you to have more than one argument as possible topics.
3. In writing your paper, you must do the following:
 - a. State in your own words the argument you find interesting. This means that you must explicitly state the conclusion of the argument and the premises presented in support of that conclusion.
 - b. State why it is interesting or important to consider the argument.
 - c. Provide reasons for thinking that the argument is unsound. This means that you must state explicit reasons for thinking that one of the premises in the argument is false.
 - d. Briefly explain how someone might avoid the objection you raised.
 - e. You must write your paper in the first person singular.
4. Each paper must be no shorter than 3 FULL pages in length, not including the title page or the bibliographical pages.

Grads: Graduates will write 2 short papers. Each paper is worth 10% of the final grade. Each paper must focus on one of the assigned topics for the class.

1. In a text other than the required textbook, you must locate an argument that (a) relates to a topic in one of the chapters in the required textbook, (b) that you find interesting, and (c) that you think might serve as a topic for your paper.
2. You must meet with me outside of class to discuss the argument you find interesting. I may not approve your chosen argument as a topic for your paper, so I advise you to have more than one argument as possible topics.
3. In writing your paper, you must do the following:
 - a. State in your own words the argument you find interesting. This means that you must explicitly state the conclusion of the argument and the premises presented in support of that conclusion.
 - b. State why it is interesting or important to consider the argument.
 - c. Provide reasons for thinking that the argument is unsound. This means that you must state explicit reasons for thinking that one of the premises in the argument is false.
 - d. Briefly explain how someone might avoid the objection you raised.
 - e. You must write your paper in the first person singular.

Research Papers

A research paper is a paper written on the basis of sustained and careful research. Students should master the procedures presented in *The Craft of Research 2nd edition* by Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2003; Chicago UP), or a comparable work. Each student must discuss the focus of her research paper with the professor, as soon as possible. The purpose of this discussion is to formulate a research project that makes sense given the student's interests and the focus of the class. Students must pursue research based on the assigned readings, but are otherwise free to pursue what most interests them.

Undergrads: The research paper is worth it is worth 50% of your final grade. A digital version of the paper is due in Wheeler’s email inbox no later than 9 May. The grade for your paper will be based on the following criteria:

- a. Undertake a bibliographical search in the SDSU library. Find one philosophical article that has some aspect of the philosophy of film as its main focus. Talk to me *during office hours* about the article you have found. Show me that you have made a photocopy of the article. (10 points)
- b. Restate the main argument of the article you have found using the following steps (45 points):
 1. Explicitly state the main conclusion of the article, and
 2. Explicitly state the main premises presented in the article in support of the main conclusion.
- c. Criticize the main argument of the article using the following steps (45 points):
 1. State and explain an objection to the argument using the following steps:
 - a. Explicitly state which of the premises presented in support of the main conclusion you will criticize, and
 - b. Develop an argument against that supporting premise, using evidence found in at least secondary source.
 2. Explain how someone might respond to your objection.

Graduate research paper: The research paper is worth 50% of the final grade. Students shall submit a digital version of the paper to Wheeler’s email inbox before the end of 9 May. Students may submit papers before they are due. The professor will accept and discuss preliminary versions and drafts, but students are not required to submit these.

Grads should expect the research paper to be around 25 pages in length, double spaced. Students must use secondary sources. The general goal of the research paper is critical and analytic—it is, emphatically, not expository.

The basic criterion for success is publishability. In assessing the papers, the most important considerations will be (1) depth of insight and (2) force of argument, but other factors—such as style, grammar, spelling, and composition—will be crucial to success. Students should be absolutely sure that they:

- A. Introduce the topic to a general philosophical audience somewhat unfamiliar with the topic,
- B. State explicitly the direction the paper will take, including a statement of the main conclusion of the paper,
- C. Explain why the topic is important,
- D. Structure the paper so as to guide the reader logically from one idea to the next,
- E. Include signposts (headings, subheadings, et cetera) to let the reader know the content of each section,
- F. Explicitly define and explain important concepts or terms,
- G. Use important terms consistently throughout the paper,
- H. Provide sufficient and pertinent textual evidence for all interpretive claims,
- I. Analyze crucial texts so that the important concepts and arguments are clear,
- J. Formulate an explicit conclusion, state explicitly all of the main premises in support of that conclusion, and include a summary of the findings in the paper, (this may be done in the form of an abstract),

- K. Use the active voice,
- L. Choose words that are specific rather than general or vague,
- M. Maintain focus in each paragraph,
- N. Construct logical sentences whose relationship to each other is clear, and
- O. Proofread and edit the paper for clarity.

Graduate Oral Presentation

Over the course of the semester, every graduate student will lead the class discussion once, by way of a prepared oral presentation. The oral presentation is worth 20% of the final grade. Oral presentations must focus on some part of the assigned readings. Beyond that minimal requirement, the substance of the presentation is up to the student.

At least four days prior to her presentation, a student must announce to all course participants the readings on which she will focus. The format for leading the discussion is fixed as follows:

- (1) The student shall explain the importance of, and the philosophical context for, the passages she has chosen to consider.
- (2) The student shall present and criticize an argument related to the passages. It must be absolutely clear (a) what the conclusion of the argument is, (b) how many supporting premises there are, and (c) what the supporting premises are. Criticism must explicitly address the supporting premises of the argument.
- (3) The oral presentation should last no less than 10 minutes and no more than 20 minutes.
- (4) The student shall lead the class discussion generated by her oral presentation for 10 minutes.

The written version of the oral presentation should be no longer than five pages, double-spaced, and no shorter than four pages, double-spaced. A student shall present the written version to the professor two days prior to the presentation, and shall present digital versions to her classmates one day prior to her presentation.

Oral presentations will receive either an 'A' (good), a 'B' (average), or a 'C' (failing). An 'A' represents the fact that all the above requirements were met. A 'B' represents the fact that most but not all of the above requirements were met. A 'C' represents the fact that most of the above requirements were not met.

Course Schedule

Readings are to be done *before* the scheduled class meeting.

Weeks 1: Introduction to the Philosophy of Film

Week 1: Required reading: *Image and Mind*, Preface and Introduction.

Suggested readings:

Noël Carroll, "Prospects for Film Theory: A Personal Assessment"
Noël Carroll, "TV and Film: A Philosophical Perspective"
Stanley Cavell, "Knowledge as Transgression: *It Happened One Night*"
Gilles Deleuze, "Philosophy of Film as the Creation of Concepts"
Jim Hillier, *Cahiers du Cinema*, any and all
Pauline Kael, "The Idea of Film Criticism"
Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film*
Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*
Jonathan Rosenbaum, anything
Malcolm Turvey, "Can Scientific Models of Theorizing Help Film Theory?"

Weeks 2-4: The Metaphysics of Film

Week 2: Required reading: *Image and Mind*, Chapter 1.

Week 3: Required reading: *Image and Mind*, Chapter 2.

Week 4: Required reading: *Image and Mind*, Chapter 3.

Suggested readings:

Rudolf Arnheim, "The Artistry of Silent Film" and *Film as Art*
Andre Bazin, "Cinematic Realism"
Andre Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image"
Noël Carroll, "Defining the Moving Image"
Noël Carroll, "The Essence of Cinema"
Noël Carroll, "Fiction, Nonfiction, and the Film of Presumptive Assertion: A Conceptual Analysis"
Noël Carroll, "Forget the Medium!"
Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*
Gregory Currie, "Visible Traces: Documentary and the Contents of Photographs"
Arthur C. Danto, "Moving Pictures"
Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*
Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*
Stephen Heath, "Against Authorship"
Paisley Livingston, "Cinematic Authorship"
Hugo Münsterberg, "Defining the Photoplay"
Andrew Sarris, "Auteur Theory and Film Evaluation"

Roger Scruton, "Photography and Representation"
Kendall L. Walton, "Film, Photography, and Transparency"
Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Part 1

Weeks 5: The Logic of Film

Week 5: Required reading: *Image and Mind*, Chapters 4 and 7.

Required reading: *The Philosophy of Film* (Wheeler, Schummer, and Boyle), chapter 4.
Andre Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of the Cinema"
David Bordwell, "Principles of Film Narration" and *Narration in the Fiction Film*
Noël Carroll, "Film, Attention, and Communication: A Naturalistic Account"
Seymour Chatman, "The Cinematic Narrator"
Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind*, Part 1
Gregory Currie, "Unreliability Refigured: Narrative in Literature and Film"
Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, Chapters 1 and 2
Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*
Sergei Eisenstein, "Film Language"
Sergei Eisenstein, "The Structure of the Film"
Robert Hopkins, *Picture, Image, and Experience*
Christian Metz, *Film Language*
James Monaco, *How To Read a Film*, 4th, Part 3
Flint Shier, *Deeper Into Pictures*
Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Parts 3 and 4
George M. Wilson, "Le Grand Imagier Steps Out: The Primitive Basis of Film Narration"

Weeks 6-7: The Epistemology of Film

Week 6: Required reading: *Image and Mind*, Chapters 5 and 6.

Week 7: Required reading: *Image and Mind*, Chapter 8.

Suggested readings:

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Noël Carroll, "Film, Emotion, and Genre"
Stanley Cavell, "Knowledge as Transgression: *It Happened One Night*"
Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind*, Parts 2 and 3
Gregory Currie, "Narrative Desire"
Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, Chapters 3-10
Berys Gaut, "Identification and Emotion in Narrative Film"
Karen Hanson, "Minerva in the Movies: Relations Between Philosophy and Film"
Lester H. Hunt, "Motion Pictures as a Philosophical Resource"
Colin McGinn, *The Power of Movies*
Alex Neill, "Empathy and (Film) Fiction"

Bruce Russell, "The Philosophical Limits of Film"
Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Part 2

Weeks 8-10: The Movement Image

Required reading: *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*

Weeks 11-13: The Time Image

Required reading: *Cinema 2: The Time Image*

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If any of you have special needs related to the assignments, class sessions and/or graded work, please see me after class or during my office hours to discuss the matter. You should see me about such matters as soon as possible. You can rely on my complete confidentiality with regard to any private conversations.

LEARNING DISABILITIES:

In general, if you think something might prevent you from doing well in this course, you should talk with me as soon as possible so that proper arrangements may be made to accommodate your needs. If you have special needs due to a learning disability, please avail yourself of the resources in the Student Disability Services (SDS) located in the Calpulli Center, Suite 3101 (third floor), open M-F 8am-4:30pm, 619-594-6473. The CSU Office of the Chancellor defines a learning disability as

... a generic term that refers to the heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders occur in persons of average to very superior intelligence and are presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may exist concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairments) or environmental influences (e.g., cultural/language difficulties), it is not the direct result of these conditions or influences.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES:

The University Policy File includes the following statement on Absence for Religious Observances:

By the end of the second week of classes, students should notify the instructors of affected courses of planned absences for religious observances. Instructors shall reasonably accommodate students who notify them in advance of planned absences for religious observances.

California Education Code 89320 states:

The Trustees of the California State University shall require that each state university, in administering any test or examination, to permit any student who is eligible to undergo the test or examination to do so, without penalty, at a time when that activity would not violate the student's religious creed.

Please notify me if you plan to be absent for religious observance.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM:

(The following definitions of, and SDSU policy on, academic dishonesty are copied from the University Policy File, page 18. I ask that you read this carefully. I also recommend that you visit the website (<http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/index.html>) for the SDSU Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for more information about your rights and responsibilities:)

Cheating and Plagiarism

1.0 Institutions of higher education are founded to impart knowledge, seek truth, and encourage one's development for the good of society. University students shall thus be intellectually and morally obliged to pursue their course of studies with honesty and integrity. Therefore, in preparing and submitting materials for academic courses and in taking examinations, a student shall not yield to cheating or plagiarism, which not only violate academic standards but also make the offender liable to penalties explicit in Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, part 5, sec. 41301(a), as follows:

41301. Expulsion, Suspension and Probation of Students. Following procedures consonant with due process established pursuant to Section 41304, any student of a campus may be expelled, suspended, placed on probation or given a lesser sanction for one or more of the following causes that must be campus related:

(a) Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus. A student who has committed either offense may be subject to university disciplinary action.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Cheating shall be defined as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work by the use of dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to (a) copying, in part or in whole, from another's test or other examination; (b) discussing answers or ideas relating to the answers on a test or other examination without the permission of the instructor; (c) obtaining copies of a test, an examination, or other course material without the permission of the instructor; (d) using notes, cheat sheets, or other devices considered inappropriate under the prescribed testing condition; (e) collaborating with another or others in work to be presented without the permission of the instructor; (f) falsifying records, laboratory work, or other course data; (g) submitting work previously presented in another course, if contrary to the rules of the course; (h) altering or interfering with the grading procedures; (i) plagiarizing, as defined; and (j) knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above.

2.2 Plagiarism shall be defined as the act of incorporating ideas, words, or specific substance of another, whether purchased, borrowed, or otherwise obtained, and submitting same to the university as one's own work to fulfill academic requirements

without giving credit to the appropriate source. Plagiarism shall include but not be limited to (a) submitting work, either in part or in whole, completed by another; (b) omitting footnotes for ideas, statements, facts, or conclusions that belong to another; (c) omitting quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, sentence, or part thereof; (d) close and lengthy paraphrasing of the writings of another; (e) submitting another person's artistic works, such as musical compositions, photographs, paintings, drawings, or sculptures; and (f) submitting as one's own work papers purchased from research companies.

3.0 Academic and Punitive Sanctions: Cheating and plagiarism in connection with the academic program at the university may warrant two separate and distinct courses of disciplinary action that may be applied concurrently in response to a violation of this policy: (a) academic sanctions, such as grade modifications; and (b) punitive sanctions, such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. Academic sanctions are concerned with the student's grades and are the responsibility of the instructor involved. Punitive sanctions are concerned with the student's records and status on campus and shall be the responsibility of the university President or designated representative. The Coordinator of Judiciary Procedures shall be the President's representative in matters of student discipline.

4.0 Due Process in Review of Alleged Violations

4.1 Punitive Sanctions: Only the university President or designated representative shall be authorized to exercise punitive authority over students and in so doing shall be mandated to accord students all the elements of "due process." The steps set forth in CSU Executive Order 970, "Student Conduct Procedures of The California State University," shall be followed in the delineation of these matters.

4.2 Academic Sanctions

4.21 The instructor involved shall be expected to determine the type of academic sanction for cheating or plagiarism. Usually, "grade modification" shall be used; however, grade modification shall not be considered punishment and shall be used only if the instructor is satisfied that cheating or plagiarism did occur. The grade modification shall be left to the discretion of the instructor. Grade modification may include (a) a zero or F on the paper, project, or examination, (b) a reduction in one letter grade (e.g., C to D in the course), or (c) an F in the course. In addition to grade modification, certain departments or schools may have policies that state that cheating can show unsuitability for the program or profession. Students should be made aware of the penalties for cheating and of their appeal rights.

4.22 Furthermore, before applying grade modification, the instructor should advise the student of the alleged violation and should have reasonable evidence to sustain that allegation. Reasonable evidence, such as documentary evidence or personal observation or both, shall be necessary for the allegation to be upheld.

4.3 When a student is accused of cheating or plagiarism, the instructor should arrange an informal office conference with the student and at that time advise the student of the allegation as well as the evidence supporting it. The purpose of the office conference shall be to bring together the persons involved to discuss the situation informally and to decide upon an appropriate solution. If more than one student is involved in the incident, the instructor may call the students together to confer as a group if the students so desire. All notes and discussions between the student and instructor shall be confidential, except as may be relevant in subsequent campus disciplinary proceedings or subsequent legal action.

5.0 Disciplinary Record: In order to coordinate information so as to permit appropriate disciplinary action for first-time and repeat offenders, instructors shall contact the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (<http://csrr.sdsu.edu/>) to obtain reporting requirements. Instructors should describe violations of this policy according to the requirements stated in EO 969 (<http://www.calstate.edu/eo/EO-969.html>).