PHIL 332 – Philosophy of Film
University of Oregon
Fall, 2012
3-3:50 MWF, 207 CHA
7-10 U, 115 LA

Instructor: Steven Brence
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Office: 327 PLC
Hours: 12:30-2:30, Wednesdays, or by Appt.

Course Description:

In its relatively brief history (scarcely more than a century), film has arguably become the most significant art form and medium for the origination and transmission of culture. Perhaps because of the brevity of its existence, or perhaps due to its dismissal as merely “popular” culture (a form of cultural production often deemed unworthy of serious reflection) it has received relatively little attention from philosophers. When, however, philosophers have attended to film, they have commonly sought only to adapt accepted “philosophical” problems to their study of the subject (traditional metaphysical and epistemological problems concerned with the relationship between experience and reality, for example, take the form of the examination of the relationship of film to reality), or worse still, they have regarded film as capable only of shallow, but perhaps more accessible, illustration of already charted philosophical ground (e.g. “The Truman Show” as crudely illustrative of Plato’s cave allegory).

This course, premised upon the view that philosophy is a disciplined practice of inquiry and evaluation that does not have its own particular subject matter (other than its own practice), will, instead, endeavor to develop films philosophically. That is to say, the films themselves will be regarded as subject matter for philosophical examination. They will be allowed to raise their own problems, advance their own claims, and propose their own solutions, all to be carefully examined, interrogated and evaluated.

Required Texts:

- All required readings will be available for download on the course’s Blackboard page.

Course Requirements and Grades:

- **Two Essays**, 5-7 pages in length (40%)
- **Briefer film “Developments” and Responses.** Analyses (1-1½ pp.) must be posted to http://filmtank.org/forum/ by no later than Tuesday at Noon. Responses (½-1 pg.) must be posted no later than Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday at Noon, respectively. (40%)
  (Note that completion of this portion of the course requires registration at filmtank.org, a non-commercial, publicly accessible website that has been developed, and offered to the world, out of this course at the University of Oregon.)
- **Attendance and Participation** (this includes lectures, discussion sections, and film screenings, all of which are required). (20%)
Assignment Guidelines:

All written work, unless otherwise specified, must be submitted both in hard copy and electronically to SafeAssignment, a Blackboard based electronic screener for incidents of plagiarism. You are encouraged to discuss all aspects of this course with your fellow students, but the work you turn in must be entirely your own. All materials quoted or referenced in producing your written work must be properly cited. Violation of these policies will result, at minimum, in a failing grade for the course. Late essays will be marked down according to degree of lateness. Late developments and responses will not be accepted. No work will be accepted via email without prior authorization.

Schedule

**[Films and texts listed below are subject to revision]**

All film screenings (in bold) are Sundays at 7 p.m in 115 Lawrence. The group responsible for initial developments each week is noted in bold after each film (G1, G2, etc.). The same pattern for developments, responses, rejoinders, and follow-ups established and detailed for Week 2 will be repeated for Weeks 3-10, with only the responsibilities changing according to who is responsible for initial development that week.

**Week 1**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M (9/24)</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>W (9/26)</td>
<td>Film Thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>F (10/28)</td>
<td>Film Thinking</td>
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[Groups established and Films for Film Development Essay #1 Assigned in section]

**Week 2**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon (10/01)</td>
<td>Film Discussion - “Casablanca”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues (10/2)</td>
<td>Noon - G1 initial developments due on filmtank.org</td>
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<td>Wed (10/3)</td>
<td>Film Discussion - “Casablanca” – Noon - G2-G8 responses due</td>
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<td>Thur (10/4)</td>
<td>Noon – G1 rejoinders due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri (10/5)</td>
<td>Film Discussion - “Casablanca” – Noon - G2-G8 follow-ups due</td>
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**Week 3**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sun (10/7)</td>
<td>“Notorious” (Alfred Hitchcock, 1946) G2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon (10/8)</td>
<td>Film Discussion - “Notorious”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed (10/10)</td>
<td>Film Discussion - “Notorious”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri (10/12)</td>
<td>Film Discussion - “Notorious”</td>
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**[filmtank.org developments and responses 1 & 2 Due in class]**

**Week 4**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sun (10/14)</td>
<td>“The Virgin Suicides” (Sofia Coppola, 1999) G3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon (10/15)</td>
<td>Film Discussion - “The Virgin Suicides”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed (10/17)</td>
<td>Film Discussion - “The Virgin Suicides”</td>
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<td>Fri (10/19)</td>
<td>Film Discussion - “The Virgin Suicides”</td>
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Week 5
Sun (10/21): “Ghost World” (Terry Zwigoff, 2001) G4
Mon (10/22): Film Discussion - “Ghost World”
Wed (10/24): Film Discussion - “Ghost World”
Fri (10/26): Film Discussion - “Ghost World”
**[filmtank.org developments and responses 3 & 4 Due in class]**

Week 6
Sun (10/28): “Island of Lost Souls” (Erle C. Kenton, 1932) G5
Mon (10/29): Film Discussion - “Island of Lost Souls”
**[Film Development Essay #1 Due in class]**
Wed (10/31): Film Discussion - “Island of Lost Souls”
Thur (11/01): [Films for Film Development Essay #2 Assigned in section]
Fri (11/02): Film Discussion - “Island of Lost Souls”

Week 7
Sun (11/04): “Moon” (Duncan Jones, 2009) G6
M (11/05): Film Discussion - "Moon"
W (11/07): Film Discussion - “Moon”
F (11/09): Film Discussion - “Moon”
**[filmtank.org developments and responses 5 & 6 Due in class]**

Week 8
Sun (11/11): “Into the Wild” (Sean Penn, 2007) G7
Mon (11/12): Film Discussion - “Into the Wild”
Wed (11/14): Film Discussion - “Into the Wild”
Fri (11/16): Film Discussion - “Into the Wild”

Week 9
Sun (11/18): “Vagabond” (Agnes Varda, 1985)
Mon (11/19): Film Discussion - “Vagabond”
Wed (11/21): Film Discussion - “Vagabond”
Fri (11/23): Thanksgiving

Week 10
Sun (11/25): "V for Vendetta" (James McTeigue, 2006) G8
Mon (11/26): Film Discussion - “V for Vendetta”
Wed (12/28): Film Discussion - “V for Vendetta”
Fri (11/30): Film Discussion - “V for Vendetta”
**[filmtank.org developments and responses 7 & 8 Due in class]**

Finals Week
Tuesday (12/04) **[Film Development Essay #2 Due]**

Bring completed essays to Philosophy Department office (3rd Floor PLC) by noon.