
FILM THEORY & CRITICISM in Spring 2021 (FM3027)

Course Code	FM3027	Professor(s)	Elise Domenach
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-L12
Class Schedule	F: 12:10-13:30 in Q-A101 T: 13:45-15:05 in Q-A101	Office Hours	Tuesdays 12:30-13:30
Credits	4	Email	edomenach@aup.edu
Semester	Spring 2021	Office Tel. Ext.	N/A

Course Description

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"We might say of the cinema that it is the little flashlight of moving like an uncertain comet across the night of our waking dream, the diffuse space without shape or frontiers that surrounds the screen." This is what Bazin, one of the foremost French cinema critics said in describing the phenomenon of the silver screen. In this course, we examine film theory with two motives: how does it help us to read individual films, and what does it tell us about the very curious medium that has been with us for over a hundred years? Critics have tirelessly tried to find a new language to engage the constantly evolving language of film. **In some cases, filmmakers themselves become critics and critics become filmmakers** as they grapple with the communicative as well as aesthetic values belonging to the cinema. Does this critical language distance us from the very films we watch, or does it reveal hidden motives and designs that take us deeper into the "flesh" of the film? Consider this course as a kind of adventure, as if we were traveling together with the help of Bazin's flashlight, *cine'philes* together, sharing our "waking dreams".

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will learn to apply a range of key theoretical concepts to films and to carry out the analysis of excerpts in the light of a selected method or approach.

Students will be able to identify and discuss different types of theoretical and critical traditions, and engage independently with the writings of key authors from a number of disciplines.

Students will demonstrate an awareness of the social contexts and the intellectual trends

providing the background for the discourses on cinema as a medium, as a language, and as an artistic and cultural form.

General Education

GENERAL EDUCATION: This course fulfills one or more General Education requirement ____
No

Course Outline

COURSE SCHEDULE:

January

Week 1 – 18th – 22nd

Tuesday : Introduction to film theory and film criticism: why the fit so well.

Overview of course objectives and evaluation

Friday : **Film Language**

Chaplin *The Immigrant*

Bazin (p.41-53) Urszula

Student in class presentation

Week II – 25th – 29th

Tuesday: Realism and photography

Bazin on montage (p. 47-53):

Bazin “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” (p.159-162), The Myth of Total Cinema (p.163-164)

Student in class presentation Sofia Rose

Friday : Cavell “Photograph and Screen” (p.304-305) and “Audience, actors and stars” (p.305-307)

Student in class presentation Madison

January 24th – last day to drop/add courses online

February

Week III – 1st – 5th

Tuesday : Film and popular culture

Panofsky “Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures” (p.247-261)

Student in class presentation T’Anna

Friday : The Medium and its aesthetic possibilities

Cavell “Types; Cycles as genres” (p.307-312), “Ideas of Origin” (p.312-314)

Student in class presentation Marteen

Week IV – 8th – 12th

February 8th – 10th, Mini break 1, (no classes)

Friday : reviews of previous readings

In class questions and answers

Week V – 15th – 19th

Tuesday : **Film and Skepticism**

Cavell “More of *The World Viewed*” (p.162-167 and p.184-194) pdf on Teams

Student in class presentation Cathy

Watch *It's A Wonderful Life* (Capra): <https://vimeo.com/280022699>

Friday : **Film criticism and the enactment of doubts in reading films**

Cavell Introduction to *Pursuits of Happiness* pdf on Teams Bianca

Week VI – 22nd – 26th

Tuesday :

Deleuze (p.216-226)

In class presentation Martin

February 24th – 28th, Mini break 2, (no classes)

March

Week VII – 1st – 5th

Tuesday: **Auteur Theory**

Andrew Sarris (p.451-454)

In class presentation Jonah

Friday : **The French Cinephilia : *Positif* vs. *Cahiers du cinéma***

Week VIII – 8th –12th

Tuesday : **Comolli and Narboni** (p.686-693)

In class presentation

Friday :

Mid-term exam

Week IX – 15th – 19th

Tuesday : **Film genres I : Hollywood remarriage comedies** (Cavell) pdf

In class presentation

Friday : *idem*

March 17th, Mid-semester

March 19th, Mid-semester grades due

Week X – 22nd – 26th

Tuesday : **Film genres II : Hollywood melodramas** (Cavell) pdf

Friday: *idem*

Week XI–29th – 2nd

Tuesday : **Post-colonial and World Cinema**

Yoshimoto (p.865-876)

Dissanayake (p.877-886)

In class presentations

Friday :

idem

***April 2nd*, last day to withdraw from a course.**

Last day to choose the CR/NC grading option.

April

Week XII – 5th – 9th

Tuesday : **The Male Gaze**

Laura Mulvey (p.711-722) Urszula / Tatum

Screenings from *Riddles of the Sphinx*

In class presentation

Friday :

idem

April 5th, Easter Monday (no classes)

April 6th, Faculty retreat (no classes)

Week XIII – 12th – 16th

Tuesday : **Is there such a thing as a “female gaze”?**

Screenings from *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

[Portrait.of.a.Lady.on.Fire.2019.Sciamma.mkv](#)

In class presentation

Friday:

idem

Week XIV – 19th – 23rd

Tuesday : **Nowadays film criticism: issues and perspectives**

Final paper due

Friday:

Week XV – 26th – 30th

Tuesday : Review for final

Friday : Review for final and discussion of final papers

April 28th, Last day of classes,

April 29th, – May 2nd, Reading days (May 1st, holiday)

May 3rd – 12th, Final Exam

May 26th, all grades due

Textbooks

Title	Author	Publisher	ISBN	Required
film theory and criticism 8th edition	Brady, leo	Oxford	9780199376896	Yes

Attendance Policy

AUP ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Covid-19 temporary amendments:

Students studying at The American University of Paris are still expected to attend ALL scheduled classes. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, students will have the option of attending classes remotely when special circumstances apply. For example, when students are placed under quarantine by the French authorities or by their doctor, or when students present symptoms of Covid-19 and are directed, by their doctor or the AUP Health Office, to remain home. It is still the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that their professor might have set in the course syllabus. In particular, Students attending remotely from distant Time Zones should check with their professors about the specific attendance policy for remote learners.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory. In all cases of missed course meetings, the responsibility for communication with the professor, and for arranging to make up missed work, rests solely with the student.

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Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may also recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and *especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods*.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STATEMENT:

As an Anglophone university, The American University of Paris is strongly committed to effective English language mastery at the undergraduate level. Most courses require scholarly research and formal written and oral presentations in English, and AUP students are expected to strive to achieve excellence in these domains as part of their course work. To that end,

professors include English proficiency among the criteria in student evaluation, often referring students to the university Writing Lab where they may obtain help on specific academic assignments. Proficiency in English is monitored at various points throughout the student's academic career, most notably during the admissions and advising processes, while the student is completing general education requirements, and during the accomplishment of degree program courses and senior theses.

Grading Policy

GRADING POLICY:

Attendance and Participation 10%

Film Journal (writing film critics) : 15%

Mid-term essay : 25%

Final paper : 25%

Final exam : 25%

Other
