

Cinema and Politics: BFS Seminar
ENGL 0592 /ARTH 3890/CIMS 0590/COML 0590
Spring 2023

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Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11:45 to 12:45 and by appointment

Phone: 410-241-4975 (for urgent text messages only)

TA: This time we have no TA, but Kenton Butcher, Ph.D. candidate in English, Africana Studies, and Cinema Studies, will offer a few classes. (kentonb@sas.upenn.edu)



Course requirements

1) **Attendance** is mandatory. Please inform me if you are ill or if you have an unavoidable obligation that keeps you from coming to class. Students who miss too many classes will receive a failing grade. There is unfortunately no way to make up for missed instruction and discussion time.

2) In this **course reading, thinking, and looking** carefully are of the essence. Students are expected to have viewed the assigned film and read the assigned readings before our meeting times. All films are available for viewing on streaming video from Van Pelt (click on Course Materials on our Canvas site). Many are available at very reasonable prices second-hand from amazon.com, some are on You Tube, Netflix, and Amazon. Consider purchasing the DVDs, dated technology though it be, since that would enable you to watch the special features, e.g., director's commentaries and special bonus features, at your leisure.

3) **Class participation** is considered essential. Students may be asked to do an in-class presentation or choose clips for discussion. A good way to prepare is to write some striking quotes from the readings on a card and bring to class.

4) **Written work:** One well-crafted paper of about 8-10 pp. (excluding images), based on both research and analysis, will be due around March 20th (exact dates will be negotiated). A final paper of similar length or perhaps a bit longer will be due around May 12th. Detailed stylistic instructions and topics will be provided. You may also work on a topic of your own choosing, as long as you discuss the idea with me in advance. All students are encouraged to consult the recommended books that deal with how to write good academic prose and structure good papers. These books also provide useful tips on quotation styles and incorporating research in a graceful and professional manner. These technical things can be important to know, especially when it comes to avoiding even the semblance of plagiarism. (I trust, of course, that students are familiar with the university's guidelines on **academic integrity**.)

Films to be discussed:

The Battle of Algiers. Dir. Gillo Pontecorvo. Rialto Pictures, 1966.
Memories of Underdevelopment. Dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. ICIAC, 1968
The Year of Living Dangerously. Dir. Peter Weir. Warner Brothers, 1983.
Lumumba: La Mort d'un Prophète. Dir. Raoul Peck. Velvet Films, 1990.
Lumumba. Dir. Raoul Peck. Zeitgeist Films, 2000.
I am Not Your Negro. Dir. Raoul Peck, 2016.
The Fog of War. Dir. Erroll Morris. Sony Pictures, 2003.
The Lives of Others. Dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. Buena Vista, 2006.
Y Tu Mama Tambien. Dir. Alfonso Cuarón. MGM, 2002.
Even the Rain. Dir. Icíar Bollain. Moreno Films. 2010.
The Constant Gardener. Dir. Fernando Mireilles. Universal Studios, 2006.
Syriana. Dir. Stephen Gaghan. Warner Brothers, 2006.
Waltz with Bashir. Dir. Ari Folman. Sony Pictures, 2008.
Caché. Dir. Michael Haneke. Bavaria Films, 2005.
Children of Men. Dir. Alfonso Cauron. Universal Studios, 2007.

Suggested readings:

An archive of critical essays will be placed on Canvas. Try to dip into a few each week.

Books:

Recommended (novels on which films are based):

Available from Amazon.com and other sellers
John Le Carré, *The Constant Gardener*
Christopher Koch, *The Year of Living Dangerously*

Recommended for writing your papers (all widely available):

Richard Barsam, *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film.*

Joseph Williams, *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (the older editions are best!)
Eric Hayot, *Elements of Academic Style*.
Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkinstein, *They Say/I Say The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*.

For MLA format:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_general_format.html

Schedule:

Introduction

January 12

Discussion of syllabus, principles of film analysis, etc.

Introductory discussion of *The Battle of Algiers*

This class will be conducted by Kenton Butcher (Professor Barnard will Zoom in to say hello)

Module 1

The Algerian Revolution: Cinema Verité

January 17 and 19

Film to view in advance: *The Battle of Algiers*

Suggested readings (choose three if you like):

Chanan, "The Battle of Algiers and Political Cinema"

Harrison, "Based on Actual Events"

_____, "Interview with Yacef Saadi"

_____, "Pontecorvo's Documentary Aesthetics"

Virtue, "Poaching Within the System"

Minne, "Women at War"

Module 2

The Cuban Revolution: Third Cinema and Experimental Point-of-View

January 24 and 26

Film to view in advance: *Memories of Underdevelopment*

Suggested readings:

Espinosa, "For a Cinema of Imperfection"

Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema"

Alea, "The Viewer's Dialectic"

Kovacs, "Revolutionary Consciousness"

Williams, "Memory in Drag"

Schroeder, "The Dialectics of Identification and Alienation"

Module 3

Indonesia and the End of Non-Alignment: Romance, Counterrevolution, Spectacle

January 31 and February 2

Film to view in advance: *The Year of Living Dangerously*

Suggested readings:

If possible, the novel by Koch, *The Year of Living Dangerously*

Farnsworth, "An Australian Cultural Synthesis"

McBean, "Watching the Third World Watchers"

John Orr, "Peter Weir's Version: *The Year of Living Dangerously*"

Module 4
Colonialism, Decolonization, and the Cold War in Africa:
Documentary vs. Biopic
February 7 and 9

Films to view in advance: *Lumumba: La Mort d'un Prophète* and *Lumumba*

Suggested readings:

Bingham, from *Whose Lives Are They Anyway?*

Pavsek, "The Black Holes of History"

Barr, "Cultural Amnesia and Historical Erasure"

Module 5
USA, War, and Race: Essay Film and Experimental Documentary
February 14 and 16

Discussion of Lumumba films may continue.

Film to view in advance: *I Am Not your Negro*

(To be taught by Kenton Butcher, Ph.D. candidate in English, Cinema, and Africana Studies)

No advance readings, but the interview with Raoul Peck (Artists and the Archive) at the Schomburg Center (You Tube) is good for supplementary preparation an inspiration.

February 21 and 23

Film to view in advance: *The Fog of War*

Suggested readings:

Ricciardelli, "Documentary Filmmaking"

Austen, "The Mists of Time"

Shapiro, "The Fog of War"

Morris, "An Anti-postmodern Postmodernist" (this lecture is quite revealing)

Check out other items on Morris's busy website if you like: some of the reviews are fun and contentious.

Week 6
Germany and the End of the Cold War: Aesthetics and Politics
February 28 and March 2nd

Film to view in advance: *The Lives of Others*

Suggested readings:

Silberman, "Screenplay as Literature"

Sternlieb, "You Must Remember this"

Carson, Interview with Von Donnersmarck

Lindenburger, "Stasisploitation"

SPRING BREAK

Reminder that midterm paper will be due shortly after the break
(Exact date to be confirmed by general agreement)

Module 7
On the Road: Mexico in the Era of NAFTA and the Chiapas Revolt
March 14 and 16

Film to view in advance: *Y Tu Mama Tambien*

Please note: spoiler alerts! Do not read any criticism in advance. Just watch.

Suggested readings:

Saldana-Portillo, "In the Shadow of NAFTA" (we are likely to discuss this challenging essay in class)

Acevedo-Munoz, "Sex, Class, and Mexico"
Basoli, Interview with Alfonso Cuaron

Module 8
Colonialism, Neoliberalism, Indigeneity: Historical and Metatextual Film
March 21 and 23

Note: Likely deadline for midterm paper March 20th
You may submit via e-mail (word document)

Film to view in advance: *Even the Rain*

Suggested readings:

Austin, "Consuming Empathy"
Finnegan, "Leasing out the Rain"
Cilento, "Confluence of Cinematic and Historical Temporalities"
Carter, "Material Correspondences"

Module 9
England, Kenya, Globalization: Neo-Spy Thriller, Social Problem Film, or Romance?
March 28 and 30

Film to view in advance: *The Constant Gardener*

Suggested readings:

Highly recommended novel: Le Carré, *The Constant Gardener* (a page-turner!)
Le Carré, "In Place of Nations" (essential reading)
Mafe, "Misimagining Africa"
McGowan, "The Temporality of the Real"
There is a podcast lecture too!

Module 10
The US and the Middle East: Hyperlink Cinema and
Global Commodity Networks
April 4 and 6

Film to view in advance: *Syriana*

Suggested readings:

DeWaard, "Global Social Problem Film"
Narine, "Global Film Networks"
Ciafone, "Magical Neoliberalism"
Interview with Stephen Gaghan
Jagoda, "Terror Networks" (we are likely to discuss this challenging essay in class)

Module 11
Israel and Lebanon: War, Trauma, Animation
April 11

Films to view in advance: *Waltz with Bashir*

Suggested readings

Yosef, "War Fantasies"
Kroustallis, "Failure to Think"
Dudai, "Trauma in Translation"
Rastegar, "Human Rights and Social Trauma"

Module 12
France and Algeria revisited: Memory, Trauma, Surveillance
April 13 and 18

Films to view in advance: *Caché*

Suggested readings on *Caché*:

Gilroy, "Shooting Crabs in a Barrell"

Virtue, "Memory, Trauma, and the French-Algerian War"

Burris, "Surveillance and the Indifferent Gaze"

Ungureanu, "Sacrifice, Violence and the Limits of Moral Representation"

Celik, "I wanted you to be present"

Week 13
"England Soldiers On": Speculative Futures, Dystopia, Utopia
April 20 and April 25

Film to view in advance: *Children of Men*

This class is will be taught by Kenton Butcher

Also, possibly, for the final class, *The Possibility of Hope* (documentary bonus feature)

Suggested readings:

Amago, "Ethics, Aesthetics, and the Future"

Mackey, "Children in Children of Men"

Latimer, "Bioreproductive Futurism"

Chaudary, "Humanity Adrift" (heavy on the theory, but interesting in parts)

FINAL PAPERS DUE May 12
(Exact deadline will be confirmed by general agreement)
You may submit via e-mail (word document)