

Cinema and Politics
ENGL 5092.402/ARTH 3890/CIMS 0590/COML 0590
BFS Seminar
Fall 2021

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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 down some striking quotes from the readings and bring to class.

4) **Written work:** One well-crafted paper of about 8-10 pp., based on both research and analysis, will be due around 20 October (exact dates will be negotiated) and final paper of similar length, or perhaps a bit more extensive, around 18 December. 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 construct 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.
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 Bollaín. Morena Films, 2010.
The Constant Gardener. Dir. Fernando Meirelles. 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 Cuarón. Universal Studios, 2007.
The Possibility of Hope. Dir. Alfonso Cuarón, 2007. You Tube (bonus feature on DVD)

Suggested readings:

An archive of interesting essays will be placed on Canvas. I recommend that all students dip into a few each week, since this will elevate and enrich class discussion.

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 Aug 29 and Aug 31

Discussion of syllabus, principles of film analysis, etc.
Introductory discussion of *The Battle of Algiers*

Week 1 Sept 5 and Sept 7 The Algerian Revolution: Cinema Verité

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"
O'Leary, "*Battle of Algiers* at Fifty"
Minne, "Women at War"

Week 2 Sept 12 and Sept 14

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

Film to view in advance: *Memories of Underdevelopment*
Suggested readings:
Espinosa, "For a Cinema of Imperfection"
Williams, "Memory in Drag"
Schroeder, "The Dialectics of Identification and Alienation"
Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema"
Alea, "The Viewer's Dialectic"
Kovacs, "Revolutionary Consciousness"

Week 3 Sept 19 and Sept 21 Indonesia and the End of Non-Alignment: Romance, Counterrevolution, Spectacle

Film to view in advance: *The Year of Living Dangerously*
Suggested readings:
Farnsworth, "An Australian Cultural Synthesis"
McBean, "Watching the Third World Watchers"
John Orr, "Peter Weir's Version: *The Year of Living Dangerously*"
If possible, the novel by Koch, *The Year of Living Dangerously*

Week 4

Sept 26 and Sept 28
Colonialism, Decolonization, and the Cold War in Africa:
Documentary vs. Biopic

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"

Discussion of Lumumba films likely to continue on Monday Oct 3

The interview with Raoul Peck (Artists and the Archive) at the Schomburg Center (YouTube) would be good for supplementary preparation.

Week 5
Oct 3, Oct 5, and Oct 10
The USA and its Wars: Essay Film and Experimental Documentary

Films 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 by the director is quite revealing)

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

FALL BREAK

Week 6
Oct 17 and Oct 19
Germany and the End of the Cold War: Aesthetics and Politics

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

Suggested readings:

Carson, Interview with Von Donnersmarck

Silberman, Screenplay as Literature

Sternlieb, "You Must Remember this"

Lindenburger, "Stasisploitation"

MIDTERM PAPER DUE
(Probably October 23—exact date to be confirmed by general agreement)
Please submit via e-mail as Word document (not PDF)

Week 7
Oct 24 and Oct 26
On the Road: Mexico in the Era of NAFTA and the Chiapas Revolt

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

Suggested readings:

Acevedo-Munoz, "Sex, Class, and Mexico"

Saldana-Portillo, "In the Shadow of NAFTA"

Basoli, Interview with Alfonso Cuarón

Week 8

Oct 31 and Nov 2

Colonialism, Neoliberalism, Indigeneity: Historical and Metatextual Film

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"

Week 10

Nov 7 and Nov 9

England, Kenya, Globalization: Neo-Spy Thriller, Social Problem Film, or Romance?

Film to view in advance: *The Constant Gardener*

Suggested readings:

Le Carré, *The Constant Gardener*

Le Carré, "In Place of Nations"

Tierney, "Fernando Meirelles as Transnational Auteur"

Mafe, "Misimagining Africa"

McGowan, "The Temporality of the Real"

Week 11

Nov 14 and Nov 16

**The US and the Middle East: Hyperlink Cinema and
Global Commodity Networks**

Film to view in advance: *Syriana*

Suggested readings:

Ciafone, "Magical Neoliberalism"

Interview with Stephen Gaghan

Jagoda, "Terror Networks"

DeWaard, "Global Social Problem Film"

Narine, "Global Film Networks"

Cohen, "Narrating the Global"

Week 12

Nov 21 (Thanksgiving is on November 25)

Israel and Lebanon: War, Trauma, Animation

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"

Week 11

Nov 28 and Nov 30

France and Algeria revisited: Memory, Trauma, Surveillance

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

Dec 5 and Dec 7

"England Soldiers On": Speculative Futures, Dystopia, Utopia

Film to view in advance: *Children of Men* and, for the final class, *The Possibility of Hope*

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)

FINAL PAPERS DUE AROUND DECEMBER 18

(Exact deadline will be confirmed by general agreement)

You may submit via e-mail (as a Word document, not PDF)