

Texas Tech University
The Honors College

HON 3301-H03: *Philosophical Filmmakers: Bergman, Kurosawa, Kieslowski*

Spring 2012

T 6.00pm-8.50pm

Classroom: English & Philosophy 301

Instructor Information:

Costica Bradatan, PhD

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Office Hours: Monday: 3.30pm-5.30pm, Tuesday: 3.30pm-5.30pm & by appointment

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Course Description:

Should philosophy be the monopoly of “professional” philosophers alone? Can philosophical questions be raised, and answers attempted, through other means of expression than the traditional ones (i.e., academic books and journal articles)? If they can, and if, furthermore, “the medium is the message,” then how exactly the adoption of non-conventional forms of expression (art cinema, for example) changes the philosophical content itself? How do artists and thinkers, brought up in, conditioned by and feeding on, different cultures, come to tackle the same set of “universally human” issues such as death, finitude, solitude, quest for meaning? Should philosophy itself be re-defined, in a more comprehensive, cosmopolitan and ecumenical manner, so as to account for all these aspects?

This interdisciplinary course seeks to answer such questions through an in-depth discussion of the *oeuvres* of three major 20th century filmmakers: Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007), Akira Kurosawa (1910-1998) and Krzysztof Kieslowski (1941-1996). Combining film viewing/analysis, close reading and seminar discussions, we will explore some of the ways in which abstract philosophical problems/ideas can be “fleshed out,” sometimes in strikingly expressive fashion, through specific narrative and visual strategies, cinematic techniques, and directorial styles.

Films such as *The Seventh Seal* (1957) and *Wild Strawberries* (1957), by Bergman; *Rashomon* (1950) and *Dersu Uzala* (1975), by Kurosawa, *Blind Chance* (1981), and *The Decalogue* (1989-1990), by Krzysztof Kieslowski, have always struck viewers as intensely philosophical. We now have a chance to develop this perception into a more articulated understanding. For this purpose, we will be using not only scholarly literature dedicated to these films & directors, but also works of philosophy & literature (by such authors as Nietzsche, Camus, Tolstoy, Unamuno, Rorty, Žižek and others).

Course Learning Objectives:

HONS 3301-H05 satisfies the university core curriculum requirement in Humanities: “The objective of the humanities in a core curriculum is to expand the student’s knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behaviors, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought. Through study in disciplines such as literature and philosophy, students will engage in critical analysis and develop an appreciation of the humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of any society. *Students graduating from Texas Tech University should be able to think critically and demonstrate an understanding of the possibility of multiple interpretations, cultural contexts, and values.*” (TTU Catalogue)

Specifically, upon successful completion of this course students should:

- Have become aware of the complexity of the human condition and the many ways in which artists, philosophers and thinkers portray, reflect on, and discourse about it (the course expands “the student’s knowledge of the human condition and human cultures”)
- Have realized the dialectical relationship between the sphere of the everyday life, on the one hand, and the ways in which this sphere is reflected in works of art and thought, on the other hand (the course meditates on “behaviors, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought”)
- Be able to engage sympathetically as well as critically with an work of art or thought (the course practices “critical analysis and develop[s] an appreciation of the humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of any society”)
- Be able to detect specific philosophical content in art films and works of literature
- Have realized the complex relationship between philosophy, film, and literature, how philosophy overlaps with film and literature, and how relative disciplinary boundaries sometimes are.

Methods of learning outcomes assessment:

- Graded written work
- Graded reading quizzes
- Class participation
- One-to-one tutorials
- Informal feedback via emails, discussions, etc.

Honors philosophy statement:

The fact that this is an honors class determines the ways in which these learning outcomes are to be being achieved. Thanks to a combination of factors (small-size group, writing and reading intensive, research-oriented class, a focus on dialogical learning, etc), we are in a position to pay special attention to the *qualitative* aspects of the learning process. In particular, the research component of the class (which means a focus on writing and reading) confers upon this process a *creative* dimension and places the student in a distinctly *active* position.

Disclaimer: An essential component of this seminar is watching, discussing about, and interpreting a series of art films that help us better grasp the concepts, notions and ideas covered in class. Some of these films might display content (nudity, language, violence, etc.) that some of you might find provocative or inappropriate.

Required Texts:

- Camus, Albert *The Stranger* (Vintage, 1989; ISBN: 0679720200)*
- Kickasola, Joseph. *The Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski. The Liminal Image* (New York: Continuum, 2004)*
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science***
- Richie, Donald. “Red Beard” in *Film Quarterly*, 19: 1 (Autumn, 1965), pp. 14-25. **
- Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity***
- Schneider, John, “Signs and symbols in *Dersu Uzala*,” *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 96: 1 (February 2009), pp. 173-80**
- Singer, Irving. *Ingmar Bergman Cinematic Philosopher. Reflections on his Creativity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press)*
- Tolstoy, Leon. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (Bantam, 1981; ISBN: 0553210351).*
- Unamuno, Miguel de. *Saint Emmanuel the Good, Martyr* **
- Yoshimoto, Mitsuhiro. *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000), pp. 53-68, 182-189, 194-204, 303-331**

It is recommended that those books marked with an asterisk (*) be purchased as they will be used more extensively. All these books may be purchased from the TTU bookstores. You may also purchase them from other bookstores or online, provided that the ISBNs are the ones given above. Materials marked with ** are online or will be provided by the instructor:
http://www.webpages.ttu.edu/cbradata/resources_for_film_390.html

Course Requirements:

1. Regular attendance and active class participation
2. Ten reading-based quizzes
3. First draft of the research project (graded)
4. Final draft of the research project (graded)

1. Attendance and active class participation:

Since this is an (honors) *seminar*, it is imperative that you attend and participate in every class. (Please do not be late!) Any unexcused absence will have an impact on your class participation/attendance grade (10 % for each absence). After three (3) unexcused absences the instructor may, at his discretion, recommend the University Registrar to drop the student from the course. An absence is excused when you provide serious documented evidence about it (signed note from the physician, signed letter from the Dean, death notice, etc.) Active participation in classroom discussions includes (but is not limited to): posing relevant questions; making informed comments and formulating original points of view, establishing and maintaining a fruitful dialogue with the other students, etc. When formulating your points of view, remarks or comments, please do so in a respectful manner, in such a way as not to harm the feelings of the other members of the class. Please be tolerant and respect the religious, political and intellectual opinions of the other members of the class. Showing respect to the others is, first of all, a form of self-respect. You should also respect the fact that TTU is a secular institution of higher education.

Please also note that texting (or other persistent uses of portable devices) in class counts as negative participation and translates into a lower grade for class participation.

2. Reading-based quizzes

There will be, at different times during the semester, a number of impromptu (unannounced) quizzes based on the class readings. The quiz component of the grade is worth 25 % (of the final grade). In all, there will be 50 quiz questions, each question being worth 0.5 % of your final grade. Students who miss a quiz will be allowed to repeat it only if their absence is excused (see above).

The quiz questions always cover the materials you are supposed to read for the class. Please note that they have *different degrees of difficulty*: some of these questions are relatively easy to answer, while others are harder. The rationale is that if you want to obtain the highest grade, you should be prepared to answer all (or most of) the questions, the easier ones as well as the more difficult ones. You can do so only if you do the readings very carefully and on a regular basis. In the interest of fairness, the final grades have to reflect the different amounts of effort each student has invested into the class.

More important: since this class is an *honors seminar* – therefore, writing and reading intensive – you have to pay closer attention to the readings and be prepared to spend more time on them. These are theoretical (sometimes dense) texts. Read them more than once if necessary, take notes and underline what you think it is important or what you don't understand. Look up those terms/concepts that you are unfamiliar with, or simply ask the instructor what they mean; compile a list and bring it to class, and we will discuss it item by item. These texts are important and you can learn something (important) from reading them. Just give them the attention they deserve and your efforts will be rewarded.

3-4. Research project:

Since this is an honors class, it is *research-oriented* and requires *substantial writing*. Therefore, the bulk of the final grade (see below “Grading policy”) will be determined by the quality of your research project. This piece is the culmination of students’ work during the whole semester. It must be on a course-related topic, designed by the student in consultation with the instructor. Students should think of a good topic for their research project and discuss it with the instructor (stop by during office hours or just make an appointment). The research paper must be conceived of, structured, developed and written in such a way as to meet the standards of academic excellence in the humanities, and following the guidelines for submission of written work listed below. The three stages for the production of this research paper are: a) Submission of a research topic (title plus one sentence), b) Submission of the first draft (3 pages, not including the bibliography), and c) Submission of the final draft (8 pages, not including the bibliography), at the end of the semester. (For deadlines, please see “Schedule of Events” below.)

Note on the first draft: Since your first draft will be graded, what is expected from you is essentially a shorter version of the final draft. This way your work can be judged using the “grading criteria for written work” stated here (see below). Therefore, you should not submit (as your first draft) just a “work plan,” a sketch, or a list of points you are going to develop in the final draft. What you submit as your first draft should look like a “finished paper” in terms of argumentation, structure, citing sources, rhetoric, etc. Given the length of the first draft, you may have to touch on only briefly some of the points. In this case, you may wish to insert parenthetical mentions stating that you will further explore those points in the final draft.

Individual conferences

Students are strongly encouraged to discuss with the instructor any aspects of their work for this class, and in particular about their research project. All students taking this course are encouraged to make appointments with the instructor in order to discuss issues related to the course. The instructor may ask you to come in at other times for discussing particular issues. Please feel free to email the instructor whenever you need to discuss with him aspects of your work.

As the semester progresses each of you must think of a topic for your research project. The topic for this final essay is designed by you, but must be course-related, and discussed with the instructor (on the occasion of a conferences or just make an appointment!).

Guidelines for Submission of Written Work:

- MLA Citation Style (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>)
- Word-process all written work; handwritten papers will not be accepted;
- Use standard font, in 12 point; double-spaced.
- Number your pages;
- Staple your pages together;
- At the top of the first page include your name, date, and essay title;
- Proofread and spell-check before bringing any papers to class.

Grading Policy:

- 5% Regular attendance of seminar meetings.
- 20% Active participation in classroom discussions
- 25% Reading-based quizzes (50 questions, 0.5% for each question)
- 20% First draft of the research paper
- 30% Final draft of the research paper

Grading System:

- A+ (98-100); A (94-97); A- (90-93)
- B+ (88-89); B (84-87); B- (80-83)

- **C+** (78-79); **C** (74-77); **C-** (70-73)
- **D+** (68-69); **D** (64-67); **D-** (60-63)
- **F** (0-59)

What the grades (for written work) mean

- **A** (90-100).
 - highest quality in terms of argumentation, supporting evidence, consistency, clarity, logical organization of the material
 - mastery of the basic concepts of the course and deep understanding of the material covered
 - extensive research (much beyond the required readings) and sophisticated use of primary and secondary sources
 - an excellent sense of structure, stylistic coherence and unity
 - original and persuasive thinking/points of view
 - rhetorical sophistication
 - work meets current standards of academic writing in the humanities
 - no (or only accidental) mechanical errors
- **B** (80-89)
 - Very good quality in terms of argumentation, supporting evidence, consistency, clarity, logical organization of the material
 - mastery of the basic concepts of the course and good understanding of the material covered
 - extensive research (beyond the required readings) and balanced use of primary and secondary sources
 - a good sense of structure, stylistic coherence and unity, despite occasional inconsistencies
 - persuasive thinking/points of view
 - rhetorical fluency
 - work generally meets current standards of academic writing in the humanities
 - some mechanical errors
- **C** (70-79)
 - Satisfactory quality in terms of argumentation, supporting evidence, consistency, clarity, logical organization of the material
 - Satisfactory understanding of the basic concepts of the course and of the material covered
 - some research and use of primary and secondary sources
 - some sense of structure and stylistic coherence, despite flaws
 - some rhetorical weakness
 - poor compliance with the standards of academic writing in the humanities
 - frequent mechanical errors
- **D** (60-69)
 - Some quality in terms of argumentation, supporting evidence, consistency, clarity, logical organization of the material, but undermined by gaps in knowledge and errors of fact
 - Some familiarity with the material covered, but not enough for engaging with it in a coherent/meaningful way
 - Poor research and inadequate use of primary and secondary sources
 - Poor sense of structure, lack of stylistic coherence and unity
 - current standards of academic writing in the humanities not met
 - many mechanical errors
- **F** (0-59)

- Missing work
- Work incomplete (or off the topic) in a serious way
- Serious deficiencies in argumentation, supporting evidence, and logical organization
- No relevant research
- No sense of structure and lack of coherence
- No observance of the standards of academic writing

University Policies and Regulations:

The instructor of this course respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

Absences for religious holidays:

A student who is absent from classes for the observation of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence if, not later than the fifteenth day after the first day of the semester, the student had notified the instructor of each scheduled class that the student would be absent for a religious holy day.

Students with Disabilities:

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, you may contact the Student Disability Services office in 335 West Hall or 806-742-2405.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism, or academic theft, is passing off someone else's work as your own. Please note: plagiarism simply means *using someone else's ideas without acknowledging it* (no matter if you use that person's actual words or not). Regardless of your background, you are responsible for not plagiarizing. Plagiarism will be prosecuted; it can affect your permanent record. Being a plagiarizer is incomparably worse than being unoriginal! For more about plagiarism (and academic dishonesty in general), please read the document "Texas Tech University Statement of Academic Integrity": <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/studentjudicialprograms/academicinteg.php>

Note: Submitting written work for this class that has already been submitted for another class (at Texas Tech or elsewhere) constitutes an act of academic dishonesty and will have the same disciplinary consequences as plagiarism.

Please note that plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class under any circumstances! The penalty for plagiarism ranges, depending on the gravity of the case, from a grade of **F (0 %)** for the paper in question (**without** the possibility of resubmitting it) to **F** as final grade for the class.

Class Etiquette:

- Please switch off your cell phones & other portable devices
- Absolutely no texting during class
- Laptops can be used only for note-taking (unless otherwise indicated by the instructor)
- If you bring food/beverage, please try to finish your meal before the class starts.

Schedule of Events

Section I. The filmmaker as a rebel: Ingmar Bergman

Week 1 (24 Jan):

- Introduction to the course. Philosophy and cinema. Philosophical films. Introduction to Bergman's work. Cultural and historical background. Philosophical significance of his work.
- Film: *Through a Glass Darkly*

Week 2 (31 Jan):

- Film: *The Seventh Seal*
- Text: Singer (pp. vii-48) & Nietzsche

Week 3 (7 Feb.):

- Topic: "An un-examined life is not worth living"
- Film: *Wild Strawberries*
- Text: Singer (pp. 48-90)

Week 4 (14 Feb.):

- Topic: Nihilism
- Film: *Winter Light*
- Text: Singer (pp. 90-156) & Unamuno

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| Deadline this day (14 Feb)! Submission of the topic for the research paper. |
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Week 5 (21 Feb):

- Topic: "The Hell is the others"
- Film: *Shame*
- Text: Singer (pp. 156-223)

Section II. The filmmaker as a humanist: Akira Kurosawa

Week 6 (28 Feb.):

- Topic: Introduction to Kurosawa's work. Philosophical significance of his work. Cultural and historical background. Philosophy East & West. The cultural conditioning of philosophy.
- Film: *Red Beard*
- Text: Yoshimoto (pp. 53-68) & Richie

Week 7 (6 March):

- Topic: The art of dying
- Film: *Ikiru*
- Text: Tolstoy & Yoshimoto (pp. 194-204)

Week 8 (13 March): No classes (Spring Break)

Week 9 (20 March):

- Topic: What is truth?
- Film: *Rashomon*
- Text: Rorty & Yoshimoto (pp. 182-189)

Deadline this day (20 March)! Submission of the first draft of the research paper.

Week 10 (27 March):

- Topic: Cash & clash
- Film: *High and Low*
- Text: Yoshimoto (pp. 303-331)

Week 11 (3 April):

- Topic: Encountering the other
- Film: *Dersu Uzala*
- Text: Yoshimoto (pp. 344-347) & Schneider

Section III. The filmmaker as a heretic: Krzysztof Kieslowski

Week 12 (10 April):

- Topic: Introduction to Kieslowski's work. Philosophical significance of his work. Cultural, historical and political background
- Film: *The Decalogue*
- Text: Kickasola (pp. 3-49)

Week 13 (17 April):

- Film: *The Decalogue*
- Text: Kickasola (pp. 50-89)

Week 14 (24 April):

- Topic: One life or several?
- Film: *Blind Chance*
- Texts: Kickasola (pp. 128-147)

Week 15 (1 May):

- Topic: The (Polish) stranger
- Film: *Short Film about Killing*
- Text: Kickasola (pp. 200-210) & Camus

Week 16 (8 May):

- Topic: The world as a (divine) puppet show
- Film: *Double Life of Veronique*
- Text: Kickasola (pp. 242-263)

Deadline this day (8 May)! Submission of the final draft of the research paper.