

## The Double Lens: Approaches to Film Theory & History

### Course Description:

In this course, we will survey a variety of methodological approaches to film theory. Each text we read will illustrate a manner of approaching and understanding film as a social, cultural and technological object. Our goal will be to understand, appreciate, and utilize each approach while at the same time critically examining the assumptions, values and blind spots framing each approach. As we shuttle back and forth between theoretical texts and film screenings, we will work within the parallax of this “double lens.” The metaphor of the double lens illustrates how, in this course, I want us to think about film theory itself as being a certain kind of apparatus, a second lens, through which we view a variety of filmic and photographic objects. In this sense, the course will serve as a third lens as we look at theorists looking at practices of looking. By the end of the semester, you will have gained a solid understanding of key terms and traditions in film theory. In addition to this, I hope these approaches help you sharpen the focus and increase the dexterity of your textual compositions.

### Participation/Attendance

This class will not be possible without your participation. The success of this course depends on your contributions, your labor, and your perspective. For this reason, it is mandatory that you attend the lectures and screenings.

### Papers (late/format)

No late papers will be accepted. Your essays need not be perfect, but I do expect them to be on time. Papers will be written, reviewed and rewritten in accordance with a shared schedule. Late papers threaten to jam what I hope will be the smooth machinery of the review process.

All papers are to be typed and formatted according to the most recent MLA guidelines.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism, etymologically, means *kidnapping*. Do not steal the brainchildren of others. I do not want to encourage the fear of *conception* or downplay the connection between *discourse* and *intercourse*; however, those who engage in plagiarism will suffer the consequences set forth by the university. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, see me or refer to the university’s guidelines at:

<http://www.university.edu/plagiarism.html>

## **Disabilities/Accommodations**

If you feel you might need any accommodations in order to succeed in this course, please let me know privately as soon as possible. Also, you might contact the Disabled Students' Program, 260 César Chávez Center #4250, 510.642.0518 (voice) or 510.642.6376 (TTY).

## **Requirements/Grades**

Your weighted grade in the course will be determined according to the following schema:

60% compositions  
20% midterm  
20% final exam  
10% discussion/blog

## **Course Blog**

The virtual component of this course is substantial. This semester, we will be utilizing **bspace** found at <http://www.bspace.university.edu>. Students are required to regularly post comments and feedback through this site. Stay tuned for more information on how this will work.

## **Required Texts/Materials:**

A course reader available at Copy Central

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1987)

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972)

## **Recommended Texts**

A current MLA Guide (e.g. Dianne Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*)

Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*, Ninth Edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002)

## Course Schedule

### Week One: Apparatus Theory and the Metaphysics of Cinema

Plato: "Allegory of the Cave"  
Baudry, Jean-Louis: "The Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus"  
Baudry, Jean-Louis: "The Apparatus: Metaphychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema"

#### Screening:

Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967)  
A selection of short films by Georges Méliès and Thomas Edison

### Week Two: The Power of the Apparatus

Berger, John: *Ways of Seeing*

#### Screening:

Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

### Week Three: The Reproductive Apparatus

Benjamin, Walter: "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility"

#### Screening:

Robert Weine's *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920)  
David Lee Fisher's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (2005)

### Week Four: Film Semiotics

Bordwell, David: "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrative Principals and Procedures"  
Metz, Christian: "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film"

#### Screening:

Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954)

### Week Five: The Filmic Text

Eisenstein, Sergei: "The Cinematographic Principle of the Ideogram"  
Eisenstein, Sergei: "The Dialectic Approach to Film Form"  
Eisenstein, Sergei: "Film Language"

#### Screening:

Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925)

## **Week Six: Midterm and Writing Workshop**

### **Week Seven: The Image** (Paper One Due)

Barthes, Roland: *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*

#### **Exhibit:**

Student Photography

### **Week Eight: The Image**

Kracauer, Siegfried: “Photography”

Benjamin, Walter: “A Little History of Photography”

Bazin, André: “The Ontology of the Photographic Image”

#### **Screening:**

Chris Marker’s *La Jetée* (1962)

### **Week Nine: Audiences and Reception**

Munsterberg, Hugo: “The Photoplay”

Gunning, Tom: “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator”

#### **Screening:**

Darren Aronofsky’s *Requiem for a Dream* (2000)

### **Week Ten: Audiences and Reception**

Artaud, Antonin: “The Theatre of Cruelty (First Manifesto)”

Artaud, Antonin: “The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)”

Hansen, Miriam: “A Cinema in Search of a Spectator: Film-Viewer Relations before Hollywood”

#### **Screening:**

Michael Powell’s *Peeping Tom* (1960)

### **Week Eleven: Writing Workshop**

### **Week Twelve: Pages, Stages, and Screens** (Paper Two Draft Due)

Bazin, André: “Theater and Cinema—Part One”

Eisenstein, Sergei: “Through Theater to Cinema”

Eisenstein, Sergei: “The Unexpected”

Artaud, Antonin; “On the Balinese Theater”

#### **Screening:**

Peter Greenaway’s *Prospero’s Books* (1991)

### **Week Thirteen: Pages, Stages, and Screens**

Balázs, Béla: "The Face of Man"  
Bazin, André: "Theater and Cinema—Part Two"

#### **Screening:**

The Wooster Group's *House/Lights* (1998)

### **Week Fourteen: Historiography**

Hansen, Miriam "Early Audiences: Myths and Models"  
Hansen, Miriam "Chameleon and Catalyst: The Cinema as an Alternative Public Sphere"  
Sandberg, Mark "The Wax Effigy as Recording Technology"  
Singer, Ben "Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism"

#### **Screening:**

Orson Welles' *Lady from Shanghai* (1947)

### **Week Fifteen: Review for Final (Paper Two, Second Draft Due)**