

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Cinema and Philosophy
Course Code	: PHI4373
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Sectional approach
Class Contact Hours	: 3 hours Lecture per week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective – Aesthetics Profile
Recommendation(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

A number of major philosophers have written about the cinema, raising a wide range of issues about the artistic and expressive means and functions of audio-visual representations. This course surveys a variety of these philosophical writings and issues related to cinema. It also examines the theme of ‘cinema as philosophy’ by investigating the cinema’s potential contributions to philosophical understanding.

Aims

To acquaint students with an important vein of philosophical reflection, as well as to give them an enhanced understanding of an influential popular art form and persuasive medium.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

- (LO1) Respond perceptively and critically to complex audio-visual works.
- (LO2) Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical tradition in question as well as of a number of exceptional cinematic works.
- (LO3) Appraise some of the central claims about the nature and diverse values of cinema.

Indicative Content

Philosophical essays as well as specific cinematic works will be explored with an eye to some of the following topics:

1. The nature and specificity of the cinematic medium.
2. Realism, illusionism, fiction, and non-fiction in the cinema. Film’s ‘realist’ and ‘expressionist’ functions.
3. The construction of time, space, and causation in cinematic representations.
4. Authorship and story-telling in cinema. Patterns of audio-visual representation.
5. Problems of interpretation and fictional content.
6. Narrative and narration in the cinema
7. Philosophical themes in cinematic works: cinema as philosophy

Teaching Method

Lectures and discussions focusing on particular works of cinematic art will be supplemented by discussion of readings of philosophical writings on cinema. (Film-makers whose works might be examined include such figures as Alain Resnais, Akira Kurosawa, Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Lars von Trier, Charles Chaplin, Wong Kar-Wai, Terrence Malick, etc.)

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Student's successful engagement with the lectures and readings, and corresponding progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above, will be measured by means of mid-term and final examinations comprising both short-answer and more substantive, reflective essay questions (to assess LO 1, 2, 3). These examinations will determine whether students have engaged successfully with the required readings for the course and with content presented in the lectures and tutorials. Students' knowledge of key positions, distinctions, arguments, and relevant facts will be tested. The examination questions will assess the ability to draw the course materials together, the ability to articulate and organize ideas in written form, as well as the ability to synthesize ideas and form an individual opinion on important questions that have been the subject of extensive debate in the literature. In addition, students are expected to participate in discussions in class (to assess LO 1, 2, 3).

Assessment

Assessment of the students will focus on their active engagement with the cinematic works and philosophical readings, and their ability to develop articulate critical responses.

10% Participation

40% Mid-term Examination

50% Final Examination

Required Readings

Selections from such collections as:

Allen, Richard and Murray Smith, eds. *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1997.

Carroll, Noël and Jinhee Choi, eds. *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.

Livingston, Paisley and Carl Plantinga, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Supplementary Readings

Bordell, David, and Noël Carroll. *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996.

Smith, Murray and Thomas E. Wartenberg, eds. *Thinking through Cinema: Films as Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.

Stoehr, Kevin L., ed. *Film and Knowledge: Essays on the Integration of Images and Ideas*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002.

Important Notes

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is "the presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student's own work". Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>