

Professor Stuart Warner
Fall 2012
Philosophy 350, Philosophy in Film
Roosevelt University

Course Description

This course aims at providing a deeper understanding of philosophy through the medium of film. Toward that end we will be viewing thirteen films. Accompanying these films will be several readings. The purpose of the readings is to help us understand more deeply the philosophical questions and responses that are sometimes explicit, but usually only implicit in these films. There will be two philosophical themes in particular upon which we will be reflecting: Justice and Law; and The Meaning of Life.

Now, films are a relatively new form of human making and expression. For the vast majority of reflective human history, films were non-existent. However, the telling of stories and the making of images in the attempt to reveal some understanding of things of the greatest importance to human beings—our place in the cosmos, our relations to each other, our weaknesses and our strengths, the complex and diverse character of human endeavor—is probably coeval with our coming to exist as beings who can and do reflect upon things. Although films do not allow for the systematic articulation of ideas in the way that books can, they sometimes offer the possibility of being able to impress certain philosophical understandings upon us more vibrantly, with more immediacy, than many books can . . . hence this course.

Films

“Crimes and Misdemeanors” (Woody Allen, director)
“The Man who Shot Liberty Valance” (John Ford, director)
“12 Angry Men” (Sidney Lumet, director)
“Rashomon” (Akira Kurosawa, director)
“The Godfather, Part I” (Francis Ford Coppola, director)
“The Godfather, Part II” (Francis Ford Coppola, director)
“The Last Days of Disco” (Whit Stillman, director)
“Blade Runner—Final Cut” (Ridley Scott, director)
“The Seventh Seal” (Ingmar Bergman, director)
“Harold and Maude” (Hal Ashby, director)
“Wings of Desire” (Wim Wenders, director)
“The Searchers” (John Ford, director)
“Being There” (Hal Ashby, director)

Books

West and West (editors), *Four Texts on Socrates*
David Benatar (editor), *Life, Death, & Meaning*

Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*

Plato, "The Ring of Gyges" (electronic except from the *Republic* provided by Professor Warner)

Schedule of Viewing, Reading, and Writing Assignments

August 27	View "Crimes and Misdemeanors"
August 29	Read Plato "Ring of Gyges" electronic handout
September 5	View "The Man who Shot Liberty Valance"
September 10	Read Plato's <i>Crito</i> (in <i>Four Texts of Socrates</i>), 43a-50a (pp. 99-108)
September 12	Read Plato's <i>Crito</i> (in <i>Four Texts of Socrates</i>), 50b-54e (pp. 108-14)
September 17	View "12 Angry Men"
September 19	View "Rashomon"
September 24	View "Rashomon"
September 26	View "The Godfather: Part I"
October 1	View "The Godfather: Part II"
October 3	View "The Godfather: Part II"
October 8	Read Sandel, <i>Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?</i> Pp. 208-243
October 10	Read Sandel, <i>Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?</i> Pp. 4-57
October 15	View "The Last Days of Disco"
October 22	View "The Blade Runner—Final Cut"
October 24	Read in Benatar: Williams, pp. 345-61
October 29	View "The Seventh Seal"
October 31	Read in Benatar: Nagel, pp. 31-42
November 5	View "Harold and Maude"
November 7	Read in Benatar: Taylor, pp. 21-30
November 12	View "Wings of Desire"
November 14	Read in Benatar: Nozick, pp. 65-78
November 26	Read in Benatar: Nozick, pp. 78-92
November 28	View "The Searchers"
December 3	View "The Searchers"
December 5	View "Being There"