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 *Crito* (in *Four Texts of Socrates*), 43a-50a (pp. 99-108)

September 12  
Read Plato’s *Crito* (in *Four Texts of Socrates*), 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  

October 10  
Read Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* 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”