OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

Throughout Central Europe leading edge filmmaking erupted in the 1920s. This course studies a select band of Central European filmmakers (along with a special bonus, the Soviet bloc film-artist Andrei Tarkovsky) and their collective attempt to deal with and to follow their search for a medium to describe the full complexity of individual and collective political life and historical experience. In this way the truth peeks through some of the aesthetic units of the cinematic image in our chosen films as so many lines of light. Particular attention will be paid to the Czech New Wave movement of the late 1960s. Screenings include pictures or clips from ten important film-directors or directoresses: Věra Chytilová (Czech Republic, 1929-present), Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Germany, 1946-82), Miloš Forman (Czech Republic, 1932-present), Juraj Herz (Slovakia, 1934-present), Jan Hřebejk (Czech Republic, 1967-present), Fritz Lang (Germany, 1890-1976), Jiří Menzel (Czech Republic, 1938-present), F. W. Murnau, (Germany, 1888-1931), Jan Němec (Czech Republic, 1936-present), and Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-86). Special emphasis will also be given to the relation of these director’s strategies of presentation to questions of aesthetics (of beauty), of epistemology (of knowledge and of the production of truth), of ethics, of microlevel and macrolevel political implications, of ontology (of subjectivity and of individual selfhood or identity) and of spectatorship. Above all, we shall accordingly locate those cinematic moments that might teach us non-sadistic (i.e., non-appropriating) and revolutionary modes of viewing circulation and mobility, and novel ways of engaging with one of the more important new cultural forms of the last one-hundred and twenty years in our audiovisual societies so as to forge new modes of movement and new spatial, which is also to say, temporal values and figures of temporality that would mediate experience in strikingly original ways. No background in the study of cinema is required. All films have English inter-titles or sub-titles.
which is assigned deserves your careful attention

Writing: a mid-term paper of 2000 words and a final paper of 2500-3000 words; topics will be given two weeks in advance, but you can also make your own creative choice of topic area that must have the professor’s approval in advance; regrettably, late papers will not be accepted.

Assessment: Mid-term essay 20%, Final essay 40%, Attendance, Participation and Oral Presentation 40%; crucially, you are allowed up to two unexcused absences maximum out of thirteen sessions total (i.e., four out of twenty-six component parts with each week having two parts) to pass the course; your mental participation and over-all affect on the quality of the class inform this grade as much as how much you contribute to seminar discussions; arriving more than ten minutes late for class or leaving for more than ten minutes for any part of the class session will result in an absence for that day. There will be one ten minute break at the midpoint mark during each week’s three-hour-long session.

All students must sign up for one in-class oral presentation that should be roughly of twenty minutes duration; ideally, it should offer an opportunity to contest and to test your ideas with us and so usefully serve as work to consult for one of the two required papers for the course.

READINGS:

Extracts from the following critical and theoretical texts will be available in a course reader:


Bersani, Leo and Ulysse Dutoit: Arts of Impoverishment (Harvard Univ. Press, 1993).


Kracauer, Siegfried: From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of The German Film (Princeton Univ. Press, 1947).

Flaxman, Gregory, ed.: “The Brain is the Screen: An Interview with Gilles Deleuze” in The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2000).


SCREENINGS:

Věra Chytilová: Daisies (1966, Czech with English subtitles, 75 minutes).

R. W. Fassbinder: Händler der vier Jahreszeiten (The Merchant of Four Seasons, 1971, German with English subtitles, 88 minutes).

Miloš Forman: Hoří, má panenka (The Fireman’s Ball, 1967, Czech with English subtitles, 73 minutes).


F. W. Murnau: *Der Letzte Mann* (*The Last Laugh*, 1924, silent with English intertitles, 91 minutes).


**WEEKLY SCHEDULE WITH SUBJECT AREAS:**

**Week 1:** Orientation, etc.

**Week 2/18.ii:** Part I: Introduction

Introduction to a survey view of historical and cultural matters of Central European cinematic culture and history and of the strategies the course will employ to achieve new perspectives on the filmic history of the region.

**Part II: Moving across German Expressionism and the Socioeconomic for New Spatial Values I: Murnau**

Pre-film talk and screening: *Der letzte Mann* (*The Last Laugh*, 1924, dir. F.W. Murnau).

**Week 3/25.ii:** Part I: Post-film lecture/discussion on *The Last Laugh* w/student presentations

Readings:
- D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film, Fourth Edition*, pp. 87-111.
- G. Deleuze: *Cinema 1*, pp. 40-55.
- S. Kracauer: *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film*, pp. 99-106.

**Part II: Moving across German Expressionism, the Political and the Heroizing Epic for New Spatial Values II: Lang**

Week 4/4.iii:  
Part I: Post-film discussion + student presentations  
Readings:  
D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 87-111  
G. Deleuze: *Cinema I*, pp. 40-55.  
G. Flaxman, ed.: “The Brain is the Screen: An Interview with Gilles Deleuze” in *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, pp. 365-73.  
S. Kracauer: *The German Film*, pp. 91-97.  

Part II: The Czech New Wave and Femininity  
Post-film discussion + student presentations  
Readings:  
D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 621-36  
+ a general sense of reference that includes Bersani, Deleuze, and Dutoit.

Week 5/11.iii:  
Part I: An Unsung Slovak Contribution to the Czech New Wave  
Pre-film talk and screening: *Spalovač Mrtvol* (*The Cremator*, 1968, dir. Juraj Herz)  
Part II: Post-film discussion + student talks  
Readings:  
D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 621-36  
P. Hames: *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, pp. 223-30  
+ for general reference Bersani/Deleuze/Dutoit.

Week 6/18.iii:  
Part I: Cultural Repression and Czechoslovakia  
Part II: Post-film discussion + student talks  
Readings:  
D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 621-36  
P. Hames: *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, pp. 223-30  
+ for general reference Bersani/Deleuze/Dutoit.

Week 7/25.iii:  
MID-TERM ESSAYS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS  
Part I: The Self and the Social System  
Part II: Post-film talk plus student presentations  
Readings:  
D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 621-36  
P. Hames: *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, pp. 151-65  
+ general reference to Bersani-Deleuze-Dutoit.
Week 8/1.iv: Part I: The Czech New Wave as Macrolevel Political Satire

Part II: Post-film discussion plus student presentations
Readings:  D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 621-36
P. Hames: *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, pp. 106-26
+ general sense of reference with Bersani, Deleuze and Dutoit


Week 10/15.iv: Part I: Screening contd. w/post-film lecture/discussion on *Andrei Rublev* & w/ student presentations
Readings:  R. Bird: *Andrei Rublev*, pp. 37-64 & pp. 73-83
D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 696-98.
E. Roraback: “Medieval Immobilizings in Tarkovsky’s *Andrei Rublev* (1966)”.

Part II: Das Neue Kino: Fassbinder (New German Cinema)

Week 11/22.iv Spring Break, no class

Week 12/29.iv: Part I: Post-film lecture/discussion on Fassbinder + student talks
Readings:  D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 582-604.
E. Roraback: “Keep To Your Dream: Fassbinder & Cinematic Intensity”.

Part II: The Problem of the Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1967-68

Week 13/6.v: Parts I & 2: Continue post-film lecture/discussion of Fassbinder and conduct post-film lecture/discussion of *Pelíšky* w/student presentations + Conclusions
Readings:  W. Benjamin. Thesis 9 from *On the Concept of History*
D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 582-604.
E. Roraback: “Keep To Your Dream: Fassbinder & Cinematic Intensity”.
Week 14/13.v: **FINAL ESSAYS DUE**
(The final essay takes the place of a final exam.)