

CERGE-EI and the Faculty of Humanities (FHS) at Charles University

Lines of Light: Central European Cinema

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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 Tarkovksy) 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.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICY:

Reading: there is not an over-abundance of matter to be read for the class; therefore, that

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:
Benjamin, Walter: *On the Concept of History* from *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4,*

1938-1940 (Harvard Univ. Press, 2003).

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

Bird, Robert: *Andrei Rublev* (BFI, 2004).

Cook, David A.: *A History of Narrative Film, Fourth Edition* (Norton, 2004).

Deleuze, Gilles: *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986).

Eisner, Lotte H.: *The Haunted Screen*, trans. Roger Greaves (Univ. of California Press, 1973).

Hames, Peter: *The Czechoslovak New Wave* (Wallflower Press, 2nd edition, 2005).

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).

Roraback, Erik S.: a select band of essays on individual films from a book in progress: *Circulations in & of the Cinematic Image: 1916-98.*

Thomsen, Christian Braad: "The Double Man", "Bavaria and Hollywood" and "Querelle" in *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, trans. Martin Chalmers (Faber and Faber, 1997).

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 panenko* (*The Fireman's Ball*, 1967, Czech with English subtitles, 73 minutes).

Juraj Herz:	<i>Spalovač Mrtvol (The Cremator, 1968, Czech with English subtitles, 96 minutes).</i>
Jan Hřebejk:	<i>Pelíšky (Cozy Dens, 1999. Czech with English subtitles, 116 minutes).</i>
Fritz Lang:	Clips only. <i>Die Nibelungen: Siegfried (1924, German with English intertitles, 143 minutes).</i> <i>Die Nibelungen: Kriemhild's Revenge (1924, German with English intertitles, 148 minutes).</i>
Jiří Menzel:	<i>Ostře sledované vlaky (Closely Watched Trains, 1966, Czech with English subtitles, 93 minutes).</i>
F. W. Murnau:	<i>Der Letzte Mann (The Last Laugh, 1924, silent with English intertitles, 91 minutes).</i>
Jan Němec:	<i>The Party and the Guests/A Report on the Party and the Guests (O slavnosti a hostech, 1966, Czech with English subtitles, 71 minutes).</i>
Andrei Tarkovsky:	<i>Andrei Rublev (1966, Russian with English subtitles, 205 minutes).</i>

WEEKLY SCHEDULE WITH SUBJECT AREAS:

Week 1: Orientation, etc.

Week Part I: Introduction

2/18.ii: 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 Part I: Post-film lecture/discussion on *The Last Laugh* w/student presentations

3/25.ii: Readings: L. Bersani and U. Dutoit: *Arts of Impoverishment*, pp. 1-9.
D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film, Fourth Edition*, pp. 87-111.
G. Deleuze: *Cinema 1*, pp. 40-55.
L.H. Eisner: *The Haunted Screen*, pp. 207-21.
S. Kracauer: *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film*, pp. 99-106.
E. Roraback: "The Social Negativity of Capitalism & the Noumenal Negative of Culture: F.W. Murnau's *Der letzte Mann (The Last Laugh, 1924)* & W. Benjamin's 'Angelus Novus'"; revised version of a talk given at an international conference in Prague, 25 October, 2007 and later published in a volume from the conference.
Now it constitutes one chapter in the author's abovementioned cinema book.

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

Pre-film talk and screening: brief clips of *Die Nibelungen: Siegfried (1924, dir. Fritz Lang)*; *Die Nibelungen: Kriemhild's Revenge (1924, dir. Fritz 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 1*, pp. 40-55.
 L.H. Eisner: *The Haunted Screen*, pp. 151-70.
 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.
 E. Roraback: "The Mediatization of German Expressionism & the Politics of Filmic Adaptation: Lang's *Die Nibelungen* (1924)". Revised version of a presentation given at the 30th Annual conference of the International Association of Philosophy and Literature, Freiburg, Germany, 4-9 June 2006. Now part of a book project.
- Part II: The Czech New Wave and Femininity**
 Pre-film talk and screening: *Daisies* (1966, dir. Věra Chytilová).
 Post-film discussion + student presentations
 Readings: D. Cook: *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 621-36
 P. Hames: *The Czechoslovak New Wave: Second Edition*, pp. 183-200
 + 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**
 Pre-film talk and screening: *The Party and the Guests/A Report on the Party and the Guests* (*O slavnosti a hostech*, 1966, dir. Jan Němec)
- 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**
 Pre-film talk and screening: *Ostře sledované vlaky* (*Closely Watched Trains*, dir. Jiří Menzel).
- 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

Pre-film talk and screening: *Hoří, má panenko* (*The Firemen's Ball*, 1967, dir. Miloš Forman).

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

9/8.iv:

Parts I & II: A Special Foray: Former Soviet-Bloc Cinema, Art and Medievalness

Pre-film lecture and screening:

Andrei Rublev (1966, dir. Andrei Tarkovsky).

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 Immobilizations in Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966)".

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

Pre-film lecture and screening:

The Merchant of Four Seasons (*Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten*, 1971, dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder).

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".
C. B. Thomsen: "The Double Man", "Bavaria and Hollywood" and "Querelle" in *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, trans. Martin Chalmers (Faber and Faber, 1997) pp. 1-44, 101-10 and 302-11.

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

Pre-film lecture and screening:

Pelišky (*Cozy Dens*, 1999, dir. Jan Hřebejk).

Week

13/6.v:

Parts I & 2: Continue post-film lecture/discussion of Fassbinder and conduct post-film lecture/discussion of *Pelišky* 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".
C. B. Thomsen: "The Double Man", "Bavaria and Hollywood" and "Querelle" in *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, trans. Martin Chalmers (Faber and Faber, 1997) pp. 1-44, 101-10, and 302-11.

Week **FINAL ESSAYS DUE**
14/13.v: (The final essay takes the place of a final exam.)