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PHIL 444.01: Topics of Philosophy in Film

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Topics in Philosophy of Film

Lectures: Tuesday/Thursday, 11:10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Liberal Arts 106

Film Screenings: Wednesday, 6:10-8:40 p.m., Liberal Arts 106

In this course we will critically examine some of the philosopher Stanley Cavell's writings on film. In particular we will look at two genres of Hollywood film that Cavell discusses—the remarriage comedy and the melodrama of the unknown woman—and consider how he thinks these films bear on what he calls "moral perfectionism." Cavell claims that moral perfectionism "is not a competing moral theory of the moral life [in competition, say, with utilitarian and deontological accounts], but something like a dimension or tradition of the moral life that spans the course of Western thought and concerns what used to be called the state of one's soul, a dimension that places tremendous burdens on personal relationships and on the possibility or necessity of the transforming of oneself and of one's society." As part of our examination of this topic, we will view a number of films from the 1930s and 40s, together with some more recent films that may or may not fit into either of Cavell's genres.

Course Requirements

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Attendance, Participation, Quizzes | 15% |
| 2. Paper #1 (1200-1600 words)—Due October 2 | 15% |
| 3. Paper #2 (2000-2400 words)—Due December 4 | 20% |
| 4. Take-Home Midterm—Due October 16 | 20% |
| 5. Final Exam (Tuesday, December 11, 10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m.) | 30% |

Required Readings

Books

These are available at the UM bookstore (and are also on two hour reserve in Mansfield Library).

1. Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words* (Harvard; ISBN 0674018184)
2. Stanley Cavell, *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (Chicago; ISBN 0226098168)
3. Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Harvard; ISBN 067473906X)
4. Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House* (Dover; ISBN 0486270629)

Additional Readings

These are individually available via Electronic Reserve. I have made them available in this format instead of a coursepack through the bookstore because this is significantly less expensive (through the bookstore the cost would likely be three to four times as high). I recommend that you print the entire list of articles at the beginning of the semester. To make this easier, I will

make available through both Electronic Reserve and Blackboard a single PDF file with the required readings, and a second PDF with the recommended readings. Unless you have your own printer, there are four convenient ways to print:

- (1) Campus Quick Copy (in the UC)—this is the cheapest if you print double-sided pages: \$0.09 per single-sided page; \$0.13 per double-sided page (or \$0.065 per side);
- (2) IT computer labs (www.umt.edu/it/learning/Computerlabs.htm)— \$0.10 per page (discount punch cards can be purchased in the UC game room, reducing the price to \$0.083 per side, but there's no discount for double-sided printing);
- (3) Kinko's (30 West Broadway)—this is the cheapest if you print single-sided pages: \$0.08 per side, but there's no discount for double-sided printing and you must provide them with a PDF file on a CD or USB flash drive (to print it yourself from Kinko's is \$0.49 per page!);
- (4) Mansfield Library—this is the most expensive: \$0.15 per single-sided page; \$0.20 per double-sided page.

I recommend that you do your printing at Campus Quick Copy. In addition to being the cheapest (for double-sided printing), they will also bind the readings and add a cover for a nominal fee (if you have your own printer, you can still have them bind your readings). To ensure that you print double-sided, be sure to select the "properties" button when the printer window appears; then under "Print on Both Sides" indicate that you want the pages to "flip on the long edge." This will copy the pages in a manner suitable for a portrait binding (as opposed to landscape).

Coursepack I: Required Readings

These are required additional readings for the course.

1. Stanley Cavell, "Moral Perfectionism," excerpt from the introduction to *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (1990), 1-13; 16-17; 18.
2. Andrew Klevan, "Stanley Cavell and the Quest for the Ordinary," *Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film* (2000), 11-35.
3. Robin Wood, "Bringing Up Baby," *Howard Hawks* (1968), 68-71.
4. V. F. Perkins, "Hawks's Comedies," *Howard Hawks: American Artist* (1996), ed. Jim Hillier and Peter Wollen, 68-71.
5. William Rothman, "Howard Hawks and *Bringing Up Baby*," *The "I" of the Camera* (1988), 95-107.
6. Andrew Klevan, "Staging Perspectives: *The Philadelphia Story*," *Film Performance* (2005), 38-46.
7. Marian Keane, "The Authority of Connection in Stanley Cavell's *Pursuits of Happiness*," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 13 (1985): 139-150.
8. John Milton, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (excerpt; 1644).
9. Stanley Cavell, "Photograph, Screen, Star" (excerpt from *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, 16-29), *The Cavell Reader* (1996), ed. Stephen Mulhall, 156-166.
10. Stephen Mulhall, "Cavell on Cinema: Photography, Comedy, Melodrama," *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary* (1994), 223-246.
11. Peter Brooks, "Melodrama," *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976), 11-14.
12. Henrik Ibsen, "Alternative Ending to *A Doll's House*," *The Oxford Ibsen* (1961), vol. 5, trans. and ed. James Walter McFarlane, 287-288; 454-456.
13. William Rothman, "Pathos and Transfiguration in the Face of the Camera: A Reading of *Stella Dallas*," *The "I" of the Camera* (1988), 85-94.

14. Ian Jarvie, "Critique of Cavell's *Pursuits of Happiness*," *Philosophy of the Film: Epistemology, Ontology, Aesthetics* (1987), 114-121.
15. Robin Wood, "His Girl Friday," *Howard Hawks* (1968), 72-78.
16. Stanley Cavell (in conversation with Andrew Klevan), "'What Becomes of Thinking on Film?'," *Film as Philosophy: Essays on Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell* (2005), ed. Rupert Read and Jerry Goodenough, 167-209.
17. Andrew Klevan, "Suggesting Perspectives: *The Awful Truth*," *Film Performance* (2005), 32-38.
18. Robin Wood, "Ewig hin der Liebe Glück [Love's Happiness is Gone Forever]," *Personal Views: Explorations in Film* (1976), 114-132.
19. V. F. Perkins, "Letter from an Unknown Woman," *Movie 29/30* (1982): 61-72.
20. Henry James, "The Beast in the Jungle," *The Beast in the Jungle and Other Stories* (1993), 33-71.
21. William Rothman, "Notes on Ozu's Cinematic Style," *Film International* 22 (2006): 33-42.
22. Andrew Klevan, "The Resonance of Repetition: Ozu Yasujiro's *Late Spring*," *Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film* (2000), 135-169.
23. David Denby, "A Fine Romance: The New Comedy of the Sexes," *The New Yorker* (July 23, 2007): 59-65.
24. William Rothman, "Vertigo: The Unknown Woman in Hitchcock," *The "I" of the Camera* (1988), 152-173.
25. Robin Wood, "Vertigo," *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, rev. ed. (2002), 108-130.
26. Sander Lee, "A Therapeutic Autobiography: *Annie Hall*," *Eighteen Woody Allen Films Analyzed: Anguish, God and Existentialism* (2002), 35-55.

Estimated Quick Copy cost (not including binding): \$18.00

Coursepack II: Recommended Readings

These are recommended additional readings for the course (so are not required, but I think you may find them to be of interest).

1. Stephen Mulhall, "Introduction to Cavell," *The Cavell Reader*, ed. Stephen Mulhall (1996), 1-15.
2. Joseph McBride, "Howard Hawks on *Bringing Up Baby*," *Hawks on Hawks* (1982), 69-72.
3. William Rothman, "Cavell on Film, Television, and Opera," *Stanley Cavell* (2003), ed. Richard Eldridge, 206-209; 212-213; 221-222; 223-224.
4. Joseph McBride, "Howard Hawks on *His Girl Friday*," *Hawks on Hawks* (1982), 80-81.
5. George Wilson, "Max Ophuls' *Letter from an Unknown Woman*," *Narration in Light: Studies in Cinematic Point of View* (1986), 103-125.
6. Robin Wood, "The 'Noriko' Trilogy: Three Films of Ozu with Setsuko Hara," *CineAction* 26/27 (1992): 60-81.
7. Yoshida Kiju, "The Pleasure of Viewing: On *Late Spring*," *Ozu's Anti-Cinema* (2003), 60-85.
8. David Bordwell, "*Late Spring*," *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (1988) 117; 307-312.
9. François Truffaut, "Hitchcock on *Vertigo*," *Hitchcock*, rev. ed. (1985), 243-248.
10. Stig Björkman, "Woody Allen on *Annie Hall*," *Woody Allen on Woody Allen* (1994), 75-93.

Estimated Quick Copy cost (not including binding): \$7.00

Required Films

You are required to attend a weekly film screening: Wednesdays, 6:10-8:40 p.m., LA 106. I recommend that you purchase a notebook to record your impressions of the films as you watch them and immediately afterwards. I also encourage you to watch these films a second (or even third) time; for additional viewings, DVDs are on reserve in Mansfield Library. Note: Viewing DVDs outside of class is not a substitute for the required weekly film screening.

- W 8/29 *Bringing Up Baby* (1938; 102 min). Directed by Howard Hawks, with Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn.
- W 9/5 *The Philadelphia Story* (1940; 112 min). Directed by George Cukor, with Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, and James Stewart.
- W 9/12 *Adam's Rib* (1949; 101 min). Directed by George Cukor, with Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy.
- W 9/19 *Gaslight* (1944; 114 min). Directed by George Cukor, with Ingrid Bergman, Charles Boyer, and Joseph Cotten.
- W 9/26 *It Happened One Night* (1934; 105 min). Directed by Frank Capra, with Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert.
- W 10/3 *Now, Voyager* (1942; 117 min). Directed by Irving Rapper, with Bette Davis, Paul Henreid, and Claude Rains.
- W 10/10 *Stella Dallas* (1937; 106 min). Directed by King Vidor, with Barbara Stanwyck and John Boles.
- W 10/17 *The Lady Eve* (1941; 97 min). Directed by Preston Sturges, with Barbara Stanwyck, Henry Fonda, and Charles Coburn.
- M 10/22 *His Girl Friday* (1940; 92 min)—**Note Monday Screening.** Directed by Howard Hawks, with Cary Grant, Rosalind Russell, and Ralph Bellamy.
- W 10/31 *The Awful Truth* (1937; 91 min). Directed by Leo McCarey, with Cary Grant, Irene Dunne, and Ralph Bellamy.
- W 11/7 *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948; 86 min). Directed by Max Ophuls, with Joan Fontaine and Louis Jourdan.
- W 11/14 *Late Spring* (1949; 108 min). Directed by Yasujiro Ozu, with Chishu Ryu and Setsuko Hara.
- M 11/19 *Knocked Up* (2007; 129 min)—**Note Monday Screening.** Directed by Judd Apatow, with Seth Rogen, Katherine Heigl, and Paul Rudd.
- W 11/28 *Vertigo* (1958; 128 min). Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, with James Stewart, Kim Novak, and Barbara Bel Geddes.
- W 12/5 *Annie Hall* (1979; 93 min). Directed by Woody Allen, with Woody Allen and Diane Keaton.

Film Resources

Internet Movie Database (<http://imdb.com>): Information about movies, including release dates, directors, actors, etc.

Movie Review Query Engine (<http://www.mrqe.com>): Online database of movie reviews.

Metacritic (<http://www.metacritic.com>): A second online database of movie reviews.

Film Reference (<http://www.filmreference.com>): Bibliographic references and encyclopedic entries on films, directors, actors, etc.

Turner Classic Movies (<http://www.tcm.com>): Best source for classic movies on cable TV.

Electronic Reserve

To obtain readings via Electronic Reserve, go to <http://eres.lib.umt.edu/eres>. The course password is "phil444."

Blackboard

This course has a site on Blackboard. The PDFs for Coursepack I and II can be found in a folder labeled "Course Materials." For more information on how to access Blackboard, go to <http://umonline.umt.edu/StudentInfo/welcome.htm>.

Attendance and Participation

Your attendance and participation are crucial for the success of this class and will play a significant role in determining whether or not our time together proves to be intellectually challenging and fulfilling. As many of you probably know, it is a university requirement that you attend all class meetings for courses in which you are enrolled (http://www2.umt.edu/catalog/policy_procedure.htm). In my experience, students also get the most out of those classes that they regularly attend. In this course I will regularly take attendance. Everyone may miss three classes, no questions asked (and no justifications/explanations required). After that, each absence will reduce your attendance/participation/quiz grade by $6\frac{2}{3}\%$ (that is, 1% of your final grade). If you have to miss a class, it is your responsibility to hand in ahead of time any work that is due and to obtain any new assignments that are handed out.

Participation has many facets and might be compared to citizenship. Those who are good classroom citizens are those who do three things: (i) come to class prepared, having read and thought about the assignment; (ii) take an active role in class discussions, sharing their critical insights and raising questions that help to generate further discussion and reflection; (iii) take an active role in learning the names of and respectfully listening to their fellow classmates, and in helping to foster a learning environment where all feel welcome to participate and respected as fellow inquirers regardless of the extent to which we may or may not happen to agree about a given topic under investigation.

Quizzes

On occasion I may give short quizzes. These will be unannounced and may not be made up if you are not in class that day.

Papers

You will be required to write two papers in this course: (1) 1200-1600 words (about 4-5 pages; this is worth 15% of your final grade and due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, October 2); (2) 2000-2400 words (about 6-7 pages; this is worth 20% of your final grade and due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, December 4). You will also be required to workshop a draft of each of these papers in class (Tuesday, September 25; Tuesday, November 27). Late papers will normally be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day that they are late.

Take-Home Midterm

You will be given a take-home midterm in this course (worth 20% of your final grade). This will be handed out on Thursday, October 11 and due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, October 16.

Final Exam

You will be given a comprehensive final exam at the end of the term (worth 30% of your final grade). This exam will be held on Tuesday, December 11 at 10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m.

The Art of Reading

Reading, like writing, is an art that can only be acquired through extensive and intensive practice. In general, you should plan to read each assignment for this course two times before you come to class: (i) read it through once to get a sense of the overall shape of the discussion and what the chief issues and questions seem to be; (ii) then read it a second time, reading more slowly and with an eye to how the different parts hang together. As Thoreau put it, "To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object. Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written....[T]his only is reading, in a high sense, not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tip-toe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to" ("Reading," *Walden*).

Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty

I will not tolerate cheating or plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty in this course. In addition to being a violation of the University of Montana Student Conduct Code (<http://ordway.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/index.cfm/name/StudentConductCode>), cheating and plagiarizing also harm your fellow students by giving you an unfair advantage, and are a harm to you as well since you thereby fail to take yourself seriously. While I think it is pretty self-evident what cheating is, people are not always clear about what plagiarism is. To start, plagiarism can be defined as a form of intellectual stealing and cheating. The Latin root means "to kidnap" and vividly captures what is at stake: when you plagiarize you steal someone else's intellectual child and pretend that you are its true parent. Specific examples of plagiarism include:

(i) incorporating material from somewhere else (a book, an article, a website, an encyclopedia entry) without properly documenting this (and thereby giving the true author credit for her or his work); (ii) handing in work that you did not do (e.g., by purchasing a paper on the Internet or downloading text that you simply insert into your own paper or borrowing a paper that another student wrote). In general, the first instance of cheating or plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade ("F") for the course. Any instance of cheating or plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty is also subject to University sanction. If you have any questions about whether or not something might constitute plagiarism, please feel free to contact me; see also <http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/plagiarism>.

Schedule of Readings and Written Assignments

(Subject to change with advance notice)

CW = *Cities of Words*

CT = *Contesting Tears*

PH = *Pursuits of Happiness*

CPI = Coursepack I: Required Additional Readings

CPII = Coursepack II: Recommended Additional Readings

Week 1

T 8/28

Introduction

Reading: (1) Cavell, "Moral Perfectionism" (CPI #1);

(2) Cavell, "Comedies of Remarriage and Melodramas of the Unknown Woman" (CT, 3-7; 9; 10-11; 12—this can also be obtained as a separate document through ERes, under my course Phil 105; the course password is "phil105");

(3) Klevan, "Stanley Cavell and the Quest for the Ordinary"—just read the beginning: 11-13 (CPI #2)

Recommended Reading: Mulhall, "Introduction to Cavell" (CPII #1)

W 8/29

Film: *Bringing Up Baby*

Th 8/30

Discuss *Bringing Up Baby*

Reading: (1) Cavell, "Leopards in Connecticut" (PH, 111-132);

(2) Wood, "*Bringing Up Baby*" (CPI #3);

(3) Perkins, "Hawks's Comedies" (CPI #4);

(4) Rothman, "Howard Hawks and *Bringing Up Baby*" (CPI #5)

Recommended Reading: McBride, "Howard Hawks on *Bringing Up Baby*" (CPII #2)

Week 2

T 9/4

Read and Discuss: (1) Emerson, "Self-Reliance";

(2) Cavell, "Emerson" (CW, 19-34)

W 9/5

Film: *The Philadelphia Story*

Th 9/6

Discuss *The Philadelphia Story*

Reading: (1) Cavell, "The Importance of Importance" (PH, 133-160);

(2) Cavell, "*The Philadelphia Story*" (CW, 35-48);

(3) Klevan, "Staging Perspectives: *The Philadelphia Story*" (CPI #6)

Week 3

T 9/11

Read and Discuss: (1) Cavell, "Words for a Conversation" (PH, 1-43);

(2) Cavell, "In the Place of the Classroom" (CW, 1-18);

(3) Keane, "The Authority of Connection in Stanley Cavell's *Pursuits of Happiness*" (CPI #7)

W 9/12 Film: *Adam's Rib*

Th 9/13 Discuss *Adam's Rib*

Reading: (1) Cavell, "The Courting of Marriage" (PH, 189-228);
(2) Cavell, "*Adam's Rib*" (CW, 49-54; 70-81);
(3) Milton, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (CPI #8)

Week 4

T 9/18

Read and Discuss: (1) Cavell, "Photograph, Screen, Star" (CPI #9);
(2) Klevan, "Stanley Cavell and the Quest for the Ordinary," 17-22: "Cavell on Photography" (CPI #2);
(3) Mulhall, "Cavell on Cinema: Photography, Comedy, Melodrama" (CPI #10)
Recommended Reading: Rothman, "Cavell on Film, Television, and Opera" (CPII #3)

W 9/19 Film: *Gaslight*

Th 9/20 Discuss *Gaslight*

Reading: (1) Cavell, "Naughty Orators" (CT, 46-78);
(2) Cavell, "*Gaslight*" (CW, 102-118);
(3) Brooks, "Melodrama" (CPI #11)

→ **Paper 1 Topics handed out**

Week 5

T 9/25

Workshop Exercise

→ **Paper 1 Draft Due (at the beginning of class)—at least 800 words in length**

W 9/26 Film: *It Happened One Night*

Th 9/27 Discuss *It Happened One Night*

Reading: (1) Cavell, "Knowledge as Transgression" (PH, 71-109);
(2) Cavell, "*It Happened One Night*" (CW, 145-163)

Week 6

T 10/2

Review or Catch Up

→ **Paper 1 Due (at the beginning of class)**

W 10/3 Film: *Now, Voyager*

Th 10/4 Discuss *Now, Voyager*

Reading: (1) Cavell, "Ugly Duckling, Funny Butterfly" (CT, 114-148);
(2) Cavell, "*Now, Voyager*" (CW, 227-246)

Week 7

T 10/9

Read and Discuss: (1) Ibsen, *A Doll's House*;
(2) Ibsen, "Alternative Ending to *A Doll's House*" (CPI #12);
(3) Cavell, "Ibsen" (CW, 247-264)

W 10/10

Film: *Stella Dallas*

Th 10/11

Discuss *Stella Dallas*

Reading: (1) Cavell, "Stella's Taste" (CT, 196-222);
(2) Cavell, "*Stella Dallas*" (CW, 265-281);
(3) Rothman, "Pathos and Transfiguration in the Face of the Camera:
A Reading of *Stella Dallas*" (CPI #13)

→

Take-Home Midterm handed out

Week 8

T 10/16

Read and Discuss: Jarvie, "Critique of Cavell's *Pursuits of Happiness*" (CPI #14)

→

Take-Home Midterm Due (at the beginning of class)

W 10/17

Film: *The Lady Eve*

Th 10/18

Discuss *The Lady Eve*

Reading: (1) Cavell, "Cons and Pros" (PH, 45-70);
(2) Cavell, "*The Lady Eve*" (CW, 301-312)

Week 9

M 10/22

Film: *His Girl Friday* —**Note Monday Screening**

T 10/23

Discuss *His Girl Friday*

Reading: (1) Cavell, "Counterfeiting Happiness" (PH, 161-187);
(2) Cavell, "*His Girl Friday*" (CW, 340-351);
(3) Wood, "*His Girl Friday*" (CPI #15)

Recommended Reading: McBride, "Howard Hawks on *His Girl Friday*" (CPII #4)

Th 10/25

Film (In-Class): *A Philosopher Goes to the Movies, An Interview with Stanley Cavell*

Week 10

T 10/30

Discuss *A Philosopher Goes to the Movies*

Reading: " 'What Becomes of Thinking on Film?' (Stanley Cavell in
Conversation with Andrew Klevan)" (CPI #16)

W 10/31

Film: *The Awful Truth*

Week 11

Week 12

Week 13

Page 10 of 11

Week 14

T 11/27

→

Workshop Exercise

Paper 2 Draft Due (at the beginning of class)—at least 1200 words in length

W 11/28

Film: *Vertigo*

Th 11/29

Discuss *Vertigo*

Reading: (1) Rothman, “*Vertigo*: The Unknown Woman in Hitchcock” (CPI #24);

(2) Wood, “*Vertigo*” (CPI #25);

(3) Klevan, “Stanley Cavell and the Quest for the Ordinary,” 13-17:

“*Vertigo*: Accounting for Melodrama—the Sceptical Tragedy as Expressed in Film” (CPI #2)

Recommended Reading: Truffaut, “Hitchcock on *Vertigo*” (CPII #9)

Week 15

T 12/4

→

Review or Catch Up

Paper 2 Due (at the beginning of class)

W 12/5

Film: *Annie Hall*

Th 12/6

Discuss *Annie Hall*

Reading: Lee, “A Therapeutic Autobiography: *Annie Hall*” (CPI #26)

Recommended Reading: Björkman, “Woody Allen on *Annie Hall*” (CPII #10)

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 11, 10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m.