

Cities on Celluloid



Wednesday 6:00pm-8:30pm

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A. Course Description: Cinema and cities both offer built environments of seductive experiential richness. There is also a given historical connection between them as products of the same industrial and social transformations. The 21st century has seen the rise of megacities, fragmented migratory communities and global mediascapes. Can existing theoretical frameworks contain new formations from across the globe? What remains of the twentieth century's ideas of the city and its corresponding cinematic visions in films in the 21st century? How does the modern European and North American city correspond to the new megacities of the global south? This interdisciplinary course will begin with films a century old and run to the present. It will touch on cities such as Paris, Berlin, Rome, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Hong Kong, Beijing, Delhi, Mumbai, Algiers and Rio. The focus of this course will be the films we watch, and we will watch a lot of them. This syllabus will change to meet the needs of the course and is more of framework than a polished sculpture. As we get closer to the start of the semester I will upload a more detailed version for registered students.

B. Requirements:

1. Class Participation (40% of the final grade)

- a. Weekly attendance.
- b. Weekly written responses online (in response to prompt)
- c. Leading discussion with a peer once in the semester (details TBA)

2. Midterm scene analysis (20% of the final grade)

3. Final Paper and Presentation (40% of the final grade)

C. Readings:

Various short essays, uploaded on Canvas.

D. Films:

Paris Qui Dort (Rene Clair, 1924)
Berlin, Symphony of a Great City (Walter Ruttmann, 1927)
Manhatta (Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler, 1921)
Mama Roma (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1962)
Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)
His Girl Friday (Howard Hawks, 1940)
Chinatown (Roman Polanski, 1974)
Mulholland Drive (David Lynch, 2001)
La Haine (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995)
Detroit (Katherine Bigelow, 2017)
Awaara (Raj Kapoor, 1951)
Sarkar (Ram Gopal Verma, 2005)
Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)
Beau Travail (Claire Denis, 1999)
City of God (Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund, 2002)
Chungking Express (Wong Kar-Wai, 1994)
The World (Zhangke Jia, 2004)

E. Grading:

All written assignments are graded numerically. The letter grade equivalents of the numerical grades are: below 60 = F, 60-69 = D, 70-72 = D+, 73-75 = C-, 76-78 = C, 79-81 = C+, 82-84 = B-, 85-87 = B, 88-90 = B+, 91-93 = A-, 94-100 = A

F. Policy Notes:

1. Laptops and other screens are not allowed in class. I will grant exceptions in cases of learning disability issues.
2. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's ideas without giving him or her credit for them. This includes the use of online sites such as Wikipedia. Any instance of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the University's Honor Council.

3. This syllabus is a blueprint for our course. As we build our learning base, we may discover the need to alter minor matters. This syllabus may thus change a little as the semester proceeds. If you are in doubt about a policy, a date change, a course requirement or text please ask me. I will update you on any changes as well.

4. Email is the best way to reach me, but I may take as long as 24 hours to respond. I do ask that emails be written in a somewhat structured and formal manner. I have weekly office hours and encourage you to attend. I do not read paper drafts, but am happy to discuss ideas and arguments in person.

G. Weekly Schedule:

January 15th--Introductions and definitions

UNIT 1: January 22th

WATCH:

Paris Qui Dort (Clair)

Berlin, Symphony of a Great City (Ruttman)

Manhatta (Strand and Sheeler)

January 29th

READ: TBA

February 5th

WATCH:

Mama Roma (Pasolini)

February 12th

WATCH:

Vertigo (Hitchcock)

His Girl Friday (Hawks)

UNIT II: February 19th

READ: TBA

February 26th

WATCH:

Chinatown (Polanski)

Tiwari, 2020

Mulholland Drive (Lynch)

March 4th

WATCH:

La Haine (Kassovitz)

Detroit (Bigelow)

Week of March 9th--Spring Break

UNIT III: March 18th

WATCH:

Awaara (Kapoor)

Sarkar (Verma)

March 25th

WATCH:

City of God (Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund, 2002)

READ: TBA

April 1st

WATCH:

Battle of Algiers (Pontecorvo)

Beau Travail (Denis)

April 8th

WATCH:

Chungking Express (Wong)

READ: TBA

April 15th: CONCLUSIONS

WATCH:

The World (Zhangke)

READ: TBA

April 22nd last class

Student papers-in-progress presentations

Final papers due May 1