

GERM 880: Film Theory, Film Analysis, and Film Philosophy via German Cinema

This course provides an introduction to critical developments in film theory, film analysis and film philosophy by attending closely to German cinema from the late nineteenth century to the present day in the context of the larger European, Anglo-American and global film landscape. We will examine the historical formation of film analysis and its requisite objects such as montage, mise en scène, cinematography, and sound; we will survey the history of film theory, that is, engage the questions asked by film scholars since the medium's inception: What is the material of cinema? How does the film medium compare and contrast with the other, older arts such as literature, music, painting, or architecture, and how does it fit within the current media landscape? What makes it a unique form of expression? What is the nature of the film image and what relationship does it bear to the physical world? How do the sounds, images, bodies, and narratives onscreen impact us – politically, emotionally, physically, mentally? Do technological factors, like the advent of sound or the shift from photochemical to digital "film" call for a fundamentally different theory of the medium and its expressive possibilities? Finally, we will ask how films could be forms of philosophical thought. Can the audiovisual language of moving images, this form of light and shadow, formulate ideas and concepts? How could a film contain a theory of cinema? What can film contribute to philosophy, and vice versa?

In order to engage with these questions of analysis, theory, and philosophy, we will read the classical German film theories of Hugo Münsterberg, Rudolf Arnheim, Béla Balázs, Siegfried Kracauer, and Walter Benjamin alongside classical and contemporary international theorists, from Jean Epstein and Sergei Eisenstein to Gilles Deleuze, Vivian Sobchack, Laura Mulvey, Marie-Luise Angerer, and others. Among the film-theoretical approaches we will discuss are phenomenology, feminism, psychoanalysis, affect theory, and critical race theory. Each week, we will discuss 1-2 German films and important international interlocutors in light of these theories and larger questions, including *Nosferatu*, *Dr. Mabuse*, *The Legend of Paul and Paula*, *Redupers*, *Western*, *Phoenix*, and *Toni Erdmann*.

Films with English subtitles

Readings and class discussions in English

Dr. Inga Pollmann

F 10:10 AM-1:10 PM



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures

