**Mise en scène**

Spring 2014, Wed. 3:00-5:20 PM

Prof. Spencer Golub

211 Lyman Hall

Office Hours: Tues 2-4 p.m. and by appt.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a mind-reading course taught through full-length films that we watch in class together (an important plot point). You will be asked to re-stage films inside your mind in relation to your thought process, your class readings and, of course, the films themselves and from this to hand in creative projects in any, all and hybridic media based upon what you saw and didn't see, heard and didn't hear, saw and heard in your subconscious mind. As always, the search is on for the stage and the frame in all of their iterations, disguises and overlays, in their unexpectedness.
The films we will be screening in class to awaken you to the fantasy of reality (with one exception at the beginning of the course) fall under the genre heading of “film noir,” dark and shadowy specimen of post-World War II anxiety in American culture, in which nothing and no one are what they appear to be, including the idea of appearance itself. We will read interesting films and interesting texts on how to read interesting films as interesting texts, as well as other texts that will be used to stir the films in different, unexpected directions.

Imagine evocative and provocative images of solitary souls (men and women) wearing fedoras and trench coats (or not) on rain-slicked city streets in the shadow of streetlamps, on frozen tundras and windy fields in the full light of day, all waiting for the accident to happen or happen again, on the lam from the law, fleeing from or to their stolen, sacrificed or misplaced selves while an omniscient narrative voice reels time forward and back, to and fro, away and against all odds of resolution or reconstitution. What can this teach us about the stage and staging, about limits and the spaces and times in-between?

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

We will be screening twelve full-length films in class during the course of the semester. I have indicated in the course outline below the readings that you are required to read for each particular week. You are responsible for handing in a project each and every week of the semester, except where indicated in the course outline. **This means that you will complete and hand in a total of** **eleven projects over the course of the semester.**

The grades you receive on your eleven weekly projects (minus Stalker) and your participation in class discussions will determine your final grade in the course. All projects must be submitted on the day and in the class they are due. No late projects will be accepted. It is important that you keep up with your reading and project work to get the most out of the course. With this in mind, the only excused absences are for health and family emergencies and for religious holidays. If you miss a class session, you will miss a film screening and will be responsible for locating the film to watch on your own, which defeats one of the purposes of the course, which is to share the experience of watching the film together. I cannot overemphasize how important this is to developing the proper mindset for the class.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

Read for background information and for general reference: Nicholas Christopher, *Somewhere in the Night: Film Noir and the American City* (Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2006), 290 pp.

Read for the mindset/approach of this course: Gombrowicz, *Cosmos*, trans. Danuta Borchardt(New York: Grove Press, 2011), 208 pp.

Read for an example of how to read a film closely and imaginatively: Geoff Dyer, *Zona* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), 219 pp.

**WEEK ONE**

**(\*N.B. In that we will be watching a full-length film in every class and then discussing films and assigned readings afterward, individual classes may end as late as 6 p.m. Please plan accordingly.)**

**Wed., January 22:** Introduction to the course and screen part one of the non-film noir STALKER (dir. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979, 2 hrs. 43 min.).

No project due next week.

Read for next week: Dyer, *Zona*, 3-108.

**WEEK TWO**

**Wed., January 29:** STALKER, part two.

No project due next week.

Read for next week: Dyer, *Zona*, 109-219.

**WEEK THREE**

**Wed., February 5:** SUNSET BOULEVARD (dir. Billy Wilder, 1950; 1 hr. 50 min.)

Read for next week: Christopher Fynsk, “Foreword,” in Maurice Blanchot, *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader* (hereafter abbreviated as *SHBR* in the course outline), xv-xxv.

Read for next week: Blanchot, “The Song of the Sirens (Encountering the Imaginary),” in *SHBR*, 443-50.

Read for next week: Blanchot, “Literature and the Right to Death,” in *SHBR*, 359-99.

Read for next week: Blanchot, *Death Sentence*, in *SHBR*, 131-59.

**WEEK FOUR**

**Wed., February 12:** DARK PASSAGE (dir. Delmer Daves, 1947; 1 hr. 46 min.)

Project #1 is due today.

Read for next week: Blanchot, “Two Versions of the Imaginary, in *SHBR*, 417-27.

Read for next week: Blanchot, *Death Sentence*, in *SHBR*, 159-87.

**WEEK FIVE**

**Wed., February 19:** DOUBLE INDEMNITY (dir. Billy Wilder, 1944; 1 hr. 47 min.)

Project #2 is due today.

Read for next week: Blanchot, “From Dread to Language,” in *SHBR*, 343-58.

Read for next week: Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, in *SHBR*, 203-60.

**WEEK SIX**

**Wed., February 26:** OUT OF THE PAST (dir. Jacques Tourneur, 1947; 1 hr. 37 min.)

Project #3 is due today.

Read for next week: Kundera, *Identity*, 1-84.

**WEEK SEVEN**

**Wed., March 5:** THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (dir. Tay Garnett, 1946; 1 hr. 53 min.)

Project #4 is due today.

Read for next week: Kundera, *Identity*, 85-168.

**WEEK EIGHT**

**Wed., March 12:** MURDER, MY SWEET (dir. Edward Dmytryk, 1944; 1 hr. 35 min.)

Project #5 is due today.

Read for next week: Golub, “Teleastronautics” and “Ghost Light,” in *Infinity (Stage)*, 107-70.

**WEEK NINE**

**Wed., March 19:** CLASS PROJECT-SHARING DAY and MID-SEMESTER DISCUSSION.

Project #6 is due today.

Read for Wed. April 2: Gombrowicz, *Cosmos* (Read the entire novella, 208 pp).

**WEEK TEN**

**Wed., March 26:** NO CLASS. SPRING RECESS.

**WEEK ELEVEN**

**Wed., April 2:** THE NARROW MARGIN (dir. Richard Fleischer, 1952; 1 hr. 11 min.)

Read for next week: Golub, “To the Illimit: An Introduction” and “The Flies and the Wings,” in *Infinity (Stage)*, 1-40.

**WEEK TWELVE**

**Wed., April 9:** SORRY, WRONG NUMBER (dir. John Farrow, 1948; 1 hr. 28 min.)

Project #7 is due today.

Read for next week: Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

**Wed., April 16:** LADY IN THE LAKE (dir. Robert Montgomery, 1947; 1 hr. 45 min.)

Project #8 is due today.

Read for next week: Blanchot, *The One Who Was Standing Apart From Me*, in *SHBR*, 263-301.

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

**Wed., April 23:** THE PROWLER (dir. Joseph Losey, 1951; 1 hr. 32 min.)

Project #9 is due today.

Read for next week: Blanchot, *The One Who Was Standing Apart From Me*, in *SHBR*, 302-39.

**WEEK FIFTEEN**

**Wed., April 30:** D.O.A. (dir. Rudolph Maté, 1950; 1 hr. 23 min.)

Project #10 is due today.

Read for next week: Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day*, in *SHBR*, 191-99.

Read for next week: Blanchot, “The Essential Solitude,” in *SHBR*, 401-15.

Read for next week: Blanchot, “After the Fact,” in *SHBR*, 487-95.

Read for next week: Golub, “Amnesia and the Afterlife, in *Infinity (Stage)*, 171-211.

**WEEK SIXTEEN**

**Wed., May 7:** FINAL CLASS DISCUSSION.

Project #11 is due today.