

ENGL 5210: Film Genres
Silent Cinema, Pure Cinema, and the Cinematic
Mejia
TH 12:25-2:15 PM

Course Description:

This course will explore the aesthetic concept of the cinematic, in relation to the methods and aims of film, as well as to its application in other media, including photography and text. We'll start by examining several films of the silent era (ca. 1895-1929), looking to get a sense of the basics of film language (e.g., camera position and movement, montage, mise en scène, lighting, performance, etc.) and how its storytelling capacities developed in sophisticated ways before the introduction of synchronized sound. Subsequently, we'll turn to several works from the sound era, considering how they have both paid homage to the methods and imagery of their classic forebears, as well as continued to innovate the cinematic in their contemporary context. Along the way, we'll also consider what a screenplay does and doesn't do in the construction of a cinematic experience, how and why contemporary photographers have deployed cinematic techniques in still imagery, and how writers and artists have translated these techniques into works of cinematic prose. Assignments will include weekly responses and a final project that may be a critical essay or a creative work.

Works we'll encounter may include films by F. W. Murnau, D. W. Griffith, Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Buster Keaton, Maya Deren, Alfred Hitchcock, Chris Marker, Stanley Kubrick, Terrence Malick, Claire Denis, and Wong Kar-Wai; the photography of Cindy Sherman and Gregory Crewdson; and texts by Billy Wilder, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and Sophie Calle.