

# **FM216 Order and Chaos – The Films of Fritz Lang: An Introduction to Film Studies**

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst

Course Times: Monday, 13.30 – 15.00, Wednesday 13.30 – 15.00, film screenings: Monday, 19.30

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 13.30 – 15.30

## **Course Description**

Fritz Lang (1890 - 1976) started his career as filmmaker in Germany in the 1920s, becoming one of the most prolific and renowned – and uncompromising – directors of Weimar cinema. With films like *Dr. Mabuse* (1922), *Die Nibelungen* (1924), *Metropolis* (1927) and *M* (1931) he created visually stunning representations of contemporary discourses and social anxieties, and contributed to the emerging film genres of crime film, fantasy, science fiction and psychological thriller, thus defining new standards in mass entertainment and the art of film.

In 1934 he emigrated to the US and continued his career as director of Western films, anti-Nazi films and crime dramas in the *film noir* tradition. Lang's films of the German period and of the American period might differ in style and scope but they very often share a specific mindset of pessimism and bleakness in depicting an ongoing struggle between order and chaos, on both individual and social levels.

Discussing selected films by Lang, we will also explore basic concepts of film aesthetics and cinematic language, styles of filmic presentation and different approaches to film analysis and interpretation.

## **Requirements**

No prerequisites. Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Students are expected to come to seminars and film screenings punctually and prepared and to participate actively in the class discussions.

\* Please, do not use cell phones, smart phones or similar electronic devices during seminars and screenings!

## **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Absences will significantly affect the grade for the course.

Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness is registered as absence. Students should notify the instructor if they are unable to attend class.

Please see the Student Handbook for college policies on absences due to serious illness or other important cause.

### **Assessment/Writing Assignments**

In-class writing assignments, two screening reports (week 2 and week 5, 1000 words each), a quiz (week 13), and a final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 14 (deadline: Friday, May 12, midnight). The topic of this final essay will be a film interpretation based on one of the films of the course.

### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

All assignments and written work must be submitted electronically and on time. Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

### **Grade Breakdown**

Participation:	25 %
Screening reports:	25 %
Quiz:	25 %
Final essay:	25 %

If one of these components is graded F, the final course grade cannot be higher than C.

### **Schedule**

#### **WEEK 1**

Introduction: Fritz Lang  
What is cinema? Film as a cultural phenomenon

#### **WEEK 2**

Introduction: Order and Chaos  
*Metropolis* (1927)

#### **WEEK 3**

Different styles of filmic presentation, development of film language, mise-en-scène and montage (film narration from the late 19th century to the postmodern age), part I

**WEEK 4**

Different styles of filmic presentation, development of film language, mise-en-scène and montage (film narration from the late 19th century to the postmodern age), part II

**WEEK 5**

Film semiotics: Signs and codes; denotation and connotation of signs; paradigmatic and syntagmatic connotations  
*Hangmen Also Die!* (1943)

**WEEK 6**

Film analysis: Basic model – Structural analysis  
*Die Nibelungen* (1924)

**WEEK 7**

Biographical interpretation; *auteur* theory, *cinéma des auteurs*  
*Dr. Mabuse* (1922)

**WEEK 8**

Sociological/socio-historical interpretation; film as manifestation of society or of societal/cultural/historical issues (1)  
*M* (1931)

**WEEK 9**

Sociological/socio-historical interpretation; film as manifestation of society or of societal/cultural/historical issues (2)  
*Fury* (1936)  
*You Only Live Once* (1937)

**WEEK 10**

Film as part of genre tradition  
*The Return of Frank James* (1940)  
*Western Union* (1941)

**Spring Break:** Monday, April 10 – Monday, April 17, 2017

**WEEK 11**

No classes on Monday!  
Psychoanalytical interpretation; film as dream (1)

**WEEK 12**

Psychoanalytical interpretation (2) – Feminist film theory  
*The Woman in the Window* (1944)

**WEEK 13**

No classes on Monday!

Quiz

**WEEK 14**

Order – Chaos – Order

*The Big Heat* (1953)

*The Tiger of Eschnapur & The Indian Tomb* (1959)

**WEEK 15**

Completion week

**Essay Deadlines**

Screening report 1: Wednesday, February 8, 12.00 (noon)

Screening report 2: Wednesday, March 1, 12.00 (noon)

Final Essay: Friday, May 12, midnight

**Literature**

A central text for our class will be Tom Gunning's *The Films of Fritz Lang. Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (London: bfi British Film Institute, 2006); one copy of this book will be available in the library, but you might want to purchase your own copy.

Allen, Richard, and Murray Smith (eds.). *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute, 2004.

Baudry, Jean-Louis. "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema." In: Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 299-318.

Bazin, André. "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema". In: André Bazin. *What Is Cinema?* Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 23-40.

Bazin, André. "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." In: André Bazin. *What Is Cinema?* Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 9-16.

Bazin, André. *What is Cinema?* Vol. I & II. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In: Leo Braudy / Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 731-751.

Bergfelder, Tim, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk (eds.). *The German Cinema Book*. London: British Film Institute, 2002.

Blandford, Steve, Barry K. Grant and Jim Hillier. *The Film Studies Dictionary*. London/New York: Arnold, Oxford University Press, 2004.

Bordwell, David. "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures." In: Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 17-34.

- Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. London/New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Braudy, Leo, and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. Seventh Edition. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Brockman, Stephen. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010.
- Burch, Noël. "A Primitive Mode of Representation?" In: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.). *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI 1990, pp. 220-227.
- Caughie, John (ed.). *Theories of Authorship. A Reader*. London/New York: British Film Institute/Routledge, 2001.
- Coates, Paul. *The Gorgon's Gaze: German Cinema, Expressionism and the Image of Horror*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Eisner, Lotte. *The Haunted Screen. Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008.
- Elsaesser, Thomas, and Michael Wedel (eds.). *The BFI Companion to German Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. *Weimar Cinema and After. Germany's Historical Imaginary*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Elsaesser, Thomas, and Warren Buckland. *Studying Contemporary American Film. A Guide to Movie Analysis*. London: Arnold Publishers, 2002.
- Frampton, Daniel. *Filmosophy*. London: Wallflower Press, 2006.
- Gibbs, John. *Mise-en-Scène. Film Style and Interpretation*. London/New York: Wallflower Press 2003.
- Grant, Barry Keith (ed.). *Fritz Lang. Interviews*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003.
- Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attractions. Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." [1986] In: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.). *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI 1990, pp. 56-62.
- Gunning, Tom. *The Films of Fritz Lang. Allegories of Vision and Modernity*. London: bfi British Film Institute, 2006.
- Hake, Sabine. *German National Cinema*. London/New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies. The Key Concepts*. Third Edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Hill, John, and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.). *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Hillier, Jim (ed.). *Cahiers du cinéma 1: The 1950s. Neo-realism, Hollywood, The New Wave*. London: British Film Institute/Routledge, 1985.
- Humphries, Reynold. *Fritz Lang. Genre and Representation in His American Films*. Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- Isenberg, Noah (ed.). *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Kardish, Laurence. *Weimar Cinema, 1919 – 1933. Daydreams and Nightmares*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010.
- Kitses, Jim. *Horizons West. Directing The Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood*. New Edition. London: British Film Institute, 2004.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*. Revised and expanded edition. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Kreimeier, Klaus. *The UFA Story. A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company 1918-1945*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1996.

- Litch, Mary M. *Philosophy Through Film*. New York/London: Routledge, 2002.
- McGilligan, Patrick. *Fritz Lang. The Nature of the Beast*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1994.
- Metz, Christian. *Film Language. A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Minden, Michael, and Holger Bachmann (eds.). *Fritz Lang's Metropolis. Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear*. Rochester/Woodbridge: Camden House, 2008.
- Monaco, James. *How To Read a Film. Movies, Media, Multimedia*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 198-209.
- Münsterberg, Hugo. "The Photoplay. A Psychological Study." [1916] Excerpt in: Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 401-407.
- Murray, Bruce. *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic. From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.
- Neale, Stephen. *Genre and Hollywood*. London/New York: Routledge 2000.
- Nelmes, Jill (ed.). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey (ed.). *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Panofsky, Erwin. "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures." [1934/1947] In: Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 279-292.
- Porter, Burton F. *Philosophy Through Fiction and Film*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education/Prentice Hall, 2004.
- Read, Rupert, and Jerry Goodenough (eds.). *Film as Philosophy. Essays in Cinema after Wittgenstein and Cavell*. Houndmills Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Roberts, Ian. *German Expressionist Cinema. The World of Light and Shadow*. London/New York: Wallflower, 2008.
- Rogowski, Christian (ed.). *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema. Rediscovering Germany's Filmic Legacy*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2012.
- Rosen, Philip (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Scheunemann, Dietrich (ed.). *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2011.
- Smith, Murray, and Thomas E. Wartenberg (eds.). *Thinking Through Cinema. Film as Philosophy*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2006.
- Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell. *Film History. An Introduction*. Second edition. New York: McGraw-Hill (Higher Education), 2003.
- Wartenberg, Thomas E., and Angela Curran (eds.). *The Philosophy of Film. Introductory Text and Readings*. Oxford/Malden: Blackwell, 2005.

Most books are available in our BCB library. Some texts will be available online on a Reserves Direct Class Page.

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