

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF FILM STUDIES

Film 9212/4474F: The Face, the Mask, and the Thing – Fall 2010

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Office Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 3.30 to 4.30, and by appointment

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This course will examine the continuum between one element of film-texts recognised as key to them and reasonably widely-discussed, the face, and two others that are less frequently-discussed: the mask and what Slavoj Žižek terms ‘the Thing’. It will pay particular attention to the points of interference, ambiguity and ambivalence between these categories, and to the deepening indeterminacy evident as one moves from the face to ‘the Thing’. The primary aim will be to examine relations between the viewer and the seen within the unsettled and often ‘dehumanized’ environments often deemed characteristic of modernity, the nature of whose positive and negative forms of transcendence and preoccupation with a ‘beyond’ (including that of stardom) it will also consider. It will deploy relevant theories, including those of – to restrict oneself to the first three letters of the alphabet – Agamben (*Remnants of Auschwitz*), Balázs (‘The Close-up’ and ‘The Face of Man’ from *Theory of Film*) and Canetti (*Crowds and Power*), attempting to account for the varieties of mechanisms of projection, splitting, disavowal, doubling, fetishism and adoration at work in a selection of relevant films.

Meeting times and locale

Screening: Tues. 12.30-3.30 UC 12

Seminar: Thurs. 4.30-6.30 UC 12

Mode of assessment

All participants in the course will be required to give presentations, on a rotating basis week-by-week, of the following kind: 1. summary of week’s reading and comment on its possible relevance to film-text; 2. (after week one) discussion of other theories on the course of possible relevance to this film-text (this issue is of particular relevance because of my belief that the elements of face, mask and thing may well **all** be present, in varying proportions, in **every** film-text considered in the course, and that much of its theoretical material is of relevance to texts outside the week in which that theory is presented); 3. discussion of other theory known to you which you consider relevant to this film-text, and your reasons for believing this to be the case.

The rota will be a three-part one, and each one will move successively through the three cohorts of students (second year grads, first year grads, and undergrads) in alphabetical order: Thus the second year grads will give the course’s first set of presentations; the next will be given by the first-year grads; and the undergraduates will present third. In week one, only presentations of the first type will be given. As of week two presentations of all three types will be given. Each presentation is to last at least ten minutes and no more than fifteen, thus allowing for at least fifteen minutes of discussion per presentation. Any undergraduate taking the course will be required to do half the number of presentations expected of the graduate students. The written text of the presentation itself, or upon which the presentation was based,

must be handed to the tutor after each class meeting, and will be graded according to the criteria expected of an essay; in other words, it should present an argument in continuous prose, **not** a series of bullet points. The relative weighting of presentations will depend on the number you end up doing, which will depend on the number of students in the course. For instance, if you do four and are a grad student, each one of these will count for 10% of the overall grade. If you do four and are an undergrad, each will count for 7.5% of the overall grade. (See grading schemata below.)

Graduate grading schema

Presentations will attract 40% of the course grade. The remainder of the grade will comprise 20% participation and a 40% final essay (to be handed in to the Film Studies office by 4.30 on the last day of teaching in this course). The graduate final essay should be 5,000 words. Attendance at all sessions, including screenings, is mandatory and any unjustified absence will attract a penalty of 5% of the overall grade.

Undergraduate grading schema

Presentations will attract 30% of the course grade. The remainder will comprise 20% participation and a 50% final essay (to be handed in to the Film Studies office by 4.30 on the last day of this course). The undergraduate final essay should be 2,500 words. Attendance at all sessions, including screenings, is mandatory, and any unjustified absence will attract a penalty of 5% of the overall grade.

Methodologies The methodologies considered and employed in this course are appropriate for this level inasmuch as they build upon, offer alternatives to, and sometimes critique, the ones to which students will have been introduced in their undergraduate studies.

Course objectives By the end of this course the student will be able to compare and contrast the roles played in the process whereby film-texts make and suggest meaning of the elements of faciality, masking, and indeterminacy of identification.

Course and programme aims

1. Understanding, capacity for argument, judgement and analysis will be fostered by essays, presentations and assignments with formative comment, and by in-class discussion.
2. Communication skills will be imparted through in-class discussion and credit given for frequency and quality of contributions, and by essays and other assignments marked in accordance with a grading scale given to the students and including benchmarks for the expectations associated with each grade.
3. Awareness of the limits of knowledge will be enhanced by exploring the legitimate differences of opinion and methodology within the field, and by requiring students to negotiate the formulation of their own opinions in-class with the terms and knowledge brought to that discussion by other students and the instructor.
4. The ability to argue and decide on complex issues will be fostered by essays and in-class discussion; that to manage time, by the need to prepare properly for class and to deliver assignments in a timely manner; and that for academic responsibility, by the need to source assignments accurately.

Other regulations (nb. No. 2 does not apply to Graduates)

For Film Studies Department regulations governing Term Work, Exams, Faculty Office Hours, Academic Relief (appeals, petitions), and other matters, please consult “Information for Students” on our website at www.uwo.ca/film

1. **Prerequisites:** Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or a written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed and you will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

2. **Final Grades:** A student must receive a passing grade for both term work and the final exam to receive a passing grade in a Film Studies course. Students whose term and final exam grades average 50% or above, even though one of the two is a failure, shall receive a default grade of 48%.

3. **Plagiarism** Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author they must acknowledge their debt by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Policy in the Western Academic Calendar p. 40). An essay or assignment deemed to be plagiarised in part or in toto will receive a nil mark, as well as being subject to other disciplinary penalties. These are specified in the Film Studies departmental regulations for students, with which you are advised to familiarise yourself.

4. **Plagiarism checking:** Plagiarism is a serious offense and is prosecuted to the fullest extent that university regulations permit. Do not hand in anyone's work but your own, and always cite your sources whether you are quoting someone directly or paraphrasing their ideas or research. To avoid plagiarism, *all assignments must be downloaded to turnitin.com; essays that are not downloaded to the site will not be graded.* All required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. You should submit your essay to turnitin via your WebCt account for this course.

5. **Complaints.** If students have a complaint concerning a course in which they are enrolled, they must discuss the matter with the instructor of the course. If students are still not satisfied, they should then take the complaint to the Film Studies Office, University College, Room 80. These regulations are in place because a failure to follow these procedures creates the potential for injustices of various kinds affecting either the instructor or the students themselves, or both parties. Concerns should not be allowed to fester but should be raised with the instructor in a timely manner, so that they can be addressed in time to make a difference to the course.

6. **Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness.** Please go to the following site for information on the university Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:
<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

7. **Disability.** Should you have a disability, you are strongly urged to inform SSD, so that any misunderstandings can be avoided and accommodation can be made for you in a timely fashion.

8. **My availability** I normally check my e-mail at least once a day during normal working days. However, a message sent to me on a Friday may not receive an answer until the following Monday. A message sent over the weekend is highly unlikely to be answered before Monday.

Grading Scales

1. Grading scale for M.A. Students

A+ (90+)	Work of publishable standard, albeit with some revisions possible. Equivalent to advanced Ph.D. level work.
A (88-89)	Excellent: displaying extensive originality.
A- (85-87)	Strong performance at the M.A. level, fully equivalent to that of an average Ph.D. student. Must be well-written and show some originality.
B+ (80-84)	Good M.A.-level work, indicating the student's potential (with some reservations) to work successfully at the Ph.D. level.
B (78-9)	Competent M.A. work, but does not suggest potential to proceed to Ph.D. level.
B-	Any mark below 78 indicates performance below the level required of a graduate student.

Assignments will be given a separate grade for each of the four criteria of Argument, Presentation/structure, Language skills and Research/scholarship. The four will then be pooled to yield an overall grade. The essay grade will be apportioned as follows: 50% argument, 20% language skills, 20% research and 10% presentation.

Nb. *Essays handed in late without an agreed extension will be penalized by 5% per day. They must be left in the Essay Drop Box outside the Film Studies departmental office. You are advised to keep a copy of your essay.*

2. Grading Scale for undergraduates

A+ (90-100)

- Argument: Clear development of a specific, challenging and original thesis. The writer has taken significant risks successfully; in the resulting piece, distinctive ideas and content have discovered their necessary distinctive form. Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response. Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around—subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.
- Presentation, structure: Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. Almost no typographical errors.
- Language Skills: Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound-complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses). Graceful style, neither pompous nor breezy, and few errors.
- Research/scholarship: Evidence of effective, extensive and independent research, with proper documentation of sources. Quotations used appropriately and purposively.

A (80 to 89)

- Argument: The writer has taken risks and most of them succeed. Clear development of a specific and challenging thesis, with proper paragraphs. Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response. Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around—subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.
- Presentation, structure: Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs.

Almost no typographical errors.

- Language Skills: Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound-complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses). Graceful style, neither pompous nor breezy, and few errors
- Research/scholarship: Evidence of effective and independent research, with proper documentation of sources. Quotations used appropriately and purposively.

B (70 to 79)

- Argument: Clear development of a specific thesis, with proper paragraphs. Adequately detailed reference to texts. Ability to expound reasonably sophisticated ideas with clarity.
- Presentation/structure: Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. A few typographical errors.
- Language Skills: Sentence structure correct, with reasonable range of sentence types and full range of punctuation. Style not too wordy, with errors relatively few and minor. Research Scholarship: Evidence of adequate research, with proper documentation of sources.

C (60 to 69)

- Argument: Reasonably clear development of a thesis, with proper paragraphs. Basic ability to expound ideas, whose development might be rather thin. Effort to support points with references to the text. Tendency to replace analysis with descriptive retelling of plot.
- Presentation/structure: Presentation showing lapses in tidiness and/or proofreading. Poor use of paragraphs.
- Language Skills: Sentence structure correct, but perhaps overly simple, with tendency to avoid punctuation besides period and comma. Errors relatively few, but occasionally serious, with evident misunderstanding of some point of elementary grammar (comma splices, fragments, semicolon errors, subject-verb disagreements, poorly integrated quotations)
- Research/Scholarship: reasonable effort at documentation, but rather thin.

D (50 to 59)

- Argument: Difficulty with paragraphing or consecutive thought. Ideas inchoate but clouded by weak expression. Overgeneralization with inadequate support, or examples that run to lengthy paraphrase, with little or no analysis.
- Presentation/Structure: Very poor to non-existent use of paragraphs. Inadequate and inaccurate documentation. Multiple typographical errors.
- Language Skills: Errors of grammar or diction frequent enough to interfere with understanding.
- Research/Scholarship: Little serious effort to research the topic.

F (49 and down)

- Argument: Ideas too simple for level of course. Argument completely incoherent. Erroneous content showing little or no understanding of subject.
- Presentation/Structure: Very sloppy proof-reading. Documentation virtually non-existent.
- Language Skills: writing frequently ungrammatical.
- Research/Scholarship: Non-existent. Content largely “borrowed” from sources with no individual distillation, but no apparent attempt to deceive.

0 (Report to Department)

- Plagiarism with intent to deceive

Readings and Screenings

Almost all the readings are to be found in the course studypack. There are **three** exceptions: The Face of Another (Kobe Abe) and articles by Todd McGowan (week one) and Prince and Hensley (week three). The Face of Another should be purchased from the bookstore. The two articles can be accessed through JSTOR. Their details are as follows:

Todd McGowan, 'Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes', Cinema Journal 42:3 (Spring, 2003): 27-36 (we will only be reading half of this article, omitting pp. 37-47).

Stephen Prince and Wayne Hensley, 'The Kuleshov Effect: Recreating the Classic Experiment' Cinema Journal 31: 2 (Winter, 1992): 59-75.

Week One – Introduction to Theories of the Face, the Mask, and the Thing

Screening (Sept. 14) *Persona* (dir Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1966) (dur. 83');
Readings: Björkman, Manns and Sima; Bordwell; Canetti; Elkins; McGowan; Napier.

Week Two – The Face I

Screening (Sept 21) *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (dir. Carl Dreyer, France, 1928) (82 mins.);
Reading: Aumont; Balázs

Week Three – The Face/Suture/Montage II

Screening (Sept. 28) *Dekalog 1-2 and 6* (dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski, Poland and West Germany, 1988) (dur. 175 mins.);
Reading: Prince and Hensley; Žižek.

Week Four – Theoretical Interlude: Beauty, Horror, and Fascination

No Screening;
Readings: Agamben; Freud; Siebers; Slater.

Week Five – The Face III

Screening (Oct 12) *The Idiot* (dir. Kurosawa Akira, Japan, 1951) (dur. 166 mins.);
Readings: Benjamin; Canetti.

Week Six – The Face and the Mask I

Screening (Oct 19) *The Face of Another* (dir. Teshigahara Hiroshi, Japan, 1966) (dur. 124 mins.); *Remembrance of Things to Come* (dir. Chris Marker and Yanick Bellon, France, 2001; 42 mins.)
Reading: *The Face of Another*.

Week Seven – The Face and the Mask II

Screening (Oct 26) *Eyes Wide Shut* (dir. Stanley Kubrick, UK/USA, 1999)(dur. 159 mins.);
Readings: Canetti; Napier; Žižek.

Week Eight – The Face and the Mask III

Screening (Nov 2) *Queen Christina* (excerpt(s)) (dir. Rouben Mamoulian, USA, 1933); (dir. Josef von Sternberg, USA, 1931; 91 mins.)
Readings: Barthes; Doane.

Week Nine – The Animal Mask

Screening (Nov 9) *La Belle et la bête* (dir. Jean Cocteau, France, 1946) (dur. 93 mins.);
Readings: Canetti ; Carter ; Hayward.

Week Ten – Face, Mask and Animal Mask

Screening (Nov 16) – *Sans Soleil* (dir. Chris Marker, France, 1983) (dur. 100 mins.); *The Case of the Grinning Cat* (dir. Chris Marker, France, 2004) (dur. 59');
Readings: Deleuze and Guattari; Makarius; Thomson.

Week Eleven – Animal, Allegory, Montage

Screening (Nov 23) *Greed* (dir. Eric von Stroheim, USA, 1924) (dur. 135 mins.);
Reading: Benjamin.

Week Twelve – Beauty, Horror, Fascination and *Persona* Revisited

Screening (Nov 30) *Persona*;
Readings: Agamben; Livingston.

Week Thirteen – Summing up? open ending?