THEOCRIT 9202 Bergson – Cine-Perception

Instructor: 

Course Description: Bergson - Cine-Perception

This course explores Henri Bergson’s meditations on moving image machines, screens, and “cinematographic consciousness”, also tracing the impact of his philosophy of perception on avant-garde film theory, from Jean Epstein to Gilles Deleuze. Vivian Sobchack has argued that figures shape and transform the very problematic they try to portray. How do moving image metaphors, thought-figures and optical technologies like the cinematograph, stereoscope, kaleidoscope, shadow play, ‘dark screen,’ panorama, high-speed photograph, phantasmagoria, and magic lantern dissolving views structure Bergson’s thoughts on the spectator’s sensory apparatus/awareness? What does the vitalist philosopher have to say about the human mind and perception as a “cinématographe intérieur”? The course will lay a critical foundation for understanding the relevance of Bergson’s work for contemporary film and media theory. Course readings include Bergson’s translated works Creative Evolution and Matter and Memory, lectures, and interviews, and seminal texts on Bergson’s media epistemology. Other theorists include Jean Epstein, Georg Lukács, Germaine Dulac, Walter Benjamin, Jakob von Uexküll, Gilles Deleuze, David Rodowick, and Elizabeth Grosz.

Requirements:

- Seminar Participation and OWL FORUM Responses (includes active seminar discussion and four 2-3 paragraph FORUM responses): 25%
- Seminar Presentation (20-30 minutes - specific guidelines and topics discussed in class): 30%
- Final Research Paper (16-20 pages/due Dec. 12th): 45%

Textbooks [TB] (books can be shipped directly to you, or picked up at the Book Store (see their updated Safety Measures here: https://bookstore.uwo.ca/safety-measures). Please see the final page of the syllabus for digital book links:

Henri Bergson, Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic (1900) - trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell [Dover republication of the New York, 1911 edition -


**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1/: Bergson’s Bodies/Machines: Time, Perception, and Phantasmagoria**

Henri Bergson, “Dreams” available online - [https://www.gutenberg.org/files/20842/20842-h/20842-h.htm](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/20842/20842-h/20842-h.htm) [1901]


“Prof. Bergson on Psychical Research” *Nature* 91, 360–361 (1913) [OWL]


**Week 2/: Bergson’s Bodies/Machines cont.: Kaleidoscopic, Stereoscopic or “Photographic View of Things”**


Henri Bergson - *L'évolution du problème de la liberté. Cours au Collège de France 1904-1905* [short translated excerpt on the stereoscope] [OWL]


Week 3/: Screening Movement, Scientific Film and a “Cinematographical Consciousness” I


“Bergson talks to us about Cinema” by Michel Georges-Michel from *Le Journal*, February 20, 1914 [Interview translated by Louis-Georges Schwartz and published in *Cinema Journal* Vol. 50, No. 3 (Spring 2011), pp. 79-82] [OWL]


*Recommended Reading*: Paula Amad on the “Bergsonian” Screening Room at Albert Kahn’s *Archives de la Planète* - Paula Amad, “The Counter Archive of Cinematic Memory: Bergsonism, *la durée* and the Everyday” in *Counter-Archive: Film, Everyday and Albert Kahn’s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 96-132 [OWL]


**Week 4/: The ‘Unrolling’ of a Cinematic Film: Cinematographic Consciousness II**

Henri Bergson, 1931 Introduction “The Possible and the Real,” *Creative Mind* [OWL]


*Recommended Reading:* Maria Tortajada, “The Cinematographic Snapshot”/“Paradigm of the Continuous and the Discontinuous: The Notion of Instant” in *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemology in the Modern Era* pp. 79-96 [OWL]

*Screening:* *Congress* (Ari Folman, 2013); *Light is Calling* (Bill Morrison, 2004)  
https://vimeo.com/10171103

*Oct. 11th – Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class*

**Week 5: Life, Environment and Élan Vital: From Bergson to von Uexkuell**


*Recommended Reading:* Elizabeth Grosz, “Deleuze, Bergson and the Concept of Life” *Revue internationale de philosophie* 2007/3 (no. 241): 287-300 [OWL]

Week 6: Bergsonian Vitalism at the Bauhaus: *Miracle of Flowers*

Janelle Blankenship, “‘Film-Symphonie vom Leben und Sterben der Blumen’: Plant Rhythm and Time-Lapse Vision in Das *Blumenwunder*, Intermédialités no. 16 (Autumn 2010), pp. 83–103 [OWL]

Rudolf Arnheim on the film’s interior world: Rudolf Arnheim, “Accelerated Motion” and “Slow Motion” in *Film as Art* [1932], Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006: 114-117 [OWL]


**Screening:** *Miracle of Flowers* (1926)

**Nov. 1-7th Fall Reading Week – No Class**

Week 7: “The Plastic Form” and Photogénie: French Impressionism/Symbolism


**Screening:** *Fall of the House of Usher* (Jean Epstein, 1928); *Thèmes et variations* (Germaine Dulac, 1929)
Week 8: Cinema and Eternal Variability: German Bergsonians Georg Simmel and (Early) Georg Lukács

Georg Simmel, “Sociology of the Senses”, excerpt and “The Berlin Trade Exhibition” in Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings, translated excerpts on the philosophy of history [1905], Rembrandt [1916], Kant, naturalism and historical understanding referencing “living pictures,” cinematography, panopticon wax pictures, stereoscopy, and instantaneous photography [OWL]


Week 9: “The Brain is the Screen”: Deleuze’s Bergsonism I


Recommended Reading: Elizabeth Grosz, “Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming” parallax, 2005, vol. 11, no. 2, 4–13 [OWL]

Weeks 10 “The Brain is the Screen”: Deleuze’s Bergsonism II

Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1: The Movement-Image trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986), [TB]

Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2: The Time-Image trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989), excerpts [TB]

Recommended Reading: Gilles Deleuze “Seminar on Cinema: The Movement-Image” Lecture 1, 10 November 1981 (Cinema Course 01) Transcription: La voix de Deleuze, Fanny Douarche (Part 1, 1:00:15) and Lise Renaux (Part 2, 1:01:44); transcription augmented, Charles J. Stivale; translation by Charles J. Stivale - https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/cinema-movement-image/lecture-01

Recommended Reading: Gilles Deleuze, “The Brain is the Screen: Interview with Gilles Deleuze on ‘The Time-Image’”. Discourse trans. Melissa McMahon Vol. 20, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 47-55 [OWL]

Recommended Reading: D. N. Rodowick, Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997) [short excerpt from “Movement and Image” 20-29/OWL]
Week 11/: “Nervous Magic Lantern”: Experimental Filmmaker Ken Jacobs’ Bergsonism


Screening: Nervous Magic Lantern (Ken Jacobs, Spiral Nebula, 2005), Anaglyph Tom (2008: anaglyph with 3-D)

Final Research Paper Due – Dec. 12th

INCOMPLETES

Please note that incompletes are only granted on compassionate or medical grounds. Special permission must be granted by the instructor and the Centre’s Director no later than the last day of classes.

Please note the following:

1. No later than the last day of the course, the student must contact the Director providing both the reason for the Incomplete being requested, and indicating the date by which the remaining work will be completed. The instructor must also give consent to these arrangements. Permission from the instructor is not a guarantee that the Centre’s GSC will grant a request for an INC.

2. Unless there are medical or compassionate grounds, the student will not be allowed to carry more than one INC in a semester.

3. The INC work must be submitted within one semester of the termination of the course in question, and the student must notify the Centre that the work has been submitted. Failure to comply will result in failure of the course.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwcom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

SCHOLASTIC DISCIPLINE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:
Definition - SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES

Members of the University Community accept a commitment to maintain and uphold the purposes of the University and, in particular, its standards of scholarship. It follows, therefore, that acts of a nature that prejudice the academic standards of the University are offences subject to discipline. Any form of academic dishonesty that undermines the evaluation process, also undermines the integrity of the University’s degrees. The University will take all appropriate measures to promote academic integrity and deal appropriately with scholastic offences.

Scholastic Offences include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

• Plagiarism - the “act or an instance of copying or stealing another’s words or ideas and attributing them as one’s own.” (Excerpted from Black’s Law Dictionary, West Group, 1999, 7th ed., p. 1170). This concept applies with equal force to all academic work, including theses, assignments or projects of any kind, comprehensive examinations, laboratory reports, diagrams, and computer projects. Detailed information is available from instructors, Graduate Chairs, or the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Students also may consult style manuals held in the University’s libraries. See [http://www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html](http://www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html)

• Cheating on an examination or falsifying material subject to academic evaluation.

• Submitting false or fraudulent research, assignments or credentials; or falsifying records, transcripts or other academic documents.

• Submitting a false medical or other such certificate under false pretences.

• Improperly obtaining, through theft, bribery, collusion or otherwise, an examination paper prior to the date and time for writing such an examination.

• Unauthorized possession of an examination paper, however obtained, prior to the date and time for writing such an examination, unless the student reports the matter to the instructor, the relevant program, or the Registrar as soon as possible after receiving the paper in question.

• Impersonating a candidate at an examination or availing oneself of the results of such an impersonation.

• Intentionally interfering in any way with any person's scholastic work.

• Submitting for credit in any course or program of study, without the knowledge and written approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit previously has been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.
• Aiding or abetting any such offence. Evidence of wrongdoing may result in criminal prosecution in addition to any proceedings within the University.

Please consult the SGPS website for PROCEDURES FOR SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES and further guidelines on ACADEMIC DISHONESTY PENALTIES.

PENALTIES The University will treat seriously any incident of academic dishonesty and students should expect significant consequences for their actions. A serious incident or repeated offences may result in a requirement that the student withdraw from the program and/or may result in suspension or expulsion from the University. A student guilty of a scholastic offence may be subject to one or more penalties, examples of which are: 1. Reprimand. 2. Requirement that the student repeat and resubmit the assignment. 3. A failing grade in the assignment. 4. A failing grade in the course in which the offence was committed. 5. Withdrawal from the program. 6. Suspension from the University for up to three academic years or for a portion of one academic year including the academic session win which the student is currently registered. 7. Expulsion from the University.
Cine-Perception E-Book links:

*Laughter an Essay*
-henri-bergson-v9780486113579?term=9780486113579

*Creative Evolution*
-evolution-henri-bergson-v9780486122809?term=9780486122809

*Cinema 1*

*Cinema 2*