

**WCL 2352 – Section 4 - World Cinema
Fall 2009**

Ideas of Cities

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Office: 418 Agnes Arnold

Office hours: MW 3:00-4:30 – T-Th 4:00-5:30

Course Meets: T/TH 2:30-4:00

Location: FH 222A

Film Screenings: Set up your
schedule at the LAC (311 AH)

In this course we will study important films from Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America, and familiarize ourselves with the basic terminology of film analysis. In our study of the theme of “ideas of cities,” we will consider questions such as: How have films addressed what constitutes the idea of a city? Do differences of race, class, gender, nationality, and sexuality affect the kinds of connections that characters establish with each other and their city, and that viewers establish with those characters? If so, how? How do cultural norms influence the ways a city can be cinematically represented and made into a character? How does an alienating experience of the city change the way people relate to each other? Our readings will familiarize us with formal aspects of filmmaking and film analysis, will guide us in the writing practices particular to film studies, and will provide models for the critical analysis of films.

Films

Athens and Rome

Socrates (Roberto Rossellini, France-Italy, 1971);

Spartacus (Stanley Kubrick, U.S.A., 1960)

Outsiders

Ali - Fear Eats the Soul (Rainer W. Fassbinder, Germany, 1974)

A Soul Split in Two (Silvio Soldini, Switzerland-Italy, 1993)

Father and Son

Bicycle Thieves (Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1948)

The Pursuit of Happyness (Gianni Muccino, U.S.A., 2006)

Struggle and Survival

City of God (Fernando Meirelles, Brazil, 2002)

City of Men (Paulo Morelli, Brazil, 2007)

Corruption and the City

The Bad Sleep Well (Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1960)

Hands over the City (Francesco Rosi, Italy, 1963)

The Music of the City

Elevator to the Gallows (Louis Malle, France, 1958)

'Round Midnight (Bertrand Tavernier, France, 1986)

City and the Aesthetics of Crime

Tokyo Drifter (Seijun Suzuki, Japan, 1966)

Chungking Express (Wong Kar-Wai, Hong Kong, 1994)

Required Text (available at the UH bookstore):

Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* (New York: Longman) 6th or 7th ed. (listed as Corrigan in syllabus).

Required Readings Available on WebCt

All assigned chapters of David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (listed as *Film Art* in syllabus).

Grade

Participation: 15%
 Quizzes (lowest dropped): 15%
 Paper One (3-4 pages, due September 24): 20%
 Urban Space Project: 25%
 Paper Two (4-5 pages, due December 8): 25%

Grading Scale

93-100	A	83-86	B	73-76	C	63-66	D
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-
87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	0-59	F

Films and Readings

You are responsible for viewing films and reading course materials outside of class. Because some of these films are not easily accessible in the United States, at least **six copies** of all of the films for this course are also available on reserve in the Language Acquisition Center (on the 3rd floor of Agnes Arnold Hall; consult their website—<http://www.class.uh.edu/lac/>—for their hours). If you choose to view the films on reserve in the LAC, plan accordingly. Don't wait until the day or night before class to watch the film, as a copy may not be available. Also keep in mind that you are sharing these copies with all of your colleagues in this course: you may wish to view these films at the same time with other students in this class. This gives you a chance to discuss these films with other students before coming to class. Remember, both the films and the readings for this course count as homework, and you are unable to participate in class without preparing them. Be prepared and plan ahead!

Quizzes

Pop quizzes will be given regularly over the materials that you have been asked to prepare for class. If you watch our films and do the readings attentively and on time, these will be extremely easy for you. If not, your course grade will suffer. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Papers

Paper topics will be distributed in class and posted on our WebCt site two weeks prior to their due dates. Papers must be submitted on time to receive full credit. Late papers will be lowered one letter grade for each day they are submitted past the due date (i.e. a "B+" paper submitted one day after the due date will be lowered to a "B").

Please see the last page of this syllabus for a detailed guide to how paper grades are determined in this course. Papers are graded primarily on the basis of content and how clearly you communicate your ideas, but proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, organization, etc., are also needed to earn a good grade. If you have problems with these aspects of your writing, you may wish to make use of the University's Writing Center. Your final paper

will indicate your level of preparedness for writing more advanced critical work in film studies, in the World Literatures and Cultures Program, and in any upper-level humanities course.

Urban Space Project

In groups, students will present a film to the class and submit a short written analysis focused on how the film's representation of urban space affects the connections that characters establish with each other and with their environments, and the connections that viewers are asked to establish with those same characters and environments. Each group must conduct research for the project and submit a bibliography of the sources they consult with their written analysis. Students will receive individual and group grades for their work. More details will be given throughout the semester.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is an act of intellectual dishonesty that consists of passing off another's words as one's own. Sanctions for infractions of plagiarism are serious, and may result in failing an assignment, failing a course, and being placed on academic probation. You may, of course, consult other sources for your papers in this course. However, you must cite all of those sources in a bibliography. If you use another person's words or thoughts in whole or in part in your papers, be sure that your work clearly acknowledges your sources.

Repetition of Papers Used in Other courses

Papers written for another class cannot be used to fulfill the requirements for this course. This will be considered an act of *academic dishonesty*. If you would like to incorporate fragments from a paper written for a different course, you need to obtain written authorization from the professor of that course and from me. For example, if you wrote a paper on De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* for a different film course, and you would like to re-use parts of that work for this class, you must obtain consent from both the class instructor and your previous professor. If you do not comply with this regulation, you will be facing sanctions ranging from your grade on the paper being lowered to failing this class.

Submitting Papers and Turnitin.com

All students must submit a **hard copy** of their papers to me **AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS** on the due date. You must also **upload an electronic version** of this exact same paper to turnitin.com **BEFORE** the beginning of class on the paper's due date. Papers uploaded to turnitin.com after class time will be considered late, even if you submit a hard copy of your paper on time to me in class. If you do not yet have a turnitin.com account, you must create one immediately (it is free for students). The information that you will need to submit papers for this class consists of the following:

Course Number:
Password:

You will not receive a grade for any paper until it is uploaded to turnitin.com.

Extensions for Papers

As a general rule, the instructor only grant extensions for papers in cases of genuine emergency or for other extreme circumstances, and written documentation must be provided. Lack of preparation on the students' part does not constitute grounds for an extension.

Participation

Active participation is essential in this course. This includes arriving to class on time, taking notes, asking thoughtful questions, advancing good critical ideas in class discussions, and listening to the ideas of others. Students who are disrespectful of others or disrupt class will receive low participation grades and may be dropped from the course. If you have a legitimate reason for leaving class before it ends, please notify the instructor at the beginning of class and sit near an exit so that you can leave quietly and discreetly. For the relevant university regulation, you may refer to the following statement from the on-line undergraduate catalog:

“An instructor may drop students for any one of the following reasons:

- a. Lack of prerequisites or corequisites for the course listed in the latest catalog, but only through the last day for dropping courses. Students who have not met the prerequisites will be dropped without a tuition refund if the drop date is after the refund date. (Students who enroll in a course for which they are not eligible and then remain in the course knowingly misrepresent their academic records or achievements as they pertain to course prerequisites or corequisites and are in violation of the university's academic honesty policy.)
- b. Excessive absences, but after the last day for dropping courses only with the approval of the dean of the college in which the course is being offered.
- c. Causes that tend to disrupt the academic process (except those actions involving academic honesty, which come under the jurisdiction of the academic honesty policy), but after the last day for dropping courses only with the approval of the dean of the college in which the course is being offered. *Disruptive behavior includes the use of or the failure to deactivate cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices likely to disrupt the classroom.* Students may make timely appeal of charges through the office of the dean of the college in which the course is taught.

Also consult the section of the Student Handbook entitled "Disciplinary Code" (p. 68), as well as the section of the on-line undergraduate catalog entitled "Maintaining a Learning Environment."

Cell-free and wireless-free environment

Cell phone use of any kind is not permitted in class. If you use your laptop to take notes, you are not allowed to check your email during class, and must turn off your computer's wireless connection. Your participation grade for the semester will be lowered for every instance of unauthorized text messaging or email checking, or if your phone rings during class. If there is a good reason why you must leave your phone on during class, please tell the instructor before class begins. Excessive use of your cell phone or other wireless devices constitutes disruptive behavior. It is disrespectful to the class and may lead to you being dropped from this course.

In order to reference this course's WebCt readings during class, you are encouraged to print them out or download them to your computer, or take detailed notes on them. You will not be allowed to use any wireless connections to retrieve these readings from our WebCt site during class.

Attendance

You are allowed three unexcused absences in this course without any changes to your course grade. **Your course grade will be lowered** by one letter grade for every unexcused absence thereafter (i.e. if you have 5 unexcused absences and your course grade is a "B+," it will be lowered to a "B-"). Documentation must be provided for an absence to be excused.

Introduction to the “Music of the City” Unit

Guest Speaker: Professor Luca Cerchiari

Jazz and the City: Images and Sounds of Paris, France

Jazz and cinema are two related arts of the 20th century. Their marriage in films has been particularly stimulating after WWII, when European film-makers started make use of Afro-American music as an essential element of their dramatic and visionary stories and dreams. Due to Paris' architectural and urban fascination, as well as to its rich cultural life (and because jazz in Europe, including European jazz, owes very much to this city), a Parisian “jazz feeling” permeates several European cinematic masterpieces. This seminar will address Louis Malle's *Elevator to the Gallows* (1958, music by Miles Davis), Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (1972, music by Gato Barbieri), and Bertrand Tavernier's *'Round Midnight* (1986, music by Herbie Hancock and others, and starring Dexter Gordon). In different ways, these films show how jazz, French life and images of Paris (Champs-Elysées, Saint Germain-des-Pres, and so on) strictly interact in the audiovisual creation. They also show how French, European and American musicians have cooperated to the final result. The analysis of the sonic and visual interaction illustrates how rhythm, melody and timbre create a true Euro-American counterpoint and, in the case of Tavernier's *'Round Midnight*, turn jazz music into the leading character of a true cinematic masterpiece.

Luca Cerchiari
Professor of Afro-American Music
University of Padua, Italy

Grade Guide for Papers

A Offers an original and detailed argument that demonstrates that you have thoroughly understood the text(s)/film(s) you are writing about. The introduction attracts the reader’s attention, the ideas presented within the body paragraphs are specific and well-developed, these ideas make the reader think differently about the subject or the text/film presented, and the conclusion does more than summarize the contents of the paper. Transitions are fluid, ideas are presented directly and do not rely on generalizations, and there is no unnecessary verbiage that obscures meaning. Nothing is cliché in an “A” paper.

B Attests to a good, general understanding of the text(s)/film(s) you are writing about, and offers a plausible though uninteresting argument that lacks specificity or originality. Ideas need further development, and there are some structural or organizational problems (an introduction that isn’t clear, ideas that don’t always flow well), but these problems do not make any parts of the paper unreadable. Some vocabulary is used inappropriately. Overall, a solid piece of writing that lacks creativity.

C A lot of the ideas presented in the paper rely on clichés and generalizations to make their point, they aren’t well-developed, and/or they attest to a poor understanding of the text(s)/film(s) you are writing about. There is no argument or the argument presented is totally implausible. There are mistakes about important details in the text(s)/film(s). Problems with organization, with language use, or with structure make understanding the paper difficult.

D Shows that you didn’t understand the paper topic or the text(s)/film(s) you are writing about. The paper lacks cohesion, ideas are poorly developed, and grammar mistakes make the paper unreadable. Unacceptable work for a student at the university level.

F An offensive, unreadable, or incomplete paper.

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Syllabus

The information in this syllabus may be subject to change. Any changes will be posted on the WebCt site and announced in class. Students are responsible for staying up to speed on any changes.

Week One: Introduction to World Cinema and the theme of the course. Athens and Rome

Tuesday August 25 - Course Introduction. Partial in-class screening of Roberto Rossellini, *Socrates*.

Thursday August 27 – Partial in-class screening of Roberto Rossellini, *Socrates*. Readings: Corrigan, Ch. 1 (Writing about the Movies) and Ch. 2 (Preparing to Watch and Preparing to Write).

Week Two: Athens and Rome

Tuesday September 1 – The Greek *polis* and the Roman *civitas* as archetypes of cities. Partial in-class screening of Stanley Kubrick, *Spartacus*.

Thursday September 3 – Partial in-class screening of Stanley Kubrick, *Spartacus*. Reading: *Film Art*, Ch. 2 (The Significance of Film Form).

Week Three: Outsiders, Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities

Tuesday September 8 – Partial in-class screening of Rainer W. Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. **FIRST PAPER TOPICS ARE DISTRIBUTED AND POSTED**

Thursday September 10 – Partial in-class screening of Rainer W Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. Reading: Corrigan, Ch. 3 (Film Terms and Topics).

Week Four: Outsiders, Immigrants, and Ethnic Minorities

Tuesday September 15 – Partial in-class screening of Silvio Soldini's *A Soul Split in Two*.

Thursday September 17 – Partial in-class screening of Silvio Soldini's *A Soul Split in Two*. Introduction to the next topic: Partial in-class screening of Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*. Reading: *Film Art*, Ch. 3 (Narrative as a Formal System).

Week Five: Father and Son in the City

Tuesday September 22 — NO CLASS – TEACHER IS ABSENT.

Thursday September 24 – **PAPER ONE DUE** – Partial in-class screening of Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*.

Week Six: Father and Son in the City.

Tuesday September 29 – Partial in-class screening of Gabriele Muccino's *The Pursuit of Happyness*.

Thursday October 1 – Partial in-class screening of Gabriele Muccino's *The Pursuit of Happyness*. Reading: Corrigan, Ch. 4 (Six Approaches to Writing about Film).

Week Seven: Struggle and Survival in the City

Tuesday October 6 – Partial in-class screening_ of Fernando Meirelles, *City of God*.

Thursday October 8 - Partial in-class screening_ of Fernando Meirelles, *City of God*. Reading: *Film Art*, Ch. 4 (The Shot: Mise-en-Scene).

Week Eight: Struggle and Survival in the City

Tuesday October 13 – Partial in-class screening of Paulo Morelli, *City of Men*.

Thursday October 15 – Partial in-class screening of Paulo Morelli, *City of Men*. Reading: Corrigan, Ch. 5 (Style and Structure in Writing) & 6 (Researching the Movies).

Week Nine: Corruption and the City

Tuesday October 20 - Partial in-class screening of Akira Kurosawa, *The Bad Sleep Well*.

Thursday October 22 – Partial in-class screening of Akira Kurosawa, *The Bad Sleep Well*. Reading: *Film Art*, Ch. 5 (The Shot: Cinematography).

Week Ten: Corruption and the City

Tuesday October 27 – Partial in-class screening of Francesco Rosi's *Hands Over the City*.

Thursday October 29 - Partial in-class screening of Francesco Rosi's *Hands Over the City*.
Reading: *Film Art*, Ch. 6 (The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing).

Week Eleven: The Music of the City

Tuesday November 3 – Partial in-class screening of Louis Malle, *Elevator to the Gallows*.

Thursday November 5 – Partial in-class screening of Louis Malle, *Elevator to the Gallows*.
Reading: *Film Art*, Ch. 7 (Film Sound).

Week Twelve: The Music of the City. Guest speaker: Professor Luca Cerchiari, African-American Music, University of Padua, Italy.

Tuesday November 10 – Partial in-class screening of Bertrand Tavernier, *'Round Midnight*.

Thursday November 12 – Partial in-class screening of Bertrand Tavernier, *'Round Midnight*.
Reading: Corrigan, Ch. 7 (Manuscript Form).

Week Thirteen: Urban Space Presentations

Tuesday November 17 – **URBAN SPACE PROJECT DUE** – Group Presentations

Thursday November 19 – **Group Presentations**

Week Fourteen: City and the Aesthetics of Crime

Tuesday November 24 - **FINAL PAPER TOPICS ARE DISTRIBUTED AND POSTED** –
Partial in-class screening of Seijun Suzuki, *Tokyo Drifter*.

Thursday November 26 – **NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week Fifteen: City and the Aesthetics of Crime

Tuesday December 1 – Partial in-class screening of Wong Kar-Wai, *Chungking Express*.

Thursday December 3 – Partial in-class screening of Wong Kar-Wai, *Chungking Express*.
Reading: Ch. 8 (Summary: Style as a Formal System). Conclusions.

FINAL PAPER DUE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8 BY 5 PM. Bring it to instructor's room, AH 418.