Course Description and Goals:

In its relatively brief history (scarcely more than a century), film has arguably become the most significant art form and medium for the origination and transmission of culture. Perhaps because of the brevity of its existence, or perhaps due to its dismissal as merely “popular” culture (a form of cultural production often deemed unworthy of serious reflection) it has received relatively little attention from philosophers. When, however, philosophers have attended to film, they have commonly sought only to adapt accepted “philosophical” problems to their study of the subject (traditional metaphysical and epistemological problems concerned with the relationship between experience and reality, for example, take the form of the examination of the relationship of film to reality), or worse still, they have regarded film as capable only of shallow, but perhaps more accessible, illustration of already charted philosophical ground (e.g. “The Truman Show” as crudely illustrative of Plato’s cave allegory).

This course, premised upon the view that philosophy is a disciplined practice of inquiry and evaluation that does not have its own particular subject matter (other than its own practice), will, instead, endeavor to develop films philosophically. That is to say, the films themselves will be regarded as subject matter for philosophical examination. They will be allowed to raise their own problems, advance their own claims, and propose their own solutions, all to be carefully examined, interrogated and evaluated.

Required Texts:

- All required readings will be available for download on the course’s Blackboard page.

Course Requirements and Grades:

- **Two Essays**, (5-7 pp.): (40%)
- **Briefer film “Developments” and Responses..** Developments (~2 pp.) as well as Responses (Two per film, Each 1-1½ pp.) must first be submitted through SafeAssign (on Blackboard) and then posted to [http://filmtank.org/forum/](http://filmtank.org/forum/): (40%)
  [Note that completion of this portion of the course requires registration at filmtank.org, a non-commercial, publicly accessible website that has been developed, and offered to the world, out of this course at the University of Oregon.]
- **Attendance and Participation** (this includes lectures, discussion sections, film screenings, and in-class writings, all of which are required): (20%)
Assignments Guidelines:

All written work, unless otherwise specified, should be written independently. You are encouraged to discuss all aspects of this course with your fellow students, but the work you turn in must be entirely your own. Any academic dishonesty will result, at minimum, in course failure. All work is to be submitted in class, unless otherwise directed. No work may be submitted via email without prior arrangement.

University of Oregon Academic Misconduct Code:

http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx

Philosophy Department Grading Rubric:

A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
C = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Technology Guidelines:

No electronic devices may be used during class time. This includes all portable computers, tablets, phones, blackberries, mp3 players, etc. When emailing your esteemed instructor(s), please reference PHL 332 in the topic heading, address the email (Steven, Dr. Brence, etc.), use complete sentences, proper punctuation and spelling, and sign your message. Please do email me if I can be of assistance, but do not contribute to the further deterioration of our capacity for language, or to basic standards of politeness and civility, in the process.

Classroom Guidelines:

Class attendance is required. You are expected to arrive before class begins, be respectful and polite to everyone in the room, and to stay until it ends. If you should need to leave before the end of class, please let your instructor know before class begins.

Accessibility:

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if aspects of the instruction or course design result in barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Office of Accessible Education in 164 Oregon Hall at 346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu
Schedule:

All film screenings (in bold) are Sundays at 7 p.m. in 182 Lillis. The group responsible for initial developments each week is noted in bold after each film (G1, G2, etc.). The same pattern for developments, responses, rejoinders, and follow-ups established and detailed for Week 2 will be repeated for Weeks 3-10, with only the responsibilities changing according to who is responsible for initial developments that week.

Week 1

M (1/6):  *Introduction*
W (1/8):  *Film Thinking*  Register at filmtank.org (See "Using filmtank.org" handout)
F (1/10):  *Film Thinking*  Read: "Elements of Film Thinking" handout

[Groups established and Films for Film Development Essay #1 Assigned in section]

Week 2

Sun (1/12):  *“Kiss Me Deadly”* (Robert Aldrich, 1955)  **G1**
Mon (1/13):  Film Discussion
Wed (1/15):  Reading Discussion: excerpt from Jack Shadoian, *Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster Film*
Thur (10/4):  [Noon - G1 initial developments due on filmtank.org]
Fri (1/17):  Film Discussion

[Noon - G2-G8 responses due]

Week 3

Mon (1/20):  *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day*
Tue (10/07):  *“The Cruise”* (Bennett Miller, 1998)  **Extra Credit**
Wed (1/22):  Film Discussion
Fri (1/24):  Film Discussion

Week 4

Sun (1/26):  *“Shaun of the Dead”* (Edgar Wright, 2004)  **G2**
Mon (1/27):  Film Discussion
Fri (1/31):  Film Discussion

**[filmtank.org developments and responses 1 & 2 Due in class]**

Week 5

Sun (2/2):  *“Office Space”* (Mike Judge, 1999)  **G3**
Mon (2/3):  Film Discussion
Wed (2/5):  Reading Discussion: Karl Marx "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844"
Fri (2/7):  Film Discussion

**[Film Development Essay #1 Due in class]**

[Films for Film Development Essay #2 Assigned in section]

Week 6
Sun (2/9): “Casablanca” (Michael Curtiz, 1942) G4
Mon (2/10): Film Discussion
Wed (2/12): Reading Discussion: excerpts from Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
Thur (2/13): [Films for Film Development Essay #2 Assigned in section]
Fri (2/14): Film Discussion

**[filmtank.org developments and responses 3 & 4 Due in class]**

Week 7

Sun (2/16): “Into the Wild” (Sean Penn, 2007) G5
Mon (2/17): Film Discussion
Wed (2/19): Reading Discussion: excerpts from Jean-Jacques Rousseau *On the Origin of Inequality*
Fri (2/21): Film Discussion

Week 8

Sun (2/23): "Vagabond" (Agnès Varda, 1985) G6
Mon (2/24): Film Discussion
Wed (2/26): Reading Discussion: readings t.b.a.
Fri (2/28): Film Discussion

**[filmtank.org developments and responses 5 & 6 Due in class]**

Week 9

Sun (3/2): "V for Vendetta" (James McTeigue, 2005) G7
Mon (3/3): Film Discussion
Wed (3/5): Reading Discussion: Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus"
Fri (3/7): Film Discussion

Week 10

Sun (3/9): “Moon” (Duncan Jones, 2009) G8
Mon (3/10): Film Discussion
Wed (3/12): Reading Discussion: excerpts from Jürgen Habermas, "The Debate on the Ethical Self-Understanding of the Species"
Fri (3/14): Film Discussion

**[filmtank.org developments and responses 7 & 8 Due in class]**

Finals Week

Tuesday (3/18) **[Film Development Essay #2 Due]** Bring completed essays to Philosophy Department Main Office (2nd Floor Susan Campbell Hall) by noon.

*The Instructor reserves the right to modify this schedule as needed. Any changes will be announced both in class, via email, and on Blackboard. It is the responsibility of students to note and keep track of such changes.*