Course Description:

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. Purchase of media (DVDs or access to Digital Video files) may be required.

Course Requirements and Grades:

- Two Film Development Essays, ~5 pages in length: (40%)
- Briefe film “Developments” and Responses: (40%)
  (Note that completion of this portion of the course requires registration at www.filmtank.org, a non-commercial, publicly accessible website/forum that has been developed, and offered to the world, out of this course at the University of Oregon.)
- Attendance and Participation: (20%)

Assignment 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. University of Oregon Academic Misconduct Code:
http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx
All work is to be submitted in class, unless otherwise directed. No work may be submitted via email without prior arrangement. Late essays will be marked down according to degree of lateness. Late developments and responses will not be accepted.

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 me and your classmates, and to stay until it ends. If you should need to leave before the end of class, please let me 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**

- **M (6/23):** Introduction, Film Form
- **T (6/24):** Film Form
- **W (6/25):** screening: *Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955)
  - Reading: excerpt from Jack Shadoian, *Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster Film*
- **R (6/26):** discussion
  - Group 1 Initial filmtank developments posted before class.
  - Groups 2-7 filmtank responses posted before midnight.
F (6/27): discussion

M (6/30): screening *Office Space* (Mike Judge, 1999)
Reading: excerpt from Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

T (7/1): discussion
Group 2 Initial filmtank developments posted before class.
Groups 1, 3-7 filmtank responses posted before midnight.

Reading: excerpt from Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*

R (7/3): no class
F (7/4): discussion
Group 3 Initial filmtank developments posted before class.
Groups 1, 2, 4-7 filmtank responses posted before midnight.

M (7/7): screening *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004)
Reading: Lynn Pifer, "Slacker Bites Back: *Shaun of the Dead* Finds New Life for Deadbeats"

**Film Development Essay #1 due**

T (7/8): discussion
Group 4 Initial filmtank developments posted before class.
Groups 1-3, 5-7 filmtank responses posted before midnight.

W (7/9): screening *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942)
Reading: excerpt from Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

R (7/10): discussion
Group 5 Initial filmtank developments posted before class.
Groups 1-4, 6, 7 filmtank responses posted before midnight.

F (7/11): discussion

Reading: George Slover, "Isolation and Make-Believe in *Blow-Up*"

T (6/15): discussion
Group 6 Initial filmtank developments posted before class.
Groups 1-5, 7 filmtank responses posted before midnight.

W (7/16): screening: *Moon* (Duncan Jones, 2009)
Reading: excerpts from Jürgen Habermas, "The Debate on the Ethical Self-Understanding of the Species"

R (7/17): discussion
Group 7 Initial filmtank developments posted before class.
Groups 1-6 filmtank responses posted before midnight.

F (7/18): discussion

M: (7/21), Noon: **Film Development Essay #2 due**
*Bring your completed essays by the Philosophy Dept. office (2nd Floor, Susan Campbell Hall) before Noon.*