

**PHILOSOPHY 341: PHILOSOPHY AND FILM**  
**Spring Semester 2012**

**Instructor**

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Office Hours: M/W: 8:30-10:30  
T/TH: 8:00-9:15

**Text:**

Jeffrey R. Dileo's *From Socrates to Cinema: An Introduction to Philosophy*. McGraw-Hill: Boston, 2007.

**Course Description**

Selected philosophical problems are examined as they are presented in feature and documentary films.

**General Education Goals**

This course is an introduction to some of the traditional problems and topics in philosophy and cultural history through the medium of film. The problems and topics that will be discussed in class are of great interest and concern to most people, though we do not often take the time, nor do we have the training, to approach and examine them in a careful, systematic manner.

This course will help in the areas of critical thinking, cultural literacy, and personal development through the use of historical writings, film, analysis, and the student's own critical assessment through written papers. This will help broaden the student's understanding of the world, and his or her place within it, as well as critically interpreting the meaning of the various media encountered in our culture.

**Learning Outcomes**

During the process of the course, students will have:

- Analyzed the issues and questions that philosophers have, for the past 2500 years, found compelling and worthy of consideration.
- Demonstrated the ability to approach a philosophical text and films so as to get the most benefit from them.
- Demonstrated the ability to synthesize complex philosophical problems through the analysis of the tensions developed in films shown in class.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to reflect on their lives in a critical and evaluative manner, based on values and principles discussed in class.
- Formulate a philosophical position and/or argument in written form, and evaluate the arguments of others.

**Course Outline**

1. ***The Matrix***

- “The Allegory of the Cave” by Plato (Page 130)
- “On Truth and Lie In a Nonmoral Sense” by Nietzsche (Page 228)
- “My Confession” by Tolstoy (Page 928)

2. ***Run Lola Run***

- “Moral Luck” by Williams (Page 729)
- “Karma and Freedom” by Radhakrishna (Page 735)

3. ***The Dark Knight***

- “Rebellion” by Dostoyevsky (Page 49)
- “The Star” by Clarke (Page 80)
- “The Book of Job” from *The Bible* (Page 85)

#### 4. *The Fight Club*

“The Death of God” by Nietzsche (Page 21)

“The Absurd” by Camus (Page 954)

#### 5. *Memento*

“Of Personal Identity” by Hume (Page 325)

#### 6. *The Bourne Identity*

“The Storytelling Animal” by MacIntyre (332)

### Course Requirements

- Attendance Policy: Attendance will be taken at the beginning and/or end of each class. Students will be given three *unexcused absences*. Each unexcused absence after three will result in a half grade deduction from the student’s overall grade. If students miss a class, it is their responsibility to find out if there were any assignments given. They can email or call me, or ask other students in the class.
- Respect is to be accorded to one another during class time, and academic honesty is expected for all assignments. We are to show respect to each other in our responses and disagreements with each other. Philosophy is not the attempt to be right and/or win arguments, but is the love of wisdom (*phileo + sophia*).
- There is to be no text messaging, or receiving of text messages during class. You are allowed to use a computer for taking notes during class, but you are not to use it for surfing the web or doing other work during class.
- Respect, humility, and courage are essential virtues in this enterprise. Cheating on assignments will not be tolerated. Cheating may result in sanctions up to and including removal from the class with a grade of F.

### Method of Evaluation

#### **3 Papers On the First 4 Films:**

- Each paper will consist of a critical analysis of a film and the readings assigned for the film. Each paper will be 3 to 5 pages in length. I will give a handout detailing the requirements for these papers prior to watching the first film.
- These papers can be written on *The Matrix*, *Run Lola Run*, *The Dark Knight*, or *The Fight Club*. Therefore, you will be required to write on three of these four films (the fourth film cannot be written on for extra credit).
- Each of these papers will be worth 50 points, for a total of 150 points.

#### **1 Paper on Personal Identity:**

- This paper will be written on the contrasting views presented on personal identity in the films *Memento* and *The Bourne Identity*. This paper will be worth 200 points.

#### **Participation:**

- Your participation grade consists of attendance, participation in class discussion, respect and consideration (in terms of tardiness or leaving class early, texting, distracting behavior or conversation, etc.). Participation is worth 50 points.

### Grading Scale

400 – 360 = A

359 – 320 = B

319 – 280 = C

279 - 240 = D

239 – 0 = F