

**CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY**  
**University Honors Program**  
**One University Drive**  
**Orange, CA 92866**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**HON 379**  
**Philosophy through Film**

**Spring 2015**

**Catalog Description**

*Prerequisite: acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor.*

An underlying assumption of this course is that some films can be interpreted as an attempt to provide an answer to a classic question in philosophy. We will investigate a range of feature films running the gamut from Hollywood blockbusters such as *Inception* to art house classics such as *The Seventh Seal* to experimental films such as *Koyaanisqatsi*. While our main concern will be examining some classic debates in philosophy, we will also consider the relative merits of film versus text in presenting philosophical arguments. (Offered as needed.) 3 credits.

**Content**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>FILM*</b>
1	Introduction & Skepticism	<i>Inception, The Matrix</i>
2	Skepticism (cont.) & Personal Identity	<i>Memento</i>
3	Personal Identity (cont.)	
4	Artificial Intelligence	<i>I, Robot</i>
5	Free will	<i>Minority Report</i>
6	Free will (cont.)	
7	Filmic argumentation in experimental film	<i>Koyaanisqatsi</i>
8	Ethics	<i>Crimes &amp; Misdemeanors</i>
9	Ethics (cont.)	
10	Problem of Evil	<i>God on Trial</i>
11	Problem of Evil (cont.)	<i>The Seventh Seal</i>
12	Open	
13	Existentialism	<i>Leaving Las Vegas</i>
14	Existentialism (cont.)	

\* All film screenings will take place in the evening, after the official class meeting time. Copies of all required films will be available on DVD for 3-hour checkout from Leatherby Libraries Reserve.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of the course, students will:

- a. Understand the key positions, arguments and criticisms related to several of the most important debates in the history of modern philosophy.
- b. Engage in a philosophically rigorous reading of primary sources in philosophy in the modern period.

- c. Present, explain and evaluate both text-based and film-based arguments.
- d. Present coherent arguments orally, in essay format, in filmic format and in hypertext format.

### **Honors Program Learning Outcomes**

Upon completing a course in the University Honors Program students will have:

- a. Obtained a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- b. Sharpened their ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
- c. Understood how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
- d. Developed effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.

### **Required Texts**

Litch, Mary and Amy Karofsky. *Philosophy through Film*. 3rd edition. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.

### **Required Films**

*Inception* (2010), Dir: Christopher Nolan  
*The Matrix* (1999), Dir: Andy and Larry Wachowski  
*Memento* (2000), Dir: Christopher Nolan  
*I, Robot* (2004), Dir: Alex Proyas  
*Minority Report* (2002), Dir: Steven Spielberg  
*Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), Dir: Godfrey Reggio  
*Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), Dir: Woody Allen  
*The Seventh Seal* (1957), Dir: Ingmar Bergman  
*God on Trial* (2008), Dir: Andy De Emmony  
*Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), Dir: Mike Figgis

### **Instructional Strategies**

A variety of instructional strategies will be used, including lectures, classroom discussions, written assignments (essay, weekly response writings and a group web-based project), prepared oral presentations by students employing appropriate presentation technology, and exercises in critical thinking.

### **Methods of Evaluation**

Class participation and response to in-class prompts  
 Weekly response writings  
 Midterm exam  
 Final exam  
 Peer review  
 Group-based short film  
 Analysis essay on group's short film

### **Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy**

Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

### **Students with Disabilities Policy**

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Center for Academic Success, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

### **Bibliography**

- Augustine. *On Free Choice of the Will*. Translated by Anna Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1964.
- Berkeley, George. *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. Edited by Jonathan Dancy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Descartes, Rene. *Meditations of First Philosophy*. Edited and translated by John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Hume, David. *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by Tom Beauchamp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition revised by P. H. Nidditch. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Translated by James Ellington. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1993.
- Kaufmann, Walter. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. New York, NY: Meridian, 1975.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by P. H. Nidditch. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Perry, John and Michael Bratman, ed. *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Plato, *Republic*. Translated by G. M. A. Grube. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1974.

**Prepared by: Mary Litch**

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