

Advanced Polish: Polish Through Film (Special Topics): K. Kieślowski's "Dekalog"

Course meets: WF, 2:30-3:45, 1432 Cathedral of Learning

Instructor: Oscar Swan, 1417 CL (Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures), 624-5707

You are encouraged to communicate with the instructor by e-mail: <swan+@pitt.edu>.

Course Description: We will view and read the film script to one hour-long film per two-week period from the series "Dekalog" by the Polish film director Krzysztof Kieślowski. Situated in the a set of rather drab Warsaw apartment-house blocks, these films are loosely based on the Ten Commandments and how they relate (or not) to everyday life situations and choices. The films lend themselves both to analytic discussion and to being retold, and they feature an extremely good selection of everyday vocabulary.

Emphasis in this course will be on getting the gist of, retelling, and discussing the stories, and on vocabulary building. Additionally, we will familiarize ourselves with the language of critical analysis by translating excerpts from published reviews of the Dekalog movies. Subsidiarily, we will work on grammatical tasks which facilitate retelling and discussion, such as participle and verbal-noun formation, word order, sentence analysis, declension and conjugation review, uses of the conditional, and other such topics.

Factual comprehension will be assisted by a set of from 20 to 30 instructor-provided discussive questions. Many of the films as made actually differ in detail and sometimes even in concept from the film as originally scripted, this fact providing another aspect from which the films may be discussed.

Required:

The course website is <<http://polish.slavic.pitt.edu/dekalog>>

√ *Dekalog I-VII*, film scripts by Krzysztof Kieślowski and Krzysztof Piesiewicz, to be downloaded and printed out individually from the course website (in the folder *Scenariusze-Filmscripts*)

√ Reviews of *Dekalog I-VII* by Damian Cannon (the file *Dekalog.Reviews.pdf*) to be downloaded and printed out from the course website.

√ Instructor's Questions on *Dekalog I-VII* (the file *Dekalog.Pytania1-7.pdf*) to be downloaded and printed out from the course website.

√ Stills from *Dekalog I-VII* (in the folder *Ujecia-Stills*) to be downloaded and printed out from the course website.

√ A good Polish-English and English-Polish Dictionary (Oxford, Collins, Kosciuszko, Swan). Swan is available online at <<http://polish.slavic.pitt.edu/dictionary.pdf>>

√ Recommended: the video or DVD version of *Dekalog*, available at Amazon.com. The videos may also be viewed in the Media Center at Hillman Library (the library has the set on both VHS and DVD), or borrowed in the Slavic Department Office and viewed in room 1432 CL as long as classes are not in session there. They will also be shown on Monday afternoon (every other Monday) at 1:00-2:00 in 1432 CL.

Attendance and Language Policy. This course may include students of differing ability levels (from Intermediate High to various levels of Advanced). To the extent possible, students in the course will be evaluated on the basis of progress made from the initial state to the end of the course, not on the basis of comparison to other students. Since the reading and analysis of the stories will take place cumulatively over the course sessions, attendance at all sessions is crucial and required. Unexcused absences will affect the course grade.

Class discussion will be in Polish. Grammatical questions may be asked in either Polish or English, preferably on “Wednesday-I” as per the Weekly Routine below.

Your work must be your own. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL RESULT IN COURSE FAILURE.

WEEKLY ROUTINE

The course will cover seven of the ten *Dekalog* films. Each film will be covered in a two-week sequence, as described here:

Monday I

Film screening. No class, but: Watch the film either on your own time or view it on Monday afternoon in 1432 CL, and read the Cannon review of it. It’s fine, and even expected, not to like or to agree with the Cannon review.

Wednesday I

1. Translate into “academic Polish” a single selected paragraph (of your choice) from the Cannon review.
2. Translate the first 1, 2, or 3 scenes from the *Dekalog*, as assigned.

Friday I

Read the first half of the *Dekalog* film script, and write out and hand in answers to the first half of the question set.

Monday II

No special assignment and no film screening, but if you wish you can view the film on your own in room 1432 CL from 1:20:00.

Wednesday II

Read the second half of the *Dekalog* film script, and write out and hand in answers to the second half of the question set.

Friday II

1. Write a one-page (at least) synopsis of the *Dekalog*, in Polish. Submit this both electronically (to swan@pitt.edu) and in hard copy.
2. Picture quiz or graded classroom discussion based on pictures (in either case based on the set of stills at polish.slavic.pitt.edu/dekalog/Ujecia-Still).

Evaluation. For each two-week period there will be four graded assignments (the translation, answers to the questions set, the synopsis, and the bi-weekly quiz), assigned a mark from 1 (minimally acceptable), 2 (acceptable), 3 (quite good), with possible pluses and minuses. There will be no midterm or final. The final grade will be based on the cumulative grades received on all assignments, converted into letter grades of A, B, C. No assignments may be dropped. Weekly oral class participation (above all, a willingness to actively participate in class discussion) may raise or lower a grade up to one full grade point.