

University of Pittsburgh

Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Contemporary Polish Cinema (Polish 0870)

Instructor: Elzbieta Ostrowska (visiting from Lodz, Poland)

Course Meets: Tuesday, 1:00 - 4:50, in room 352 CL

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:00 - 11.45

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General Course Description:

The course is designed as a survey of Polish cinema since 1945 up to the present, as an example of both a national and a European cinema. Films will be examined from both a historical and an aesthetic perspective in order to present the main trends in post-war Polish cinema, for example: Socialist Realism, the Polish Film School and the Cinema of Moral Concern. This will lead into a discussion of the works of some of the most important Polish filmmakers (Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk, Roman Polanski, Agnieszka Holland, Krzysztof Kieslowski and others).

Films to be examined may be arranged in three general groups:

- Films representing World War II: their relation to Polish national ideology (Polish Romanticism) and cultural tradition.
- Films representing post-war reality and their relation to important socio-political changes in post-war Poland.
- Films focusing on the role of cinema, and cultural production in general, in the process of the construction of the national collective consciousness

By the end of the course students will be familiar with the main trends of Polish post-war cinema as well as with works by the most important Polish filmmakers. They will also be able to use methods of textual and contextual film analysis.

Required Textbooks

Boleslaw Michalek, Frank Turaj (1988), *Modern Cinema of Poland*, Indiana University Press.

Frank Bren (1993), *World Cinema: Poland*, London.

Additional materials will be photocopied.

General Instruction:

Classes will consist of screenings, introductory lectures, student presentations and seminar discussions.

Grading:

Grading will be based on three written essays:

Essay 1 (1500 words) will be an analysis of a single film screened and discussed during the first four weeks.

To be submitted on September 25.

Essay 2 (1500 words) will be an analysis of a chosen film in relation to its historical context.

To be submitted on October 30.

Essay 3 (3000 words) will be an analysis of one general issue examined during the whole semester

To be submitted by December 4.

Grading:

Essay 1 - 25% of grade

Essay 2 - 25% of grade

Essay 3 - 50% of grade

List of films to be screened:

Adventure in Mariensztat, dir. Leonard Buczkowski, 1953

Ashes and Diamonds, dir. Andrzej Wajda, 1958

Bad Luck, Andrzej Munk, 1958

The Passenger, dir. Andrzej Munk, 1963

Lodz Ghetto (doc.), dir. Dariusz Jablonski, 1998

Knife in the Water, dir. Roman Polanski, 1962

Man of Marble, dir. Andrzej Wajda, 1977

Camera Buff, dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1979

Man of Iron, dir. Andrzej Wajda, 1981

Lonely Woman, dir. Agnieszka Holland, 1981

Sexmission, dir. Juliusz Machulski, 1984

Decalogue V, VIII, dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1988

The Turned Back, dir. Kazimierz Kutz, 1994

Pigs, dir. Wladyslaw Pasikowski, 1992

Europa, Europa, dir. Agnieszka Holland, 1990

Course Schedule:

WEEK I

Socialist Realism in Polish cinema (1949-1955)

- The political situation of Poland after 1945
- The organization of the Polish film industry after World War II
- Film as a means of political propaganda

Screening:

Adventure on Mariensztat, dir. Leonard Buczkowski, 1953

Reading:

Michalek, Turaj, pp. 1-14

Bren, pp. 34-52

WEEK II

The Polish Film School (1956-1963)

- The October Thaw in 1956
- The tradition of Polish Romanticism in Polish cinema
- Wajda's trilogy (*A Generation*, *Kanal*, *Ashes and Diamonds*)

Screening:

Ashes and Diamonds, dir. Andrzej Wajda, 1958

Required reading:

Michalek, Turaj, pp. 19-30; 129-136.

WEEK III

Ironic perspectives on Polish history

- Romantic irony
- Realism as a main feature of Andrzej Munk's style

Screening:

Bad Luck, Andrzej Munk, 1958

Reading:

Michalek, Turaj, pp. 19-30; 114-125

WEEK IV

Poland and the Holocaust

- The Jew as the Other in Polish cultural discourse
- Representations of Jews in Polish culture
- Holocaust issues in Polish cinema

Screening:

The Passenger, dir. Andrzej Munk, 1963

Lodz Ghetto (doc.), dir. Dariusz Jablonski, 1998

Reading:

Michalek, Turaj, pp. 125-128.

WEEK V

Cinematic representations of Polish reality in the 1960s

- The Political and social situation; crisis of moral values: "little stabilization"
- The emergence of a new generation of filmmakers: Roman Polanski and Jerzy Skolimowski
- Popular cinema / National cinema

Screening:

Knife in the Water, dir. Roman Polanski, 1962 Required reading:

Michalek and Turaj, pp. 41-45

Bren, pp. 63-67

WEEK VI

Revisionist representation of the Stalinist period in Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble* - Stalinist oppression of the individual

- Reflexivity in the Polish context
- The worker as a continuation of the idea of the Polish romantic hero

Screening:

Man of Marble, dir. Andrzej Wajda, 1977

Required reading:

Michalek and Turaj, pp. 156-60,

Bren, pp. 133-144.

WEEK VII

The Cinema of Moral Concern

- The development of documentary
- The emergence of a new generation of filmmakers (e.g. Krzysztof Kieslowski, Feliks Falk, Grzegorz Królikiewicz, Agnieszka Holland)
- New engagements with social and political reality

Screening:

Camera Buff, dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1979 Reading:

Michalek, Turaj, pp. 59-79.

WEEK VIII

Film as a witness of historical events - the representation of the revolution of 'Solidarity' in Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Iron*

- The decade of workers' rebels - January 1970 up to August 1980
- The artist as politician

- Man of Iron - political strength and artistic weakness

Screening:

Man of Iron, dir. Andrzej Wajda, 1981

Reading required:

Michalek and Turaj, pp. 163-167

WEEK IX

Representations of Polish femininity in cinema - The Individual vs. History

- The construction of femininity in Polish cultural discourse

- The myth of the Polish Mother

- Dominant images of women in Polish cinema

Screening:

Lonely Woman, dir. Agnieszka Holland, 1981.

Reading required:

Elzbieta Oleksy, "A sparrow with a broken wing...and a shot of vodka": Construction of femininity in Post-War Polish Visual Culture"

WEEK X

Polish cinema between 1981 (Martial Law) and the collapse of Communism - Escapes into popular genres

- Popular cinema in post-war Poland

- Popular form in relation to the political regime

- Popular debates on gender issues

Screening:

Sexmission, dir. Juliusz Machulski, 1984 Reading required:

Bren, pp. 118-127.

WEEK XI

Polish cinema between 1981 (Martial Law) and the collapse of Communism: Escapes to universal themes.

- Krzysztof Kieslowski: universal themes - European co-production

- Moral reflection on contemporaneity and the past

Screening:

Decalogue V, VIII, dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1988

WEEK XII

Polish cinema after the collapse of Communism - ironic visions of history

- Great History from Everyman's perspective

- Andrzej Munk's legacy in *The Turned Back* by Kazimierz Kutz

Screening:

The Turned Back, dir. Kazimierz Kutz, 1994

WEEK XIII

Popular cinema after 1989 - between the local and global

- Post-modernity in Polish cinema after 1989
- Polish masculinity: between idealism and skepticism

Screening:

Pigs, dir. Wladyslaw Pasikowski, 1992

Reading required:

Michael Stevenson, "I don't feel like talking to you anymore: Gender Uncertainties in Polish Film since 1989", in: *Gender in Film and the Media. East-West Dialogues*, eds. E. Oleksy, E. Ostrowska, M. Stevenson, Frankfurt am Main, 2000.

WEEK XIV

Europa, Europa - The European/Polish epic

- Issues of individual, national, racial, ethnic identity
- Epic form in the traditions of European and Polish art.

Screening:

Europa, Europa, dir. Agnieszka Holland, 1990

Reading required:

Janet Lungstrum, "Foreskin Fetishism: Jewish male difference in Europa, Europa", *Screen*, vol. 39, no.1.