

D.

## STATEMENT OF QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCE

**Course Description**

Film Studies H670 / German H670, “Cinema and the Historical Avant Garde” investigates the vital connection between the new possibilities in representation, art, social philosophy, and politics in the early phases of the age of mass culture. The technological and social conditions that gave rise to the film apparatus were very much on the minds of thinkers and artists and were understood to signal fundamental shifts in areas ranging from society’s make up to human perception. The course uses Peter Bürger’s notion of the “historical avant garde” as a point of departure to comprehend examples of filmic practices that were quite widespread until “realism” became the primary aesthetic mode of the industry that came to dominate cinema. These alternate conceptions of what a film is, or might do, have largely been eliminated from standard notions about movies today, and the course concludes by considering the consequences of that narrowing in the cinematic spectrum.

FS H670 / Ger H670 is a new course, being put forward as foreseen in the Film Studies Major Proposal. It has relatives in two other courses – History of Art 650 and German 671 – in each case there is some small overlap in primary material (i.e. films).

The main qualitative differences between HA 650 and FS H670 / Ger H670:

- HA650 is an historical survey of avant-garde film as an art form, while FS H670 / Ger H670 is a course in intellectual history concentrating on the nexus of aesthetics and politics in the first portion of the twentieth century;
- HA650, in addition to showing challenging films, largely requires reading in film history (with secondary material suggested), while FS H670 / Ger H670 integrates challenging aesthetic expression with rigorous primary and secondary texts contemporaneous with the films;
- HA650 relies on more lecture than FS H670 / Ger H670, which, because of its small class size and level of student, will function like a seminar.

The main qualitative differences between Ger 671 and FS H670 / Ger H670:

- Ger 671 is an historical survey of German cinema before 1945 stressing the question of *national cinema*, while FS H670 / Ger H670 is a course in intellectual history concentrating on the nexus of aesthetics and politics in an internationalist mode during that period;
- Ger 671 introduces students to a broad range of film genre, while FS H670 / Ger H670 looks at a broad range of examples within one “genre”;
- Ger 671 stresses the fundamentals of film analysis adequate for cinema produced by the studio film industry, while FS H670 / Ger H670 concentrates largely on analytical process adequate to non-commercial and/or non-narrative cinema.

**How the specific goals of the course will be achieved.**

FS H670 / Ger H670 aims:

- to introduce students to the historical conditions giving rise to modern mass culture;
- to foster an understanding of how film has been conceived to function both as an art form and as political representation;
- to foster a greater awareness of the inherent and often unexamined limitation of possibilities regarding the “film” culture with which students interact every day;
- to sharpen students’ ability to analyze critically and generate cogent verbal and written expression.

These goals will be met by:

- using a variety of media (film, music, and print) and materials (primary & secondary; historical and contemporary);
- stressing intellectual exchange in seminar-style discussion format augmented by a variety of pedagogic modes (brief lecture, student led presentation, guest-artist presentation, etc);
- providing consistent feedback from and interaction with the instructor.

**The exposure to the basic material in the course, and ways in which added breadth and depth of material will be included.**

Students will be exposed to the basic material of the course through reading outside of class and film viewing within the class. These will be given added breadth and depth through lecture, student presentations, exchange with others in discussion, and expert opinion brought by visitors.

**The exposure to, and use of, methodology and research techniques, and especially the ways in which the course will provide exposure to the nature of scholarship in the field.**

Students will be exposed to techniques of formal film analysis, as well as historical scholarly thought connected to the rise of film and mass culture. They will also be required to conduct research for their final papers that will familiarize them with the nature of scholarship in the field(s) and to garner their own insights from that scholarship.

**Amount and quality of work expected from students on papers, examination(s), and projects; and the method of grading that work.**

Students will read between 80 and 150 pages of material per week, depending on the complexity of the texts. Films will be screened and discussed during class time. Students will be required to demonstrate their knowledge of and ability to manipulate the material from the first and second halves of the course respectively in two take-home examinations, composed mostly of short responses to synthetic questions. The paper will be submitted in stages geared to accentuate the process of writing and allowing for feedback. (See syllabus for breakdown of grading and computation).

**The amount and kind of student/faculty contact, including how the course will offer a significant level of interaction and engagement between faculty and students, and how such engagement will be achieved.**

Students will have extensive interaction with the faculty instructor in this seminar-style class. Exchange and feedback will be facilitated both in discussion and in sequential assignments (paper).

**How an environment will be fostered that facilitates intellectual exchange among students (if applicable).**

Students will be encouraged to engage in significant intellectual exchange with fellow students in this seminar-style class. Exchange and feedback will be facilitated both in discussion and in formal oral presentations.

**Ways that creative thinking will be an essential aspect of the course requirements.**

Creative thinking will be vital in two ways in this course: (1) students will be exposed to the works of some of the most creative artists and thinkers of the past 100 years; (2) students will have to understand and synthesize complex thought generated in a very different historical context and have the creativity to make connections between that thought and contemporaneous aesthetic texts, on the one hand, and their own contemporary world, on the other.

**How the course will embrace, as appropriate, interdisciplinary work and study.**

The study of film is inherently interdisciplinary. Additionally, this course integrates a variety of media and material from a number of different disciplines (art history, philosophy, film studies, political theory, etc.) as it seeks to unpack avant-garde cinema as a crossroads of political, philosophical, and aesthetic endeavor.

**Evidence of a pedagogical process that will demand a high level of intellectual output.**

Generally, the movement of this course from the rudimentary aspects of modernism and film history to a consideration of the possibilities and limitation of the visual culture of the present is an extremely demanding one, especially as the steps along the way are built on some of the most challenging aesthetic and intellectual minds of the twentieth century (e.g. Adorno). Specifically, the seminar structure of this course will foster a high level of output over the course of the quarter, while the sequential nature of the paper will afford students the opportunity to generate a quality intellectual product.