

Phil 3511: Philosophy of Literature and Film

Prof. Justin Steinberg

Class Number 63919 Section TR11

Tuesday/Thursday, 11:00 am – 12:15pm



This course will focus on philosophical issues in the medium of film, while also considering issues raised in related art forms such as literature and photography. Among the questions that we will discuss are: How do films represent and what do they represent? What distinguishes a work of non-fiction from a work of fiction? In what sense is there truth in fiction? Can film challenge or inform our understanding of truth and knowledge? What is the relationship between empathy and the imagination? Why do people watch films that produce unpleasant emotions? What makes a film good? Does the ethical content of a film affect its aesthetic value? What kind of ethical and/or political power does film possess?

We will explore these questions by bringing philosophical texts to bear on particular films that will be viewed outside of class. Among the films that we will be viewing and discussing are: *The Thin Blue Line* (Morris, 1988), *Blow-Up* (Antonioni, 1966), *Close-Up* (Kiarostami, 1990), *Rashomon* (Kurosawa, 1950), *Funny Games* (Haneke, 1997), and *Killer of Sheep* (Burnett, 1979).