

**Course Materials for
'Screenwriting & Philosophy'**

**FA/FILM 4600, Section A, GS 5123 3.0
Fall Term, 2005-2006**

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York University

[Outline, Readings and Guide for Writing a Commentary (for student use) and the Schedule of Lectures and Screenings [for private use of EWC] for a one-term course for advanced students of screenwriting or philosophy (and others, if interested) on Screenwriting and Philosophy. First offered in the fall term of 2001, the course was offered again in 2002, 2005 and 2008. The materials here presented, as used in 2005, are comparable in kind to those of the earlier and latter offerings.]

Course Outline

Screenwriting & Philosophy

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Screenwriting & Philosophy

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Evan William Cameron

We know much about how we perceive things (faces, chairs, conversations, music, etc.) and how we perceive them by means of films, thanks to the pain-staking work of scientists during the past two centuries. Strangely, however, the question of how it is *possible* for us to perceive any such things by means of films continues to perplex many, for even as they persist in speaking *as if* we were perceiving them by means of films, they feel compelled nonetheless to deny it, believing that it must somehow be incoherent to affirm that we perceive things by means of films as occurring *elsewhere* than within the space and time within which we perceive them.

We shall devote the first half of this course to coming to understand how the above dilemma may be overcome by attending to the historical trajectory of a fundamental tradition of philosophical investigation stretching from Kant through Wittgenstein and Collingwood to the present day responding to Plato's presumption of 'essentialism', while examining at the same time a number of films that present to us events that could hardly have otherwise been encountered, thereby opening the way to understanding how films have been and continue to be made, perceived and discussed. We shall then ponder the films of Andrei Tarkovsky, a filmmaker who garnered a deserved reputation for enabling us to encounter things *philosophically* by means of his films, seeking to understand how he may have managed to do it.

Prerequisites: Graduate students, and undergraduate students who have completed (or are concurrently enrolled within) a full upper-year course in screenwriting, and another (or the equivalent) in philosophy, are welcome to take the course. Others may do so with permission of the instructor.

Last day to withdraw from course without receiving a grade: Friday, 11 November 2005

Classes: We shall meet from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Thursday mornings in Room 108 CFT. Lecture topics and screenings will be announced beforehand and readings assigned. Sessions will normally consist of a lecture followed by a screening of a feature-length film (or the equivalent). A short break will occur near the middle of each class session.

Office Hours: I shall generally be available in my office in the CFT, Room 216, on Tuesdays from 1:00 until 1:45 p.m., Thursdays from 1:30 until 2:30 p.m. and at other times by appointment. (It would be prudent, however, to confirm meetings with me before or after class.) I can also be reached by e-mail at ewc@yorku.ca.

Readings: An anthology of readings, compiled under the name and number of the course, is available for purchase at the York Bookstore, and should be procured immediately, along with a commentary upon Tarkovsky's life and work by Vida Johnson and Graham Petrie entitled *The Films of Andrey Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue*. A volume of remarks by Andrey Tarkovsky upon his work, entitled *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, will be made available for purchase at cost as announced in class. Other readings may occasionally be assigned from the Book Reserve service of the Scott Library.

Assignments and grading: Each student must complete three assignments:

(a) an *essay*, comprising minimally 6250 words for graduate students or 5000 words for undergraduate students, exclusive of notes and appendices, addressing a problem of the relation between screenwriting and philosophy by bringing to bear upon one or more screenplays and their sources, or the ideas expressed in a text by a notable screenwriter, the encompassing concerns of a text written before 1980 by a major philosopher, worth 50% of the grade;

(b) a *commentary*, comprising minimally 2500 words for graduate students or 2000 words for undergraduate students, upon the essay submitted by another student, worth 30% of the grade; and

(c) a *notebook*, encompassing at least six essays of two-three pages each submitted to me in timely fashion during the run of the course, reflecting upon issues of screenwriting and philosophy arising directly from the films, readings or lectures encountered in class, worth 20% of the grade.

The format and mode of submission of the instalments of the notebook, a work-in-progress throughout the course, and the details of the design and submission of the commentaries, will be given in class.

Dates and times of submission:

A two-page description of the projected essay, including preliminary bibliographies and filmographies, etc., must be submitted to me *before or at the beginning of class on Thursday, 20 October 2001*. The essay itself must be submitted to me *before noon on Wednesday, 16 November 2005*, accompanied by copies of the sources from which you worked (texts, screenplays, novels, short stories, plays, DVDs of films; etc.). On Thursday, 17 November 2005, you will be given the essay of another student, with accompanying materials, upon which to comment. Your commentary must be submitted to me *before or at the beginning of class on Thursday, 24 November 2001*.

Summary of assignments and dates of submission:

Two-page description of essay:	Before or at the beginning of class, Thursday, 20 Oct. 2005
Essay w/sources, etc.:	Before noon on Wednesday, 16 Nov. 2005
Commentary:	Before or at the beginning of class, Thursday, 24 Nov. 2005
Final notebook entry:	Before noon on Thursday, 8 Dec. 2005

All submitted descriptions, treatments, commentaries and notebook entries must be typed in accordance with the standard formats as specified in class. *Keep a copy of all work submitted for the course* as a hostage against ill fortune, for your work will pass through other hands, sometimes slippery, before being returned to you.

Academic penalties: Students within this course will be expected to complete and submit work as if employed within a professional environment requiring deadlines and recognised standards of honesty and integrity to be respected.

Work submitted late will therefore be penalized **one full letter grade**, and if submitted more than a week late, **will be graded 'F' [or '0']**. Exceptions to the above will be made *only* for reasons of bereavement or medical emergency *with supporting documentation required*.

Work submitted that is determined to be in violation of the Senate and/or Faculty of Fine Arts Policies on Academic Honesty, as prescribed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars, **will result in a grade for the work, and for the course, of 'F' [or '0']**.

Changes to Outline: Aspects of this outline may be modified during the progress of the course should extraordinary circumstances arise that require it. If so, modifications will be made only after consultation with the members of the class, and written confirmation of them will be provided in writing.

Memo of Understanding

Screenwriting & Philosophy

**FA/FILM 4600, Section A, GS 5123 3.0
Fall Term, 2005-2006**

An Understanding

I have read the Course Outline for *FA/FILM 4600 A, GS Film 5123 3.0: Screenwriting & Philosophy* to be offered at York University during the Fall term of 2005-2006 under the direction of Dr. Evan Wm. Cameron.

I understand that through the lectures, discussions, readings, essays and examinations encompassed by the course I may be required to attend to works and ideas of others with which I may be unfamiliar and which I may find uncongenial or even abhorrent, and that I may be compelled to demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of them to complete the requirements of the course. I understand in particular that I shall be required to submit the following assignments as specified in the Course Outline, on the dates indicated and in conformity with the Policies on Academic Honesty of the Senate and of the Faculty of Fine Arts, or be subject to the academic penalties noted therein.

Two-page description of essay:	Before or at the beginning of class, Thursday, 20 Oct. 2005
Essay w/sources, etc.:	Before noon on Wednesday, 16 Nov. 2005
Commentary:	Before or at the beginning of class, Thursday, 24 Nov. 2005
Final notebook entry:	Before noon on Thursday, 8 Dec. 2005

In return, I understand that I shall be given the opportunity at or near the end of the course to evaluate the conduct of Professor Cameron with respect to the course, and the content of the course itself, on a form permitting me to append whatever comments I wish to make without signing my name or in any other way infringing on the confidentiality of the assessment. I understand, as well, that Professor Cameron will request that my confidential assessment, including comments, be incorporated in any future evaluation of his performance as a professor by the university.

Having been given the opportunity by Professor Cameron to question him with respect to the content, structure and requirements of the course, I agree to participate in it in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Course Outline and this understanding.

(name: please print)

(student ID #)

(date)

(signature)

Readings:

Table of Contents & Sources

[Anthology to be Purchased]

Screenwriting & Philosophy

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Table of Contents & Sources

Screenwriting & Philosophy: FA/FILM 4600 3.0 A/GS 5123 3.0 Fall Term, 2005–2006

The readings in this anthology have been ordered alphabetically by author. The provenance and date of the *original* publication of the material are given in brackets if otherwise unobvious from the text.

- John Austin. "A Plea for Excuses". Chapter 6 of *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford, England: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1961), pages 123–152. [Published originally in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1956–7.*]
- Bazin, André. "Theatre and Cinema – Part Two". From *What is Cinema?*, selected and translated by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968 [1951]), pp. 95–124.
- Cameron, Evan Wm. "Filmmaking, Logic and the Historical Reconstruction of the World". [Revision of 2 August 2002 of essay published originally in *Film & Philosophy* II (1995), pp. 88–104.]
- Cavell, Stanley. "Sight and Sounds", "Photograph and Screen", "Audience, Actor, and Star", "Types; Cycles as Genres" and "Ideas of Origin". Chapters 2– 6 of *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979 [1971]), pp. 16–41.
- Robin G. Collingwood. Chapters I, and IV through XI of *An Autobiography* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1970 [1939]), pp. 1–6 and 29–146.
- John Dewey. "The Live Creature", "Having an Experience", the beginning of "Substance and Form", and "The Varied Substance of the Arts". Chapters I, III, the beginning of VI, and X of *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch and Company, 1934), , pp. 3–19, 35–57, 107–114 and 214–244.
- C. I. Lewis. "A Pragmatic Conception of the *a Priori*". *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 20, Issue 7 (1923), pp. 169–177. [Read before the American Philosophical Association in 1922.]
- Alasdair MacIntyre. "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science". *The Monist*, Vol. 60 (1977), pp. 54–74.
- William Rothman and Marian Keane. "Cavell's Philosophical Procedures and *Must We Mean What We Say?*". The "Appendix" to *Reading Cavell's 'The World Viewed': a Philosophical Perspective on Film* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2000), pp. 261–277.
- George Santayana. "The Photograph and the Mental Image". From *Animal Faith and Spiritual Life: Previously Unpublished and Uncollected Writings by George Santayana with Critical Essays on His Thought*, edited by John Lachs (New York, New York: Appleton–Century–Crofts, 1967.), pp. 391–402. [Reprinted from *Columbia Manuscript Collection, XIV:5:a* (8 1967 by Daniel Cory)]
- Ludwig Wittgenstein. "Philosophy". From *Philosophical Occasions: 1912–1951*, edited by James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann [with contributions by R. B. Braithwaite, G. E. Moore, William Eccles, Rush Rhees, Yorick Smythies and G. H. von Wright] (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 160–199. [A representation of sections 86–93, pp. 405–435, of the so-called 'Big Typescript', Catalogue Number 213 in the Wittgenstein *Nachlass*, written circa 1933; German text edited by Heikki Nyman; translation by C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue.]

Guide for Writing a Commentary

Screenwriting & Philosophy
FA/FILM 4600, Section A, GS FILM 5123 3.0
Fall Term, 2005-2006

**FA/FILM 4123, GS 5123 3.0
Screenwriting & Philosophy
Fall Term, 2005-2006**

Guide for Writing a Commentary

You have been given an essay with appendices by another student upon which to comment. Your review of 2000 words (7 pages) if you are an undergraduate student, or 2500 words (10 pages) if you are a graduate student, is due before noon of Thursday, 24 November 2005.

Treat the essay and any accompanying materials given you with care. *Do not write upon them.* Confine your comments to your typewritten critique, and return both your critique and the essay to me in the envelope given you.

Keep in mind, as you assess the essay, that this is a course on coming to understand better how the concerns and interests of screenwriters and philosophers intersect. As we have stressed in class, such understanding comes only from trying to put oneself in the place of at least one screenwriter and one philosopher – determining what problems they faced, why the texts they produced were thought to be answers to those problems, and what interesting relationships might be drawn between them.

When assessing the project, therefore, the fundamental question to answer is whether the project is founded upon a thorough and determined attempt by the student to understand what the chosen screenwriter(s) and the philosopher(s) intended to achieve by saying what they said, and what light might be thrown by each upon the other. Would those writers, in short, facing the problems they faced, and giving the answers they gave, have deemed the student's remarks to be interesting and important?

Formally, however, your assessment should address at least the following four questions in order:

1. Does the essay, step-outline, etc., meet the minimal requirements of the assignment with respect to subject, length, format and documentation? The essay, as specified in the Course Outline, must encompass at least "6250 words for graduate students or 5000 words for undergraduate students, exclusive of notes and appendices" and address "a problem of the relation between screenwriting and philosophy by bringing to bear upon one or more screenplays and their sources, or the ideas expressed in a text by a notable screenwriter, the encompassing concerns of a text written before 1980 by a major philosopher". Is an adequate step-outline appended, and a copy of the original text enclosed (if not otherwise readily available)? Etc.. Unless I have indicated otherwise to you, the essay given you should conform reasonably to the above requirements. Format and documentation should be of university standard.

2. What are the strengths of the paper? What are its weaknesses?
3. What, on balance, do you think of the *theses* of the paper? Were you persuaded by the author? If so, why? If not, why not?
4. What suggestions would you make to the author for further study (e.g., other relevant theorists or texts)?

Strive to be as fair, cautious, helpful and yet critically focussed as you can be, remembering that the grade given to the essay you are helping to assess will constitute 50% of some other student's grade for the course, that your commentary will constitute 30% of your own grade for the course, and that one of your peers will be reviewing your work as well.

Course Schedule

**Lectures & Screenings
(with Readings to be Assigned for Week Following)**

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Lectures and Screenings (with Readings to be Assigned for Week Following)

08 Sept.	Introduction & Overview	GLENN GOULD: OFF THE RECORD; ON THE RECORD, 1959, 60m (Stanley Jackson [b. ?]; dir. Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor); THIRTY TWO SHORT FILMS ABOUT GLENN GOULD, 1993, 94m (François Girard [b. 1933], Don McKellar [b. 1963] and Nick McKinney [b. 1969]; dir. Girard). Read Bazin, Cameron, Cavell (Rothman & Keane?) and Santayana.
15 Sept.	Lecture1: Wittgenstein, Socrates & Plato's 'Essentialism': an Introduction	BARAKA, 1992, 94m (dir. Rob Fricke). Read Lewis and Dewey.
22 Sept.	Lecture 2: Santayana's Story: a Hint of Things of Come – Wisdom without Essentialism; and Pudovkin's Solution to the Mysteries of 'Collective Artistry' and the 'Masterscene Screenplay'	ZELIG, 1983, 79m (Woody Allen [b. 1935]; dir. Allen); DUTCH HARBOR: WHERE THE SEA BREAKS ITS BACK, 1998, 80m (dir. Braden King & Laura Moya).
29 Sept.	Lecture 3: Kant's 'Copernican Revolution', Intimations of Pragmatism and the Metaphysical Research Laboratory of Filmmaking	THE DOUBLE LIFE OF VÉRONIQUE, 1991, 96m (Krzysztof Piesiewicz [b. 1945] and Krzysztof Kieślowski [b. 1941]; dir. Kieślowski). Read Austin, Collingwood, MacIntyre, Rothman & Keane and Wittgenstein. [Next week: bring \$25 to purchase <i>Sculpting in Time</i> by Tarkovsky.]
06 Oct.	Lecture 4: Consequences of Pragmatism: Learning How to Learn without Generalizing (from Lewis, Dewey, Austin, Wittgenstein, Collingwood and MacIntyre, contra Plato) by Reconstructing the Historical Narrative of How we Encounter Things.	THE STEAMROLLER AND THE VIOLIN, 1960, 45m (Andrei Tarkovsky, with Andrei Konchalovsky [b. ?] and S. Bakhmetyeva [b. ?] (story); dir. Andrei Tarkovsky); MY NAME IS IVAN, 1962, 96m (Vladimir Bogomolov [b. 1924], Mikhail Papava [b. 1906], Andrei Konchalovsky [uncredited; b. 1937], and Andrei Tarkovsky [uncredited]; dir. Tarkovsky). Begin to read Tarkovsky and Petrie.
13 Oct. 20 Oct.	Yom Kippur [Screening only.] [Project Descriptions Due!]	[No Classes] ANDREI RUBLEV, 1966, 205m (Andrei Konchalovsky [b. 1937] and Andrei Tarkovsky [b. 1932]; dir. Tarkovsky).

- 27 Oct. Tarkovsky 1: Collingwood and Autobiography: a Prelude to Comprehending Why Tarkovsky was Dissatisfied with his Early Works SOLARIS, 1971, 166m (Fridrikh Gorenshtein [b.?], Stanislaw Lem [b. 1921] and Andrei Tarkovsky; dir. Tarkovsky). Begin Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*; Johnson & Petrie, *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky*.
- 03 Nov. Tarkovsky 2: From Fanciful to Memorable Events: an Introduction to Tarkovsky's Transformations, Part 1 [**Last date to drop w/o grade 11 November!**] THE MIRROR, 1975, 106m (Aleksandr Misharin [b.?], Andrei Tarkovsky; dir. Tarkovsky).
- 10 Nov. [**Discussion of Projects and their submission.**] Tarkovsky 3: From Memorable to Memorably Fanciful Events: an Introduction to Tarkovsky's Transformations, Part 2 (from THE MIRROR to STALKER) [**Essays Due: 16 November!**] STALKER, 1979, 160m (Arkadi Strugatsky [b. 1925], Boris Strugatsky [b. 1933] and Andrei Tarkovsky [uncredited]; dir. Tarkovsky).
- 17 Nov. Tarkovsky 4: The Pedagogical (read: Historical) Lesson of the Unceasing Evolution and Peculiar Limitations of Tarkovsky's Convictions about How Films Ought to be Made. NOSTALGHIA, 1983, 126m (Tonino Guerra [b. 1920] and Andrei Tarkovsky; dir. Tarkovsky).
- 24 Nov. Lecture: Tarkovsky's 5: the Summary (Philosophical) Provocation of Tarkovsky's Remarks upon How Films Ought in General to be Made [**Commentaries Due!**] THE SACRIFICE, 1986, 145m (Andrei Tarkovsky; dir. Tarkovsky).
- 01 Dec. Discussion: Wine & Cheese DIRECTED BY ANDRE TARKOVSKY, 1988, 102m (Michal Leszczylowski [b.?]; dir. Michal Leszczylowski).