

Contemporary Polish Cinema: Andrzej Wajda

Instructor: Dr. Elzbieta Ostrowska (visiting from the University of Lodz, Poland)

Course Meets: M 1:00PM-4:50PM CL 352

Office Hours: M 11:00AM-12:00 PM, W 10:00AM-10:45AM

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Course Description:

The course will examine the films of Andrzej Wajda who is regarded by film critics as the quintessential Polish director, so strongly is he connected to Polish history and Poland's cultural tradition. In this course, his films will be examined from both an historical and an aesthetic perspective in order to show how Wajda was involved in the main trends of post-war Polish cinema: in Socialist Realism, the Polish Film School and the Cinema of Moral Concern. When appropriate, Wajda's films will be contrasted with other director's films (for example, Andrzej Munk). As many of Wajda's films are adaptations of novels and short stories the course will also introduce some aspects of Polish literature. The films to be examined are in three general groups:

"Films representing World War II and their relation to Polish national ideologies and, in particular, to Polish Romanticism." Films representing post-war Poland and their relation to important socio-political changes in the period." Films focusing on the role of cinema and cultural production in general, as part of the process of the construction of a national collective consciousness

Each class will include an introductory lecture, oral presentations by class members and the screening of a film followed by discussion. By the end of the course students will be familiar with the work of Andrzej Wajda as well as the main trends of Polish post-war cinema. They will also be able to use methods of textual and contextual film analysis.

Course objectives:

1. To survey the history of Polish cinema through Andrzej Wajda's films.
2. To introduce students to Polish cultural traditions.
3. To develop methods of film analysis.

Required Textbook:

Marek Haltof, 2002, Polish National Cinema, Berghahn (Book Centre).

Secondary Literature (available on reserved):

Norman Davies, God's Playground. A History of Poland, New York 1982.

Norman Davies, Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland, Oxford 2001.

Assessment:

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

Midterm test: identification and discussion of terms, names and image and short essay questions.

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

Grading:

Class participation--15%

Essay 1--25%

Midterm test/paper--25%

Essay 2--35%

Course schedule:

Week I

A Generation (1954) - Between Communist Propaganda and Polish Romanticism

Week II

Kanal (1957) - Wajda's vision of the Warsaw Uprising

Week III

Ashes and Diamonds (1958) - The Polish Film School

Week IV

Andrzej Munk's Eroica - A polemic against Andrzej Wajda's romanticism.

Week V

Innocent Sorcerers (1960) - The post-war generation.

Week VI

Landscape after Battle (1970) - The Second World War revisited

Week VII

The Birch Wood (1970) - Intertextuality between film, literature, and painting

Week VIII

The Wedding (1972) - The Polish National Drama

Week IX

Promised Land (1974) - Modernity in the Polish context

Week X

Man of Marble (1976) - Revisionist representations of the Stalinist period in Poland

Week XI

Rough Treatment (1978) - The Cinema of Moral Concern

Week XII

Man of Iron (1981) - Direct witness to historical events: the representation of the Solidarity revolution.

Week XIII

Korczak (1995) - Wajda's return to the issue of the Holocaust

Week XIV

Pan Tadeusz (1999) - Nostalgia