

University of Pittsburgh

Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Polish 1450 - Contemporary Polish Cinema (Spring Term)

Instructor: Jolanta Lapot (visiting from Lodz Film School of Poland, 1999-2000)

Course Meets: W CL249 5:45-10:00

Office Hours: Th, Fr 11:00-2:00

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General Course Description

The course presents contemporary Polish cinema from 1945 to the present. Concepts will be studied in their historical, political, philosophical, and aesthetic perspective. We will examine the important national themes in modern Polish cinema, relating them to the history of Poland and Eastern Europe. The main trends (schools, movements) in Polish cinema will be examined such as the so-called Polish School and the Cinema of Moral Concern. The works of most important modern Polish film-makers will be examined, including the works of Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk, Agnieszka Holland, Roman Polanski, Krzysztof Kieslowski, Wladyslaw Pasikowski, Leszek Wosiewicz, and Ryszard Bugajski.

Films to be examined may be divided into three general groups

1. Films representing post-war history and, more specifically, films covering important social and political transformations, but made after the fact. These are sometimes called revisionist films in search of historical truth, previously distorted by political ideology.
2. Films dealing with World War II. We will look at different ways in which the war is treated by film-makers over the course of the post-war period.
3. The final group of films is chosen purely on the basis of artistic merit. The role of film as an art form will be examined during the different periods of the post-World-War-Two era.

By the end of the course students will be familiar with the major Polish film-makers and their best works. They will be able to understand the complex ethical issues raised in these movies as well as have a better understanding of the historical-didactic role these movies have played in Polish culture. Students will also be able to analyze better the context in which the contemporary Polish world-view has been formed.

Required Textbooks

1. Boleslaw Michalek, Frank Turaj (1988). Modern Cinema of Poland, Indiana University Press
2. Frank Bren (1993). World Cinema: Poland, London

*Additional materials will be photocopied.

General instruction

Classes will consist of lectures, seminar discussion, and student oral presentations.

Method of Evaluation

- 5 short (2-4 pages each).....5x10% =50%
- Final paper (8-10 pages).....20%
- Attendance, participation.....30%

Policies and Expectations

During the semester students will be required to write 5 brief essays in which they will reflect on the issues raised in the screened movies or touched on during class discussion.

In the final paper, students will be required to give a deeper analysis of a single chosen issue as it relates to modern Polish cinema.

A readiness to lead and participate in class discussion, and to give oral presentations, will be required of all participants.

List of Films to be Screened

1. Leon Buczkowski, Adventure in Mariensztat (1953)
2. Andrzej Wajda, Man of Marble (1977)
3. Ryszard Bugajski, Interrogation (1982/1990)
4. Andrzej Wajda, Ashes and Diamonds (1958)
5. Roman Polanski, Knife in the Water (1962)
6. Agnieszka Holland, A Lonely Woman (1981/1987)
7. Krzysztof Kieslowski, Camera Buff (1979)
8. Andrzej Wajda, Man of Iron (1981)
9. Agnieszka Holland To Kill the Priest (1984)
10. Juliusz Machulski, Sexmission (1984)
11. Krzysztof Kieslowski, White (1993)
12. Leszek Wosiewicz, Kornblumenblau (1996)
13. Wladyslaw Pasikowski, Pigs (1992)

Supplementary Films

1. Jerzy Skolimowski, Hands Up (1967)

2. Barbara Sass, *Without Love* (1980)
3. Krzysztof Kieslowski, *Blind Chance* (1982)
4. Krzysztof Zanussi, *Camouflage* (1976)

Tentative Course Schedule

WEEK I.

Introduction. The Period of Socialist Realism (1949-1956)

- Influence of international political events of the late 1940s on the building of Communist Poland.
- Main assumptions of the cultural policies determining the shape of artistic creation.
- Mystification of reality and the imposition of values in Polish socialist-realist cinematography.
- Tasks and aims of film under Socialist Realism. The labor-related film (examples from *Two Brigades*, *Near Warsaw*, *The Bus Arrives at 6:30*, *Not Far from Warsaw*)
- Screening of *Adventure in Mariensztat*
- Analysis and discussion

WEEK II.

Stalinist terror and the individual

- Films made after the fact: *Shivers* dir. by Wojciech Marczewski, *Man of Marble* dir. by Andrzej Wajda, *Interrogation* dir. by Ryszard Bugajski. Textbook 1, pp. 159-179. Textbook 2, pp 133-144.
- Wajda: between the permissible and the impermissible. *Man of Marble*: history of production; international reception; importance. Textbook 1, pp. 156-160. Textbook 2, 133-144.
- Screening: *Man of Marble*, dir. by Andrzej Wajda (1977)
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK III.

The totalitarian system and Marxist ideology (continuation)

- Krystyna Janda, "woman of marble" and other Polish actors.
- Poland's banned films. *Interrogation*: history of production, international reception. Textbook 2, pp. 129-130. Review by Philip Strick.
- Screening: *Interrogation* dir. by Ryszard Bugajski (1982/90)
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK IV.

The "Polish School" (1953-1963)

- Polish social and political situation after the October 1956 workers' riots. Excerpts from fictionalized documentary Poznan 1956 dir. by Filip Bajon (1996)
- Main trends in film-making as a reflection of artistic, social, and political transformations in this period. Textbook 1, pp. 19-34.
- Wajda's trilogy: Generation, Kanal, Ashes and Diamonds. The Polish dilemma. Textbook 1, pp. 129- 138. The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda by Boleslaw Michalek, pp. 9-54.
- Screening of Ashes and Diamonds dir. by Andrzej Wajda
- Zbigniew Cybulski, the "Polish James Dean"
- Analysis and discussion: World War Two and the revision of history. The hero as the continuation of the Polish literary Romantic hero. Moral existentialism. Polemic with the Polish cultural tradition of romantic ideology.

WEEK V.

The Polish School (continued). Perspectives on World War Two.

- Andrzej Munk: war from the perspective of a skeptic.
- The psychological and sociological syndrome of the executioner and his victim. Textbook 2, 11. 27-28 and 114-128. Textbook 2, pp. 54-56.
- Screening: The Passenger dir. by Andrzej Munk (1963)
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK VI.

Films about the reality of the 1960s. Textbook 1, pp. 35-48.

- The social and political situation in the Gomulka period: historical events of the period.
- March 1968. Anti-Jewish social climate as the result of political manipulation. Parts of the documentary Hear My Cry, dir. by Maciej Drygas (1991)
- The Lodz Film School of the 1960s. Pictures of Polish socialist reality, the crisis of values. The "little stabilization". The cinema of Jerzy Skolimowski.
- Roman Polanski, Polish origins and experience. The End of Night, Two Men and a Wardrobe, Knife in the Water. Textbook 1, pp 41-42 and Film School of Poland, pp. 14-16.
- Screening: Knife in the Water, dir. by Roman Polanski (1962)
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK VII.

The Cinema of Moral Concern.

- The social reality and the crisis of values, individual and collective values and attitudes. Textbook 1, pp. 59-79.
- Screening: Lonely Woman, dir. by Agnieszka Holland (1981)

- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK VIII.

The Cinema of Moral Concern (continuation)

- The documentary. The social and political situation in Poland (Krzysztof Kieslowski, Marcel Lozinski). Textbook 1, pp. 65-68.
- Work relationships, social vision, the ambiguity of so-called social advancement.
- Screening: Camera Buff, dir. by Krzysztof Kieslowski (1979)
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK IX.

- Socio-political analysis of Polish reality. The events of January 1970 and of the year 1980. Historical events of the period. Textbook 1, pp. 74-76.
- Andrzej Wajda: artist and politician. Man of Iron: art, history, connections. Textbook 1, pp. 163-167.
- Screening: Man of Iron, dir. by Andrzej Wajda (1981).
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK X.

The Stigma of Martial Law. Escape to freedom.

- Martial law: general historical description of the period.
- Polish cinema between 1981 and 1989. Polish directors in Poland and in exile. Textbook 1, pp. 77-79. 196-197.
- Agnieszka Holland, a portrait. The murder of Father Popieluszko and To Kill a Priest.
- Screening: To Kill a Priest, dir. by Agnieszka Holland (1984).
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK XI.

Escape to the Cinema of Genres

- Hit comedy denounces the totalitarian system (Sexmission)
- Screening: Sexmission, dir. by Juliusz Machulski (1984).
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK XII.

Polish Cinema after the 1989 Freedom Shock

- "A Fistfull of Dollars" (article from Film Quarterly) 1995/3

- The difficult lessons of democracy. Polish reality of the 1990s. Social consequences of the political turn- around.
- Krzysztof Kieslowski, the pessimist (?). Decalogue
- Kieslowski's French movies.
- Screening: White, dir. by Krzysztof Kieslowski (1993).
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK XIII.

Post-Modernist view of the role of cinematic art.

- Polish cinema, Polish history, and the Romantic tradition.
- World War II as now depicted.
- Screening: Kornenblumenblau, dir. by Leszek Wosiewicz (1996)
- Analysis and discussion.

WEEK XIV. (continuation)

- Moral vacuum following the euphoria from regained freedom; crisis of values.
- Screening: Pigs, dir. by Wladyslaw Pasikowski (1992) and Jakub, dir. by Adam Guzinski (student from the Lodz Film School, 1998)
- Analysis and discussion.
- History of Polish Cinema: Conclusion
- **Final Paper Due.**

ENJOY THE CLASS!