



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title:	Uses and Misuses of Propaganda in European Film
Course code:	CINE 3012 PRAG
Programs offering course:	Business, Arts and Sciences, Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3.00
Contact hours:	45.00
Term:	Fall 2023

Course Description

It could be said that all films are propaganda because they convey messages consciously or unconsciously. However, this course, through the use of a wide range of clips, and relevant texts, looks at two kinds of propaganda in films, the overt and the covert, and the different categories within each type. Thus there is a distinction to be made between the Propaganda film that does not disguise its intentions to influence and even to convert audiences, and those films that have an ideology embedded in it, be it a western, thriller, comedy, or melodrama. The course, which is mainly structured chronologically, takes a contextual and intertextual approach to the subject, while seeking out the specificity of cinema. The course is supplemented and illustrated by the use of clips from films, and one or two complete feature films, to which the students are expected to apply historical and critical analyses, seeing films from different perspectives. In other words, students learn how to "read" films.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Develop academic expertise, such as a scholarly comprehension, critical spectatorship, and thinking about the means by which films attempt to persuade the spectator to embrace a certain point of view, whether psychological, social, or ideological;
- Apply the basic terms of film theory, such as diegetic and non-diegetic, the signified and the signifier, the Kuleshov effect, dialectical montage and deep focus;
- Deliver a presentation critiquing a film, lead a critical discussion and defend their views;
- Present different perspectives of a film employing historical and critical analyses.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

The course will take the form of interactive lectures which will be illustrated by film clips derived mainly from YouTube links, to which the students will have access as revision, and from available DVDs.

Assessment and Final Grade

1.	Presentation	20%
2.	Two Quizzes 20% x 2	40%
3.	Essay	20%
4.	Class Participation	20%
	TOTAL	100%

Course Requirements

Presentation

A 5-10 minute presentation of a subject, chosen by the student but as an aspect of a subject already covered by the professor.

Two Quizzes 20% x 2

Two oral quizzes in class requiring short answers, one pre-midterm.

Essay

One essay of 1700-2000 words on a subject arranged with the professor to be delivered to the professor towards the end of the course.

Class Participation

Assessment of students' participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Participation is valued as **meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom**, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students are required to actively, meaningfully and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions and all types of in-class activities throughout the duration of the class. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed, in advance of each class session. This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Students are responsible for following the course content and are expected to ask clarification questions if they cannot follow the instructor's or other students' line of thought or argumentation.

The use of electronic devices is only allowed for computer-based in-class tests, assignments and other tasks specifically assigned by the course instructor. Students are expected to take notes by hand unless the student is entitled to the use of computer due to his/her academic accommodations. In such cases the student is required to submit an official letter issued by his/her home institution specifying the extent of academic accommodations.

Class participation also includes students' active participation in Canvas discussions and other additional tasks related to the course content as specified by the instructor.

Students will receive a partial participation grade every three weeks.

Attendance

To encourage engaged learning, regular class attendance is required throughout the program. This includes any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as internship, service-learning, or other required field placement.

An excused absence in a CIEE course will only be considered if approved by a CIEE Center Director/Academic Director (not the Instructor), and:

- it is a self-certified absence for illness (only once per course, requires formal request before or within 24 hours, cannot miss assessment worth more than 5% of final course grade)
- a doctor's note from a local medical professional is provided
- evidence of a family emergency is provided
- it is a pre-approved observance of religious holiday

Unexcused absences include personal travel and/or travel delays, as well as missing more than 25% of a single class period (including tardiness and early departure). Assessments missed due to unexcused absences will be marked as zero. Students with over 10% unexcused absences will be contacted by CIEE staff. Students with over 20% unexcused absences will be contacted by CIEE staff, receive a formal warning letter (shared with their home institution) and lose 10% of the final course point total (e.g., a final A grade of 93% will be lowered to a B grade of 83%).

For more detail, please consult your CIEE Academic Manual.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to a positive and inclusive teaching and learning environment. All students are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness, respect, and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in grade penalties or disciplinary action. See the CIEE Student Academic Manual for further information on academic integrity.

N.B. Course schedule and co-curriculars are subject to change. The final duration and distribution of content and assignments will be determined and presented to students at the onset of the course.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class: .

A general introduction to film history and film theory in order to give students the tools with which to 'read' a wide range of films. The way in which sound is used for dramatic effect, the effectiveness of the close-up, the Long Take, Visual metaphors, Deep Focus or Depth of Field and the montage theory, as espoused by Russian constructivists.

Week 2

Class: .

Vladimir Lenin, the head of the Soviet state realized at the beginning of the Russian revolution of 1917, that film was the most important of all the arts because it could educate the masses, many of whom were illiterate, to support Bolshevik aims. This was carried out by 'agitprop' trains and the work of Dziga Vertov's Kino-Pravda (literally Cinematic Truth) newsreels. Almost all of the silent Soviet films of the 1920s - Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*, V. I. Pudovkin's *Mother* and Alexander Dovzhenko's *Zvenigora* - were made for propaganda purposes. At the same time, the films were revolutionary in form. Extracts from the masterpieces of early Soviet cinema will be examined.

Week 3

Class: .

In 1924, the Soviet government declared that the state would not interfere in matters of artistic style - even non-naturalistic and avant-garde expression - but that the films should have a revolutionary content. Thus began an exciting and fruitful period with unexpected results, such as the comedies of Boris Barnet, and Vertov's documentary *The Man With The Movie Camera* (1929) while Lev Kuleshov, one of the first theorists of the cinema, put his researches at the service of his first feature, the gag-filled satire *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924) while Yakov Protazanov made the first Soviet science-fiction movie, *Aelita* (1924).

Week 4

Class: .

The contrast between Russian Constructivism and German Expressionism will be examined, putting the films in historical context. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) became the trademark film of German cinema of the 1920s with its stylized distorted sets, artificial lighting and shadows. Among the directors who emerged at the same period was Fritz Lang with his two-part *Dr. Mabuse, The Gambler* (1922) and *Metropolis* (1927), both of which seem to foreshadow the rise of Adolph Hitler. This is expressed by Siegfried Kracauer in his book, *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947), which analyzed the German psyche through German films.

Reading requirement. Indicated sections from Kracauer's book.

Week 5

Class: .

Following on from the previous week on German cinema, films, now under control of the Nazis, who purged Jews from the industry, will be analyzed. There were a number of anti-semitic propaganda pieces, including *Jew Suss* (1940), which distorted the original novel, and the two spectacular Leni Riefenstahl's documentaries, *The Triumph of the Will* (1935) - on the Nuremberg Rally - and *Olympia* (1938), on the 1936 Berlin Games. What criteria is used on which to judge them? Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) as a reaction to the Nazi regime.

An oral quiz, requiring short written answers will be given in class during this week. There will also be a discussion on the 5-10 minute presentations that the students will give during the Mid-Term exam period the following week.

Week 6

Class: Midterm Exam Period

Student Presentations. This will require the student to deliver a short talk on a specific subject – a critique of one film or a general theme or style.

Week 7

Class: Midterm Exam Period

During World War II, only Great Britain, being one of the very few unoccupied countries, produced anti-Nazi films such as Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) and Humphrey Jennings' *London Can Take It* (1940) and *Listen to Britain* (1942), did much to influence public opinion in America. When the USA entered the war in 1941, a stream of anti-Nazi dramas were produced. Even Donald Duck was recruited against the enemy in Walt Disney's *The Fuehrer's Face* (1943). The Soviet Union, under Stalin, produced mainly morale-boosting documentaries and 'Socialist Realist' features. Socialist Realism was opposed to 'formalism' (art that put style above content). One of the few masterpieces of Socialist Realism was Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* (1938).

Week 8

Class: .

The majority of post-war films made in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia – countries which had been under German occupation and restricted in their film-making – tended to deal with the occupation, the horrors of the ghetto and the heroes of the resistance. The three countries had won independence before Nazi subjugation, then fell under repressive Communist regimes. They had to wait until the late '50s to have some freedom. During the war, the Germans took over Barrandov Studios in Prague, one of the best equipped in Europe, which interrupted any advance in the Czech film industry. After 1945, Yugoslavian films dealt almost exclusively with the war such as the popular 'partisan' movies.

Week 9

Class: .

Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione* (1942) is regarded as the first Italian neo-realist film, followed by Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945) and the films of Vittorio De Sica: *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), *Miracle in Milan* (1953) and *Umberto D* (1952), dealt with the problems of working class people and the social conditions that caused them.

Week 10

Class: .

The second quiz, based on the course so far, will be held during this week. There will also be a discussion on the subjects of the essays which the students will deliver the following week.

The late '50s and 60s were a fertile period for Polish, Hungarian and Czech cinema, until a crackdown on freedom of expression after 1968. Most influential were the films of the Andrzej Wajda, starting with his war trilogy, *A Generation* (1954), *Kanal* (1957) and *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958), bitter anti-romantic World War II films, which brought Polish cinema to the world's attention as never before. When censorship was slightly relaxed, Wajda returned to overt political subjects reflecting on the immediate past, with *Man of Marble* (1976) – which depicted the life of a worker hero of the '50s who falls from official favor, and its sequel *Man of Iron* (1981), made under enormous pressure, about the struggle for Solidarity. In Czechoslovakia, a new generation of directors emerged, notably Milos Forman, Jan Kadar, Ivan Passer, Jiri Menzel and Vera Chytilova, who cleverly tried to skirt censorship while still seeming to be on message. Likewise, in Hungary, a younger generation of film-makers made their mark: Miklos Jancso, (*The Round-Up*, 1965), Istvan Szabo (*Father*, 1967) and Istvan Gaal (*The Falcons*, 1970). Jancso, especially, from the mid-60s to the mid-70s, traces the fight for Hungarian independence and socialism by using emblem and symbolism in his choreographed dramas.

Week 11

Class: .

Students will deliver their essays of 1,700-2,000 words to the professor on December 4

without any extension of time.

The hugely influential French New Wave mainly avoided propaganda, except for Jean-Luc Godard, who formulated a truly revolutionary film language free from the dominant bourgeois culture of the west. After *Weekend* (1968), a devastating critique of modern French society, Godard broke away from commercial film-making to shoot a series of ciné-tracts in 16mm and video, but returned to more accessible films but with his revolutionary zeal undimmed. At the same time, Rainer Werner Fassbinder was attacking the complacency of post-war Germany with *The Third Generation* (1979), which focused on a Berlin terrorist group, and other films that attempted to demystify Germany's cultural and historical past. Wim Wenders in his early films tried to confront that notion that 'the Yanks have colonized our [Germans] subconscious'

Week 12

Class: .

The last lectures will look at how propaganda has been used in the USA, particularly Hollywood during the studio era, as distinct from the approach in Europe. This will include the racism in films like *Birth of a Nation*, but also how the more subliminal 'messages' are delivered in films like *Casablanca* and the melodramas of Douglas Sirk. There will also be an overview on propaganda in the arts generally, and how film functions as 'a synthesis of all the arts' (Eisenstein) and is yet the most effective medium to persuade viewers to accept a particular belief or ideology whether consciously or unconsciously.

Week 13

Class: Final Exam Week

A debate on how propaganda functions on modern social media with examples supplied by the students. Also time will be found for one-to-one consultations.

Course Materials

Readings

(There will be no specific text book for the course. The Professor will supply the students with relevant texts)

Bazin, André. *What Is Cinema?* University of California Press, 2004.

Bergan, Ronald. *Eye Witness Companion Guide to Film*. Dorling Kindersley, October 2006.

Updated 2011.

Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

Kracauer Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Monaco, James. *How to Read a Film*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Media Resources

Films

Among the films to be viewed in whole or part during the course:

- Ali: Fear Eats the Soul (1974), dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder
- All that Heaven Allows (1995), dir. Douglas Sirk
- Battleship Potemkin (1925), dir. Sergei Eisenstein
- Bicycle Thieves (1948), dir. Vittorio De Sicca
- Come and See (1985), dir. Elem Klimov
- Daisies (1966), dir. Věra Chytilová
- Der Fuehrer's Face (1943), dir. Jack Kinney
- Divided We Stand (2000), dir. J. R. Jarrod
- Earth (1998), dir. Deepa Metha
- In a Year of 13 Moons (1978), dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder
- Jew Süss (1940), dir. Veit Harlan
- Kuhle Wampe (1932), dir. Slatan Dudow
- La Grande Illusion (1937), dir. Jean Renoir
- Land Without Bread (1933), dir. Luis Buñuel
- Listen to Britain (1942), dir. Ian Dalrymple

- London Can Take It (1940), dir. Humphrey Jennings
- Man of Iron (1981), dir. Andrzej Wajda
- Man of Marble (1977), dir. Andrzej Wajda
- Metropolis (1927), dir. Fritz Lang
- Miracle in Milan (1951), dir. Vittorio De Sicca
- Mother (1926), dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin
- October (1928), dir. Sergei Eisenstein, Grigori Aleksandrov
- Olympia (1938), dir. Leni Riefenstahl
- Ossessione (1934), dir. Luchino Visconti
- Shop on the High Street (1965), dir. Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos
- Strike (1925), dir. Sergei Eisenstein
- The Birth of a Nation (1915), dir. D. W. Griffith
- The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920), dir. Robert Wiene
- The General Line (1929), dir. Sergei Eisenstein, Grigori Aleksandrov
- The Gorky Trilogy (1938-1940), dir. Mark Donskoy
- The Man with a Movie Camera (1929), dir. Dziga Vertov
- The Round-Up (1966), dir. Miklós Jancsó
- The Triumph of the Will (1935), dir. Leni Riefenstahl
- The Wajda War Trilogy (1954), dir. Andrzej Wajda
- Umberto d' (1952), dir. Vittorio De Sicca
- Welcome, Mr Marshall (1953), dir. Luis García Berlanga
- Westfront 1918 (1930), dir. Georg Wilhelm Pabst
- Why We Fight (2005), dir. Eugene Jarecki