EAST EUROPEAN CINEMA:
WAR, LOVE, AND REVOLUTIONS

FALL 2014

Lecture, discussion, film screenings: Tuesday, 13:05-15:55 pm
Location: McCain 2132
E-mail: yleving@dal.ca, Drop Box: 106.
Office Hours: Monday, 12-1 pm, and by appointment.
McCain, Room 3016, Tel.: 494-3473,
http://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/russian-studies.html

Vaclav Neckar and Jitka Bendova in
Closely Watched Trains (Czechoslovakia, 1966).

Course Description

This class is a survey of Eastern European film from 1956 to 2013. We will look at major films and directors from Poland, Czechoslovakia (and its successor states), Hungary, USSR/Russia, and former Yugoslavia. This course brings post-Berlin Wall European film into the fray of current debates on cultural identity, transnational cinema, and postcolonialism. Despite the state control, the filmmakers of Communist Europe were often more bold, honest and provocative than their profit-driven Hollywood counterparts. By drawing on political, cultural, and philosophical discourses, the course will offer pointed analyses of most significant East European films that touch upon issues of
ethnicity, gender, and overcoming censorship. The time covered includes both the Communist and the post-Communist years.

Full versions of films will be screened once a week, in addition to a lecture, discussion, and viewing of additional short clips. You will even direct a very short film of your own ("The 52 Seconds" Project)!

The objectives:

1. To give you a specific theoretical vocabulary to understand various cinematic styles and to enable you to analyze film, using this vocabulary.
2. To make you comfortable with reading sometimes difficult texts by film-makers and film as well as literary theorists, so that you may appreciate their beliefs about art, cinema and its relationship to the world.
3. To give you an appreciation of global film styles.

Required literature:

1) *The Cinema of Central Europe (24 Frames)* by Peter Hames, available at the University Bookstore (If the store fails to obtain the Hames’ book order, then selected chapters -- assigned below under numbers -- will be provided by instructor as electronic documents).
2) Nick Lacey, *Introduction to Film* (Palgrave, 2005), available at the University Bookstore.

Recommended readings:

Theory of cinema:
Bordwell, David & Thompson, Kristin. *Film Art: An Introduction*. N.Y., 1996.

History of the East European cinema:

ATTENDANCE AND GRADING POLICIES

1) **In-class Written Visual Analysis:** 10 %
2) **Midterm exam**: (Short essay questions and a Visual Analysis) 15%

3) **Film Reports**: 15 % (Due every Thursday by noon; printed out, in my mailbox at McCain ground floor or in the Department of Russian Studies, McCain, 3rd floor)

4) **“The 52 Seconds” Project**: 15%

   “The 52 Seconds” Project – script/storyboard (due on the 4th week of the course); - a short b/w film shot on MiniDV, compact digital camera, or even a cell phone (52 seconds long; due on the 7th week of the course). **Background**: Lumière Brothers’ first “motion pictures” ran exactly 52 seconds due to the technical limitations. I’ll show you in class how some celebrated directors throughout the world created their own one minute Lumière tribute using the restored original camera. **Purpose**: To learn appreciate the visual style and concepts of early cinema. **Audience**: Upload your clip on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) – we (and the rest of the world) will watch the videos in class! Bring a USB memory stick to me **at the time of your presentation** (it will be returned to you after I upload it to my computer).

5) **Student Presentations**: 15 %. In the second half of the semester, you will be divided into small groups (you will also have the option of selecting your group). Each group will be required to give a brief presentation, with a visual, on a film of their choice. The assignment will be discussed in class.

6) **Final research project**: 20%. Final research paper (15 pages) seeking comparative analysis of several films and incorporating material from course readings. This will be due on the last day of the course.

7) **Attendance and Participation**: 10%.

   If you want to keep up with the material, you need to do the readings and be able to identify and understand the key arguments of the essays. To this end, you will be asked to participate in the discussion of the readings and I will call upon you to answer or ask questions as I lecture.

   Attendance will be taken at every class meeting, and you will be marked absent if you are late. To attend classes, to be awake, to participate, to absolutely not talk on your phone or read the paper and solve crossword puzzles during class — all these are crucial requirements for your participation in class.

   **DO NOT WALK OUT OF THE CLASSROOM DURING THE LECTURE.** **SINCE THIS IS A LONG, THREE-HOUR CLASS I WILL ALLOW A 5-MINUTE BREAK BEFORE OR AFTER THE SCREENING OF THE MOVIE.**

   You should attend all classes and screenings. Your overall grade will drop by half a letter grade if you have more than 1 unexcused absence. (An excused absence is when you submit a written excuse such as a doctor's report or a letter about a family emergency. An unexcused absence is when you just decide to not show up). It is your responsibility to make up any (excused or unexcused) classes missed. Absence is not an excuse for ignorance about the material covered on that day. The in-class writing
assignments cannot be made up later, so attendance is critical to keep up with that area of your grade.

**SCHEDULE**

**Topic I: The Post-War Eastern Europe and Independent Cinema**

**September 9: Politics, Culture, and East European Cinema:** *Introduction*

*SCREENING:* Jiri Menzel, *Closely Watched Trains*  
(Czechoslovakia, 1966)  
93 min.

[READ ME!]

Essay in your book under the title *Closely Observed Trains*
Read: 0, 1  
[Note: articles starting with “0” belong to the general background sources on the EE cinema]

**September 16: War and Post-War Trauma in Eastern Europe**

Andrzej Wajda, *Kanal* (Poland, 1957); *Ashes and Diamonds* (Poland, 1958)  
Read: Essay in your book under the title *Ashes and Diamonds*  
Andrzej Munk, *Bad Luck* (Poland, 1959); István Szabó, *Father* (Hungary, 1967)

*SCREENING:* Elmar Klos and Jan Kadar, *The Shop on Main Street*  
(Czechoslovakia, 1966)  
128 min.

[READ ME!]

Theory: Nick Lacey, *Introduction to Film*, Chapter 1, pp. 5-30.  
Read on Wajda, Munk, and Szabó: 2, 2a, 2b, 2c, 3, 3b, 3c  
Read on *The Shop on the High Street*: 4a, 4b, 5, 5a

**September 23: The Czech New Wave**

*SCREENING:* Vera Chytilova, *Daisies*  
(Czechoslovakia, 1967)  
74 min.
Milos Forman, *The Firemen’s Ball* (Czech Republic, 1967)
Milos Forman, *Loves of a Blonde* (Czechoslovakia, 1966)

Read on Forman and Chytilova: 7, 7a, 10, 10a, 0_10, 0_8
Theory: Nick Lacey, *Introduction to Film*, Chapter 1, pp. 31-45.

* FIRST IN-CLASS VISUAL ANALYSIS

** “The 52 Seconds” Project – Your script/storyboard is due today!**

Topic II: Make Love, Not War

September 30

SCREENING: Dusan Makavejev, *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*
(Yugoslavia, 1971)
84 min.

9, 9_WR, 9a, 0_9, 0_14
Theory: Nick Lacey, *Introduction to Film*, Chapter 2, pp. 46-98.

Topic III: The New Mythopoetics

October 7. Cinema of Putin’s Russia

SCREENING: Andrei Zvyagintsev, *The Banishment*
(Russia, 2007)
157 min

IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF “THE 52 SECONDS PROJECT” – 1


October 14. Cinema of Hungary

*GUEST LECTURE and SCREENING*
“Bela Tarr’s *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000) and *The Turin Horse* (2011)
by Matthew McCarthy
(Halifax Public Libraries)

**IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF “THE 52 SECONDS PROJECT” – 2**

Theory: Nick Lacey, *Introduction to Film*, Chapter 4, pp. 147-174.

**October 21: MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

*Note: Midterm will take half of the allocated class time.*

**Topic IV: Auteur Cinema: The Art of Krzysztof Kieslowski**

**Cinema of Poland**

**SCREENING:** Krzysztof Kieslowski, *A Short Film About Love* (Poland, 1988)  
58 min

Theory: Nick Lacey, *Introduction to Film*, Chapter 4, pp. 174-207.  
Read: 12, 12b, 12c, 12d

**October 28: Cinema of a socialist state on the verge of collapse**

**SCREENING:** Cristian Mungiu, *4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days*  
(Romania, 2007)  
113 min.

18, 18a, 0_18  
Theory: Nick Lacey, *Introduction to Film*, Chapter 5, pp. 208-262.

**IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF “THE 52 SECONDS PROJECT” – 3**

**Topic V: Apocalypse Now**
November 14: Cinema of former Yugoslavia

SCREENING: Milcho Manchevski, *Before the Rain*  
(Macedonia, 1994)  
113 min.

Read: 15  

November 11. Remembrance Day, no classes

November 18. STUDENT FINAL PRESENTATONS – 1

* SECOND IN-CLASS VISUAL ANALYSIS

November 25: STUDENT FINAL PRESENTATONS – 2

December 2: Conclusion. STUDENT FINAL PRESENTATONS – 3

Optional (if time is left): Mikhail Kalatozov, *Letter Never Sent*  
(USSR, 1959) 96 min.

Important Things to Note:

(a) Papers should be turned in on time. Grades will be affected by late submission.

(b) *A Warning Regarding Plagiarism*: Dalhousie University subscribes to Turnitin.com, a computer-based service which checks for originality in submitted papers. Any paper submitted by a student at Dalhousie University may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offense which may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the university, or even the revocation of a degree. It is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived. At Dalhousie there are University Regulations which deal with plagiarism and, prior to submitting any paper in a course, students should read the Policy on Intellectual Honesty contained in the Calendar or on the Online Dalhousie website. The senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student papers be submitted in both written and computer-readable format, and to submit any paper to a check such as that performed by Turnitin.com. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand. Copies of student papers checked by this process will be retained by Turnitin.com. (Memo from Vice President Academic and Provost, August 7, 2002).

(c) Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests and exams should make their request to the Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation (OSAA) prior to or at the outset of each academic term (with the exception of X/Y courses). Please see [www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca](http://www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca) for more information and to obtain the Request for Accommodation – Form A.

A note taker may be required to assist a classmate. There is an honorarium of $75/course/term. If you are interested, please contact OSAA at 494-2836 for more information.

Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom so that students who require their usage will be able to
participate in the class. (Memo from Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation, Updated July 2011).

(d) The Writing Centre is here to help you:
Learning to write well contributes to good marks, completion of degrees and, later, success in the workplace. Now is the time to improve your writing skills. You can visit the Writing Centre for assistance with your assignments. Staff and tutors help you to understand writing expectations and disciplinary conventions. The service is available six days a week. (See our website for hours of operation at the various Writing Centre sites.) To book an appointment call 494-1963; email writingcentre@dal.ca; visit the website for online booking at dal.ca/writingcentre; or drop in to the Killam’s main floor Learning Commons (G40). Visit the Writing Centre’s Resource Guide at http://dal.ca.libguides.com/writingcentre for online guidance.

On watching a film & discussing it:

Watching a film to critically analyze it is a different process than watching it in a cinema theater, so here are some ways in which you can train yourself to view a film. These are general guidelines; adapt it to suit your viewing, reading, and analytic skills and interests.

I. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. It is absolutely crucial to take notes when you watch a film. Do not make the mistake of transcribing the whole film; you'll miss the film that way! But jot down that which strikes you, that which you may want to think about later—an image, a sound, a reference to a scene or sequence, a character's role in a specific scene etc.
2. We'll be watching the film in the dark, so you may either bring a small flashlight or get used to reading your scribbles in the dark...
3. It is always good to know the characters names in a film. If you can't catch it or remember it from the screening, look it up on the web (e.g. on <imdb.com>)
4. Write down your thoughts on the film briefly, immediately after you see it. That way your ideas remain fresh and return when you need them to.
5. I will set the films up briefly, but also think of the film when you do the next week's theme. Look for parts of the reading that resonate in a direct or indirect way with any aspect of the film you have seen. Write down specific page numbers and mark relevant sections to talk about in class.

II. SOME WAYS OF DIRECTING YOUR ATTENTION.

FORMAL ANALYSIS OF THE FILM

Like a written sentence that is composed of words, put together grammatically to mean something, a film sequence has its syntax. To convey meaning, instead of nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns, it uses a combination of the following elements, and you need to develop a sensitivity to them all, as they work individually and in conjunction with each other:

(a) Visual material:
Individual shots; each of them framed and composed in a specific manner; edited together with cuts, dissolves, fades.

**Images:**

1. How are the images composed? Do they have a realism, an abstract quality, a surrealism? How are these effects created and to what end? Are the image-compositions largely symmetrical or asymmetrical? What is the mise-en-scene of the image (i.e. how is the action staged, with elements like lighting, costuming, acting)? How is the image presented—from what point-of-view? When are high-angled shots or low-angled shots used? Is there a preponderance of close-ups or medium-shots or long-shots? Does this have any impact on your viewing of the film, on the points of identification you may find or don't find as a viewer?

2. What are the conjunctions or connections between the images? The images are most likely to produce, in their sequencing, a certain narrative or some form of synthesis. Consider how the images are sequenced to produce this narrative. How are connections and associations between images created? What juxtapositions are created by the edits? What is the temporal connection between the images (does it move forwards in time, backward, in a circular manner)? How is temporality constructed?

**Narrative:**

What is the story these series of images tell you? What is (are) the theme (themes) of the film? Does every sequence and image of the film contribute to the theme or does it complicate the theme? Does the film have a singular narrator or multiple narrators? Is the film aligned to any one narrator? Or is the film's perspective alienated from all the characters in the film? Is anyone given omniscience? Can you relate it to any genre? Is it funny, does it use black comedy, tragic devices, melodramatic techniques? How and why?

(b) **Aural material:**

Multiple audio tracks are edited together and with the images. Does the audio always take a secondary and supportive role to the images? If so, why? If not, when does it do so and to what effect? Do the individual shots, the larger narrative, and the audio-track always work with each other to produce a unified meaning? Do they sometimes work against each other? Is there ever any dissonance, and if so to what effect?

**CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF FILM**

What is the film's location within the industry that produced it? What is its relationship to culture—is it part of the dominant ideology; is it conservative or progressive in any way? Does it represent any contradictions in culture and how does it reconcile those contradictions (or not)? How does it represent gender, sexuality, identity, ethnicity, the nation-state, other nationalities, races, classes?