Course Description

Two masters of cinema, yet with little in common, Alfred Hitchcock and Jean-Luc Godard illustrate the spectrum of possibility in film form. A Hollywood establishment insider, Hitchcock represents the apex of classical technique, while Godard serves as one of the greatest critics of that same approach, rejecting establishment rules if only to praise the cinema again in the end. One is the grandmaster of plot and character, the other delights in alienation effects. One is aloof from political concerns, the other yearns to write them into existence. One is obsessed with Freudian psychoanalysis, the other with Marxist revolution. In this course we will study the history and form of the cinema through a focused examination of these two directors.

Given that both Hitchcock's and Godard's careers span several decades and comprise dozens of films, one is obligated to limit one's study considerably. Hence, we will focus on the period of the 1950s and 1960s, corresponding to the late work of Hitchcock and the early work of Godard. The course contains five Hitchcock films, *Strangers on a Train* (1951), *Rear Window* (1954), *Vertigo* (1958), *The Birds* (1963), and *Marnie* (1964), and five Godard films, *My Life to Live* (1962), *Contempt* (1963), *Alphaville* (1965), *Weekend* (1967), and selections from *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998). The course concludes with a work of film criticism by philosopher Slavoj Žižek.

Course readings are drawn from the writings of Harun Farocki, Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Peter Wollen, and Robin Wood. Weekly lectures will include clips selected from the history of cinema and focus on the following concepts and themes: mise-en-scene, narrative, sound, the shot, montage, the long take, spatiality, and the subjective camera.

Course Readings


**Schedule**

January 25  
Course Introduction.

February 1  

February 8  
Silverman & Farocki, “Chapter 2: In Search of Homer.”

February 15  
Silverman & Farocki, “Chapter 3: Words Like Love.”

February 22  
Silverman & Farocki, “Chapter 1: Nana Is an Animal.”

March 1  
Wood, “Chapter 4: *Vertigo*.”

March 8  
Quiz #1 in class today.
*Histoire(s) du cinéma* (d. Jean-Luc Godard, 1988-1998), (selections TBA).
Peter Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema," *Readings and Writings*, pp. 79-91 (PDF).

March 15 - spring break

March 22  
Paper on Godard due in class today (5-6 pages).
No readings or screenings.

March 29  
Wood, “Chapter 7: *The Birds*.”

April 5  
Silverman & Farocki, “Chapter 4: Anal Capitalism.”

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April 12

April 19
Quiz #2 in class today.

April 26

May 3
TBA

May 6, 5pm
Paper on Hitchcock due (5-6 pages).
Course Assignments

Weekly assignments
Students are expected to attend class, and to watch the assigned films and read the assigned readings in advance of class. All films are on reserve in the Avery Fisher Center on the 2nd floor of Bobst Library. Students are strongly encouraged to screen films well in advance of class in order to avoid bottlenecks caused by the last minute rush. Renting or obtaining the films by other means is also encouraged.

Quizzes
There will be two quizzes given in class on March 8 and April 19.

Papers
Students are required to write two papers, each 5-6 pages in length, one on Godard (due March 22) and one on Hitchcock (due May 6). Paper topics will be provided. All papers should demonstrate a close reading of the required cinematic and textual materials and exhibit a methodology of critical and formal analysis.

Grading Requirements
Each student will be evaluated based on the course assignments. Grades will be determined according to the following formula:

60% papers
20% quizzes
20% in-class participation