

New York University  
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication  
**Film: History and Form -- "Hitchcock and Godard"**

SPRING 2011

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E59.1007.001  
Location: Silver 518  
Time: Tuesdays, 4:55pm - 7:25pm

### **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**

Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki, *Speaking about Godard* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films Revisited (Revised Edition)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

## Schedule

January 25

Course Introduction.

February 1

*Marnie* (d. Alfred Hitchcock, 1964). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 3523 (disc 10).  
Wood, "Chapter 8: *Marnie*" (plus optional: Chapter 19).

February 8

*Contempt* (d. Jean-Luc Godard, 1963). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 14786.  
Silverman & Farocki, "Chapter 2: In Search of Homer."

February 15

*Alphaville* (d. Jean-Luc Godard, 1965). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 9917.  
Silverman & Farocki, "Chapter 3: Words Like Love."

February 22

*My Life to Live (Vivre Sa Vie)* (d. Jean-Luc Godard, 1962). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 7138.  
Silverman & Farocki, "Chapter 1: Nana Is an Animal."

March 1

*Vertigo* (d. Alfred Hitchcock, 1958). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 5386.  
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

*The Birds* (d. Alfred Hitchcock, 1963). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 3523 (disc 9).  
Wood, "Chapter 7: *The Birds*."

April 5

*Weekend* (d. Jean-Luc Godard, 1967). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 3497.  
Silverman & Farocki, "Chapter 4: Anal Capitalism."

April 12

*Strangers on a Train* (d. Alfred Hitchcock, 1951). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 5401.

Wood, "Chapter 2: *Strangers on a Train*" and "Chapter 16: The Murderous Gays: Hitchcock's Homophobia."

April 19

Quiz #2 in class today.

*Rear Window* (d. Alfred Hitchcock, 1954). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 3523 (disc 4).

Wood, "Chapter 3: *Rear Window*."

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Visual and Other Pleasures*, pp. 14-26 (PDF).

April 26

*The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (featuring Slavoj Žižek) (d. Sophie Fiennes, 2006). Bobst Avery Fisher DVD 18015.

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