

**Prof. Bernhard Dotzler**

<Office location>

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Office Hrs. W 3:00 - 4:00 PM

**Topics in German Literature & Civilization: Film After Benjamin (3 credits)**

01:470:390; index 06983

Spring 2018

Cross listed with 01:175:377:01 (11477), 01:195:397:01 (13713)

MW 1:10 PM - 2:30 PM

Scott Hall 202

**Course Description**

Walter Benjamin (1892 - 1940) was one of the most influential intellectuals of the twentieth century. He is said to be the first who saw—long before Marshall McLuhan—»that the way a bullet rips into its victim is exactly the way a movie or pop song lodges in the soul.« »Shock« and »distraction« are key concepts of his film theory. Taught in a seminar format and based on readings, discussion, and active participation, the course first studies Benjamin's most important essays on film, photography, and the philosophy of history, including »The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,« »Brief History of Photography,« »On the Present Situation of Russian Film,« »The Storyteller,« and »Theses on the Philosophy of History.« Secondly, the course addresses the question of how Benjamin's theory, or reflections, can be identified in actual movies. Screenings will include *Twelve Monkeys* (dir. Terry Gilliam), *La Jetée* (dir. Chris Marker), *Helas pour moi!* (dir. Jean-Luc Godard), *Local Angel: Theological Political Fragments* (dir. Udi Aloni), *Erzählen/Telling* (dir. Harun Farocki), and *Wings of Desire* (dir. Wim Wenders). – Taught in English.

Required films will be viewed by watching excerpts in class but should be watched independently too. The films will be on reserve in the Douglass Media Center and available for streaming.

**FINAL GRADE**

**Class participation** **10%**

Students are expected to take part actively in class discussion.

**Weekly short papers** **20%**

Jan 29 to Feb 26 students have to write short papers (1 p) on each of Benjamin's essays.

**Presentation** **20%**

The oral presentation is based on one of the topics (i.e. films) covered in class.

**Final paper, due by April 30** **50%**

At the end of the semester students will write a term paper (5-7).

**Grade distribution**

A=90-100%; B+=85-89; B=80-84; C+=75-79; C=70-74; D=65-69; F=64 and below

## Study Materials

Benjamin, Walter, 2007. *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, New York: Schocken Books (ISBN: 978-0-8052-0241-0)

Benjamin, Walter, 2008. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge, Mass./London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (ISBN-13: 978-0-674-02445-8)

Reading materials will be available, too, on the Sakai site for this class.

## Departmental policies

- Attendance

All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website

<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Every additional three absences may entail a further one-step grade-reduction. Three late arrivals count as one absence.

Note: It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out.

- Disability Support Services

Students who may be requesting accommodations due to disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with procedures and policies regarding disability support services at the following website: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/> . It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential.

- Academic Integrity

Violations of academic integrity are an extremely serious matter, and can lead to a student's failing the course and being referred to the University's Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action. When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Note also that use of online translation services is not permitted as a tool for generating work that you submit for course credit. Please see the University's policies on academic integrity at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers> , and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

## **SEMINARPLAN (tentative)**

- Jan 17 01 Introduction
- 22/24 02 Eisenstein: *Battleship Potemkin*
- 29/31 03 *On the Present Situation of Russian Film/Reply to Oscar A.H. Schmitz*
- Feb 05/07 04 *Little History of Photography*
- 12/14 05 *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*
- 19/21 06 *Theses on the Philosophy of History*
- 26/28 07 *The Storyteller*
- March 19/21 08 Farocki, *Erzählen (Telling)*
- 26/28 09 Wenders, *Der Himmel über Berlin / Wings of Desire*
- April 02/04 10 Aloni, *Local Angel: Theological Political Fragments*
- 09/11 11 Godard, *Helas pour moi! / Oh, Woe Is Me*
- 16/18 12 Marker, *La Jetée*
- 23/24 13 Gilliam, *Twelve Monkeys*
- 30 14 Closing statements

**FINAL PAPER due by April 30.**

## **Student-Wellness Services:**

### **Just In Case Web App**

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

### **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

**(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/**

[www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

### **Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)**

**(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 /**

[www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

### **Disability Services**

**(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

### **Scarlet Listeners**

**(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>**

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.