Seminar in Political Theory
Professor M. Schoolman
POS 419Z -0001 (5003), Spring 2012
Monday, 2:45-5:35, LC 11
Department of Political Science
Milne 218 (mschlman@albany.edu)

Student Preceptor: Zachary Madonna

Office Hours for Professor Schoolman:

Monday, Humanities 16 (Political Science Contact Offices)
12:30- 2:30 pm.

Thursday, Milne 218 (downtown campus)
12:30-2:30 pm.

Office Hours for Zachary Madonna:

Humanities 16, by appointment.

Seminar in Political Theory

The topic for this course is "politics and film." It will take up two theoretical questions. First, is there a fundamental shift underway in the culture of modern democratic societies? Specifically, is the culture that was developed around language to some as yet undetermined extent being replaced by a culture that revolves around visual images? Second, what political lessons, if any, do visual images teach, or what forms of political thinking and behavior do visual images encourage? Do visual images make citizens dull, apolitical couch potatoes, or constitute a new form of enlightenment and, if so, in what ways do they enlighten a democratic people or contribute to the development of an enlightened democratic society? To answer these questions the course will focus on film, which is arguably the most dominant visual media today, though we also will be interested more broadly in visual media on the internet and on television. While there is much scholarship on visual images and their media, perhaps the most important work for political theorists has been the writing of the French theorist Gilles Deleuze, whose book Cinema I will form most of the reading for our course. Deleuze’s theory has the great benefit of considering the visual image as it is, apart from language and perception, and allows us to consider visual images as independent forms of discourse – as “visual discourse.” Grades to be based upon term papers, class presentations, and class participation and attendance.
Course Requirements

There are three requirements for this course:

1. Every student is expected to participate in class on a regular basis, posing questions, answering questions, contesting or arguing on behalf of the views of other students in the course and, certainly, challenging the views of the instructor. Since POS 419Z is in a “seminar” format, meaning the class is comparatively small in size and allows for discussion among the members of the class, student participation is facilitated. Class participation is valued at 25% of the final grade. **Obviously, in order to participate students must attend class. Attendance will be taken each class.** As class meets but once each week during the course of the semester, which means that a class absence amounts to missing a full week of class, students are highly discouraged from missing more than one class during the term. Additional, unexcused class absences are grounds for deregistration and failure.

2. All students are required to make at least one presentation in class on the reading material. Students will be given at least two weeks advance notice in order to be able to prepare their presentations. Presentations should be no more than 20-30 minutes long. This may seem like a long time for a presentation, but once student presenters read and study the text and begin to prepare their presentations they will see that the time allotted is not generous. **Presentations are valued at 25% of the final grade.** Student presentations should accomplish three things:
   - **First**, presentations should summarize the arguments in the reading assignment for that day, drawing upon examples from films, if possible, to illustrate Deleuze’s arguments about images. To help student presentations, many examples have already been cited on the syllabus for the first three weekly reading assignments and this practice will continue, with examples provided by the instructor in advance of each reading assignment for the duration of the semester. Students making presentations may use those examples, most of which are drawn from *Cinema I*, though it is also hoped that students will find examples of their own.
   - **Second**, presentations should relate the argument in the reading to class discussions on Deleuze earlier in the semester;
   - **Third**, presentations should pose critical questions about the reading material.

   **Best presentations (grade of A) -- will include all three of the above.**

3. Finally, students will have a term paper (15-20 pages) to write on “images,” the goal of which will be to create ways of thinking about the “democratic nature” of images. In their papers students will be expected to propose three types of democratic images, to explain what kinds of democratic values the images communicate, and how the image communicates those values. Students’ conceptualizations of images can be based on and drawn from films of their own choosing or from Deleuze’s *Cinema I*. **Each student will submit a term paper prospectus due on March 19 as scheduled below.** The prospectus should be 4-
5 typewritten pages outlining the term paper project and should include a working bibliography. Students should take advantage of Professor Schoolman’s office hours to discuss the prospectus. Term papers are due on May 14, as scheduled below. No late papers are accepted. Because the term paper topic will be the main focus of each class meeting, term papers can be written during the course of the semester as the class proceeds, which will be to each student’s great advantage. Term papers are 50% of the final grade. This course fulfills the 400 level writing intensive requirement for the major in Political Science and the upper-level GenEd writing requirement.

Rules of Engagement

Students are permitted to bring beverages to class, although no food of any sort is permitted. Cell phones are to be turned off upon entering class. Students who use computers for note taking are not permitted to use their computers for any other application during class time. Each violation of these rules will be rewarded with a deduction of 5 pts. from the final grade. Students must arrive to class on time. If anything competes with these obligations a student should take a different course with more flexible requirements.

Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to teach students how to carefully read and interpret texts, identify key concepts on which theoretical arguments are based, and how to use these arguments and concepts to develop critical analyses and understandings of democratic societies and their politics. Students will be taught to think about the complex matter of what counts as politics in modern democratic societies. These objectives will contribute to teaching students how to formulate concepts and arguments of their own in their written work (term papers) and in oral presentations (class participation and class presentations). Finally, students will be taught how to interpret the meaning of visual images in so far as they pertain to the nature of a democratic education for the citizens of a modern democratic society.

Required Reading

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (available at Mary Jane Books)
Horkheimer and Adorno, "Enlightenment as Mass Deception." Hand-out

Weekly Assignments

January 23. Course introduction.
January 30.
Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 1.
Class Presenters: Brienna Christiano

**Examples for Chapter 1:**
*Fred Astaire’s “Action Dance” (Any-Location-Whatever)*
"One for My Baby" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FD7sqGJ3NBg
"Swing Time" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxPgpMujzQ&feature=related
"Ceiling Dance" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8n7WQIXQDs
"Fred Astaire Lifetime Achievement Award" -
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9WT9fmVi4U&feature=results_main&playnext=1&list=PL3C172E0C5AFD1D5D

February 6.
Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 2.
Class Presenters: Joseph Wholly

**Examples for Chapter 2:**
*Hitchcock “Rear Window” (Cigarette Glow) and “Suspicion”(Glass of Milk lit from inside)- Whole accent placed on single image*
"Suspicion" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kk8FW9atXuw (around 1:46)
"Rear Window" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKCGcHQSwHw (around 2:10)

*Hitchcock “Spellbound” (Glass of milk leaving screen empty/white)- When set is emptied of certain sub-sets*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grn-Wecipdo (around 1:10)

*Griffith “Intolerance” (Change in shot direction in accordance to the ramparts)- Frame is inseparable from rigid geometric distinctions*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkgSldOU_cc (around 26:00)

*Dreyer “Passion of Joan of Arc”- Example of concept of deframing; cutting frames, faces cut by edge of screen*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25lVFTyq7Nc&feature=related (around 1:09)

*Hitchcock “Frenzy”- Modifies relative position of immobile sets (running up stairs to door that man opens then camera leaves and shoots through window of apartment)*
February 13.
  Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 3.
  Class Presenters:

  **Examples for Chapter 3:**

  **Griffith “The Massacre”** - Shows how closeups can change size of set and scene (Baby during the action sequence)
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRfbuQglsjY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRfbuQglsjY) (around 3:00)

  **Griffith “Intolerance”** - Shows montage (Transition from Babylonian to Modern race)
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOUH9_SZJao](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOUH9_SZJao) (around 30 minutes)

  **Eisenstein “Odessa”(Stairs) and “Ivan The Terrible” (Two caesuras responding to Ivan’s two moments of doubt)** - Shows his theory that movement-image is cell of montage
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF7ho_-1aWo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF7ho_-1aWo) (around 3:30)

  **Vertov “Man With a Movie-Camera”** - Shows interval of movement (perception, the glance, and the eye)
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDXgcBQVJCw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDXgcBQVJCw) (around 8:00)

February 20.
  Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 4.
  Class Presenters:

February 27.
  Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 5.
  Class Presenters:

March 5.
  Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 6.
  Class Presenters:

March 12. Classes suspended.

March 19.
  Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 7.
  Class Presenters:
  **Term paper prospectus due.**
March 26.
Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 8.
Class Presenters:

April 2.
Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 9.
Class Presenters:

April 9. Classes suspended.

April 16.
Horkheimer and Adorno, "Enlightenment as Mass Deception."
Schoolman, "Mass Deception as Enlightenment."
Class Presenter: Morton Schoolman

April 23.
Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 10.
Class Presenters:

April 30.
Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 11.
Class Presenters:

May 7. Last Class
Deleuze, *Cinema I*, ch. 12.
Class Presenters:

*May 14. Term papers due. 5:15 pm., LC 11.*