

## **HUM 425-01 | Thought and Image**

FALL 2018

This Course is Fully Online

Office: HUM 416, Office Hour: Wednesday, 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM in-person in HUM 416, via Zoom, or via email or iLearn.

Email: [theory@sfsu.edu](mailto:theory@sfsu.edu) | Office Phone: 415-338-1154 (no voice mail)

Course Website: <http://melodrama.io>

Prerequisite: ENG 114 or equivalent.

This course satisfies the following requirements: GE Segment Three.

. . . they are all trying desperately to make their thoughts and desires their own ...  
None of the protagonists come to see that everything, thoughts, desires, dreams  
arise directly from social reality or are manipulated by it  
—Ranier Werner Fassbinder

My subject is the exploitability of feelings, whoever might be the one exploiting  
them. It never ends. It's a permanent theme. Whether the state exploits patriotism,  
or whether in a couple relationship, one partner destroys the other  
—Ranier Werner Fassbinder

I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture,  
orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or  
discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon,  
schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth . . . but also the  
pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular  
telephones and—why not—language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of  
apparatuses  
—Giorgio Agamben

I have been teaching Thought and Image since 2003 and created this version of the course as a way of responding to the events of 2016. Many of my students have been profoundly affected by the events of the past few years and I wanted to find a way to continue teaching complex issues related to gender, sex, sexuality, race, and class (which can be difficult work to take on) in a way that gave students both art and distance.

This course comparatively reads the melodramas of Douglas Sirk, Todd Haynes, and Ranier Werner Fassbinder alongside the concept of *dispositif* (apparatus, or concrete social formation) in the social theory of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben.

Using Brecht's revolutionary theater techniques—variously referred to as distancing, alienation, *Verfremdungseffekt* (don't worry, I can't say it either)—but extending them further in cinematic language through the subversive use melodrama (he referred to his films as experiments in the form), Sirk's 1950's melodramas are exquisitely crafted critiques of American society, showing, even in their architecture, the complex forms of social control surrounding gender, race, and class. Frequently staged on lush sets and filmed in gorgeous technicolor—often completely over the top, *a bit too much* might be an *understatement*—Sirk's films are the very definition of art and distance.

Our first melodrama will be Douglas Sirk's most contained experiment with the form: his critique of patriarchy, class, and American society in *All That Heaven Allows* (1955). We will then do a close reading of Michel Foucault's "Means of Correct Training" from his *Discipline and Punish* in order to make use of these tools throughout our study. After *All That Heaven Allows*, the first half of the semester will include Todd Haynes' 2002 homage to the films of Sirk, *Far from Heaven*, and Rainier Werner Fassbinder's 1973 tribute, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*.

Students will be introduced to the concept of *mise-en-scène* as a primary tool for thinking the art of cinema, and to melodrama as a genre classification. In the second half of the semester, we will use these analytical tools to further study films, think melodrama in relation to Guy Debord's concept of spectacle, and consider Elizabeth Anker's provocative thesis on melodrama and politics in the post 9/11 era: that our contemporary political world is best read through the lens of the soap opera. At the end of the semester, students will be able to select a melodrama of their own choosing to research and write about as part of their final paper assignment. I am setting aside two weeks towards the end of the semester for student directed research as part of your final paper assignment.

Everyone is welcome in this class. It is important that we create a shared learning environment where everyone is allowed to have a voice. Given what is happening in the world, it is important that we strive to be supportive and respectful of our differences, our contributions, and our points of view. This is an inclusive class in every sense of the word, from the course subject matter and materials to our own engagement with them.

No prior knowledge of cinema, cinema studies, or film is required to take this course. That is, rather, the point: to give students literacy in the unique language of cinema.

### **Required Articles (available as PDF's)**

- Agamben, "What is an Apparatus?"
- Elizabeth Anker, *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of Freedom* (selections)
- Michael Camille, "Simulacrum"
- Elssaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury"
- Rainier Werner Fassbinder, "Imitation of Life: On the Films of Douglas Sirk"
- Rainier Werner Fassbinder, "Five Interviews"
- Rainier Werner Fassbinder, "I Let the Audience Think and Feel"
- Michel Foucault, "The Means of Correct Training"
- Gibbs, *Mise-en-Scene: Film Style and Interpretation* Part 1 (1-26), Part 2 (55-82), Part 3, (83-96) (selections)
- Todd Haynes, *Three Screenplays* (selections)
- Todd Haynes, "Movies Mean Nothing Until We Give Emotional Life to Them"
- Todd Haynes, "Heaven Sent"
- Todd Haynes, "A Scandal in Suburbia: Interview with Todd Haynes and Edward Lachman" Interview with Todd Haynes and Edward Lachman by Jon Silberg on *Far From Heaven* from *American Cinematographer* (December, 2002)
- "Todd Haynes" by Alison Maclean
- "Antibodies" Larry Gross Talks with Safe's Todd Haynes
- John Mercer & Martin Shingler, *Melodrama: Genre, Style, and Sensibility* (selections)

- Jane Stern/Michael Stern, "[Two Weeks In Another Town: An Interview with Douglas Sirk](#)" (Link to article on website)
- Jane Stern/Michael Stern, "[Two Weeks in Another Town Interview with Douglas Sirk](#)" (PDF version)
- Gabe Moura, "[Mise-en-scène](#)" (Note: this is a non-secure link, which means it's not encrypted. Below is a PDF version of the article).
- Gabe Moura, "[Mise-en-scène](#)" (PDF version)

### Optional articles

- Jean-Loup Bourget, "[Sirk's Apocalypse](#)" (**optional**)
- Foucault, "[Governmentality](#)" (**optional**)
- Michel Foucault, "[Panopticism](#)" (**optional**)

### Handouts

- [Handout on \*All That Heaven Allows\*](#)
- [Handout-on-mise-en-scène](#)
- [Study Questions on \[SAFE\]](#)
- [Study Questions on \*All That Heaven Allows\*](#)

### Films

- Douglas Sirk, *All That Heaven Allows* (USA/1955)
- Todd Haynes, *Far From Heaven* (USA/2002)
- Ranier Werner Fassinder, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (West Germany/1973)
- Todd Haynes, *Safe* (USA/1995)
- Wong Kar-Wai, *In the Mood for Love* (Hong Kong/2000)

### ASSIGNMENTS

Students are responsible for completing all the assigned course work and are expected to regularly attend and participate in course discussions. Reading difficult texts is a major component of this course. If you are not prepared to read and interpret difficult and challenging material, you should not take this course. Students are expected to come to class prepared. That means that you have done the assigned reading, have thought about it, and have something relevant to say. Always bring the assigned reading material (for each particular day) to class. Always take notes. My lectures, comments, and rants constitute an important "text" for the course. Be aware that my style is casual and approachable—this should not detract from the seriousness of the work we do together (this style of presentation is meant to make it easier for you to grasp the material). There will be 3 papers required (following the requirements for segment III, see below). There will be a 2-page paper, a 4-page mid-term paper, and a final 4-page paper (typed and double spaced). There will be a handout on the paper assignments before each paper is due. Your essays must demonstrate mastery of the reading material and course lectures for the assignments (your grade will be based on this). All essays must be critical. No grade will be awarded for non-critical writing. No papers will be accepted via e-mail (no exceptions). No late papers accepted (no exceptions). Plagiarism in any of the course assignments, in any form, will be dealt with harshly and will be forwarded to the Dean's Office for appropriate action. Plagiarism on any assignment will also result in a grade of zero. You must receive a letter grade on all

assignments in order to complete the course. Students are responsible for all of the course content and materials even if they are absent (absences of more than two class sessions can result in your final grade being substantially lowered).

### **SEGMENT III WRITING REQUIREMENT**

To meet the segment III writing requirement, you will be required to write two five page critical papers. These papers are “formal” and will be read and graded by the professor. You will be expected to argue coherently, to support your arguments with detailed examples from the works analyzed, to edit your papers for spelling, grammar punctuation and agreement, and to meet recognized standards for notes and bibliography when relevant. All of the above will be taken into account in the grading of these assignments.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Through the completion of course activities\*, students will learn to:

1. Apply artistic or humanistic methods of inquiry and analysis (including creation, interpretation, and evaluation) to study aesthetic experiences, expressive forms, belief systems, or communicative practices and relate them to the social and cultural contexts in which they are rooted.
2. Articulate how theories and practices in the arts and/or humanities come to be accepted, contested, changed, or abandoned by the scholarly or artistic communities.
3. Evaluate the quality of information, claims, expressions, and interpretations.
4. Construct coherent and sound arguments with support from multiple sources, including library resources and proper citations, that communicate what students have discovered.
5. Analyze social issues as well as ethical dilemmas and choices that arise out of artistic or humanistic research, discoveries, and applications.
6. Analyze multiple forms and variations of human diversity found in aesthetic experiences, expressive forms, belief systems, or communicative practices, and apply that knowledge to their own lives and to ways in which they could contribute purposefully to the well-being of their local communities, their nations, and the people of the world; to social justice; and/or to the sustainability of the natural environment.

\*Numbered learning objectives and the corresponding activities where they are met will be listed under each assignment section in the syllabus (e.g. forums, notes, papers).

### **Disability Access**

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/415-338-2472, video phone/415-335-7210) or by email ([dprc@sfsu.edu](mailto:dprc@sfsu.edu)).

## Student Disclosures of Sexual Violence

SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Title IX Coordinator by completing the report form available at <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>, emailing [ypsaem@sfsu.edu](mailto:ypsaem@sfsu.edu) or calling 338-2032.

To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

- The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; [http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe\\_plc/](http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/)
- Counseling and Psychological Services Center - (415) 338-2208; <http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/>
- For more information on your rights and available resources: <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>

## STUDENT DROPS

Students who do not attend the first class meeting will be dropped. It is the students' responsibility to drop the course after the first class session. Students who stop attending but do not drop will be given a WU grade. Please be aware that a WU grade is counted as an F for GPA purposes. Enrollment in this course constitutes your agreement to abide by all of the above rules and policies.

## GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

Forum Posts and Notes: 10%

First Paper: 20%

Midterm Paper: 30%

Final Paper: 30%

Final Exam: 10%

Learning Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

## NOTES

- You should take notes on ALL of the films. You will need these notes to successfully write your papers and complete the course.
- For five of the modules, you will be required to hand in your notes online in iLearn as specified in the schedule.
- There is no set format for the notes (they are *your* notes, after all). It is fine to write them out by hand and scan them, then upload them, if that works best for you. Or use a computer to type them up.
- Film notes are required to be uploaded for the following modules: *All That Heaven Allows*, *Far From Heaven*, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, *SAFE*, supplemental videos on *SAFE*.
- Film notes are due on Sunday by 11:55PM.

## FORUMS

- **The forums** are there for students to ask me questions about the materials, to allow you to interact with other students about the material, and **to provide a voice for you and your learning**. You should think of these activities as part of your research, as well as a virtual classroom discussion. There are 6 forums, as listed in the schedule and in iLearn.
- Your posts should be substantial and thoughtful and should demonstrate engagement with the assigned materials, including the video lectures and readings.
- Forum posts are due Sunday by 11:55PM.
- I will be regularly checking-in and interacting with you in the forums. (Note: if anyone has any questions or issues with this format/schedule, please do not hesitate to discuss this with me. This is **your** class and i am here to help you succeed.)

### **Forum posts are required for the following modules**

- WEEK 3 | *ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS* (PART TWO)
- WEEK 5 | *FAR FROM HEAVEN* (PART TWO) | THOMAS ELSAESSER AND AMERICAN MELODRAMA
- WEEK 6 | MICHEL FOUCAULT | THE MEANS OF CORRECT TRAINING
- WEEK 8 | *ALI: FEAR EATS THE SOUL* (PART TWO)
- WEEK 9 | MELODRAMA AND APPARATUS | MIDTERM REVIEW
- WEEK 12 | *[SAFE]* (PART THREE)

### **PAPERS**

Papers are due Sunday, 9/30 @ 11:55 PM; Sunday, 11/4 @ 11:55 PM; and THURSDAY, 12/20 @ 11:55 PM via TurnItIn

## **TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE FALL 2017** (Instructor Reserves the Right to Modify)

### **WEEK 1 | WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

#### **To Complete This Module**

1. **READ** the course syllabus and become familiar with the iLearn environment. Take your time. I know it can seem overwhelming. You have an entire week to complete these activities!
2. **WATCH** “Welcome to Thought and Image” (4:00)
3. **WATCH** “How to Use iLearn and the Course Website for HUM 425” (5:57)
4. **POST** to the Welcome and Introduction Forum (below) no later than 11:55PM Sunday.

### **WEEK 2 | ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS (PART ONE)**

## 1. READ

- Handout on mise-en-scène
- Handout on *All That Heaven Allows*
- New Study Questions on *All That Heaven Allows* (to help with your viewing of the film)
- Gabe Moura, Mise-en-scène (short blog post)
- Fassbinder, "Imitation of Life" (short essay)

## 2. WATCH

- Introducing the Prison Iconography of Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (short visual essay) (1:53)

## 3. WATCH

- Establishing Scenes in Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (w/commentary) (5:56)

## 4. WATCH

- "Eyes — Looking — Screens" in *All That Heaven Allows* (w/commentary) (2:57)

## 5. WATCH

- Film , *All That Heaven Allows* (TAKE NOTES !!)

## 6. POST Your Notes to iLearn No Later Than 11:55PM on Sunday

## WEEK 3 | ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS (PART TWO)

### 1. READ

For the lengthy interview with Douglas Sirk, there are two versions to choose from:

- Jane Stern/Michael Stern, "Two Weeks In Another Town: An Interview with Douglas Sirk" (link to the original article with images)
- Jane Stern/Michael Stern, "Two Weeks in Another Town: An Interview with Douglas Sirk" (PDF of article, no images) (below)
- Note: We will refer to these two texts, the Fassbinder assigned last week, and the interview with Sirk, throughout the first half of the semester.
- Wikipedia entry on "Distancing Effect"

### 3. WATCH

- Instructional video "Reading *All That Heaven Allows* Backwards" (to be posted)

#### 4. WATCH

- Instructional video, "Reading 'Two Weeks in Another Town: An Interview with Douglas Sirk'"

#### 5. REVISIT

- Revisit last week's short instructional videos after you've done all of the above

#### 3. POST

- Post to the online forum on *All That Heaven Allows* no later than 11:55PM on Sunday

### WEEK 4 | FAR FROM HEAVEN (PART ONE)

#### 1. READ

- Haynes, *Three Screenplays* (selections)
- Haynes, "Movies Mean Nothing Until We Give Emotional Life to Them" (interview)
- Haynes, "Heaven Sent" (Interview)
- Todd Haynes, "A Scandal in Suburbia: Interview with Todd Haynes and Edward Lachman" Interview with Todd Haynes and Edward Lachman by Jon Silberg on *Far From Heaven* from *American Cinematographer* (December, 2002) - Please note that this is a three page website interview. You have to go to each page at the bottom (where it says "next page"). Yes, it is annoying.

#### 2. WATCH

- Film – *Far From Heaven*

#### 3. WATCH

- Short documentary *Anatomy of a Scene* (27:27) (take notes!!!)

4. POST your film notes on *Far From Heaven* AND *Anatomy of a Scene* to iLearn by 11:55PM on Sunday

### WEEK 5 | FAR FROM HEAVEN (PART TWO) | THOMAS ELSAESSER AND AMERICAN MELODRAMA | FIRST ESSAY DUE SUNDAY @ 11:55 PM

## 1. READ

Note: both readings are great, and both are a bit dense. Allow yourself extra time to read these essays.

- Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury"
- Michael Camille, "Simulacrum" (below)

## 2. WATCH

- Todd Haynes/Edward Hopper (Interview with Richard Dyer and Todd Haynes on the art of Hopper and *Far From Heaven*)

## 3. WATCH

- Instructional video, "The Surface of Things: The Art of Cinema and Todd Haynes' *Far From Heaven*" (to be posted)

## 4. POST

- Post to the online forum no later than 11:55PM on Sunday

2-Page Paper due on *All That Heaven Allows* Sunday no later than 11:55PM

## WEEK 6 | MICHEL FOUCAULT | THE MEANS OF CORRECT TRAINING

### 1. READ

- Michel Foucault, "The Means of Correct Training"

### 2. WATCH

- Instructional video, "Reading 'the Means of Correct Training'" (to be posted)

### 3. POST

- Post to the online forum no later than 11:55PM on Sunday

## WEEK 7 | ALI: FEAR EATS THE SOUL (PART ONE)

### MIDTERM PROMPT HANDED OUT

### 1. READ

- Ranier Werner Fassbinder, "Five Interviews"
- Ranier Werner Fassbinder, "I Let the Audience Think and Feel"
- Mercer/Shingler, *Melodrama: Genre, Style, and Sensibility*, 4-37 (below)

## 2. WATCH

- Film – *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*

3. POST your notes on the film no later than 11:55PM on Sunday

## WEEK 8 | ALI: FEAR EATS THE SOUL (PART TWO)

### 1. READ

- Mercer & Shingler, *Melodrama: Genre, Style, and Sensibility*, 38-77 (below)

### 2. WATCH

- Short documentary with Todd Haynes: 'From Sirk to Fassbinder and Back' (22:46)

### 3. WATCH

- Instructional video, "Stairs and Stares: Reading *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*" (to be posted)

3. POST to the online forum no later than 11:55PM on Sunday

## WEEK 9 | MELODRAMA AND APPARATUS | MIDTERM REVIEW

### 1. READ

- Agamben, "What is an Apparatus?" 1-3, 6-24 (you can skip section 2)

### 2. WATCH

- Instructional video, "Melodrama and Apparatus: A Midterm Review" (to be posted)

### 3. WATCH

- "Graphic Matches in *Written on the Wind*" (short video essay on Sirk's film). Even though we have not watched *Written on the Wind*, this short video essay gives you some hints into Sirk's hilarious iconography in the film.

4. POST to the midterm review forum no later than 11:55PM on Sunday

## WEEK 10 | [SAFE] (PART ONE) | Midterm Paper Due

### 1. READ

- “Todd Haynes” by Alison Maclean
- “Antibodies” Larry Gross Talks with Safe’s Todd Haynes
- Study Questions on [SAFE]

## 2. WATCH

Film – [SAFE]

3. **POST** your notes on [SAFE] no later than 11:55PM on Sunday

**4-Page Midterm Paper Due by 11:55PM on Sunday**

## WEEK 11 | [SAFE] (PART TWO)

### 1. WATCH

- Todd Haynes on [SAFE]

### 2. WATCH

- Todd Haynes and Julianne Moore on *Safe*

### 3. WATCH

- Q&A with Dennis Lim on *Safe*

4. **POST** your notes on the video extras on [SAFE] by 11:55PM ON SUNDAY

## WEEK 12 | [SAFE] (PART THREE)

### 1. WATCH

- Instructional video, "Thinking the Self in Todd Haynes' *Safe*" —to be posted—

2. **POST** to the forum on [SAFE] no later than 11:55PM on Sunday

—**THANKSGIVING / FALL BREAK – NO CLASS**—

## WEEK 13 | INDEPENDENT RESEARCH (PART ONE) | FINAL PAPER PROMPT HANDED OUT

### Possible reading assignment

- Elizabeth Anker, *Orgies of Feeling*, 1-25, 32-64.

## **WEEK 14 | INDEPENDENT RESEARCH (PART TWO)**

### **Possible reading assignment**

- Elizabeth Anker, *Orgies of Feeling*, "Melodramas of Failed Sovereignty: The War on Terror as a Woman's Weepy," 225-257

## **WEEK 15 | IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE**

### **1. WATCH**

- *In the Mood for Love* (Honk Kong, 2000)

### **2. WATCH**

- "Tony Rayns on *In the Mood for Love*" (23:49)

### **3. WATCH**

- "*In The Mood for Love*: Frames Within Frames" (8:59)

**You Do Not Have to Do Any Film Notes This Week.**

## **WEEK 16 | FINAL EXAM AND FINAL PAPER DUE THURSDAY DECEMBER 20<sup>th</sup> BY 11:55PM**

Final Exam in iLearn, open from 00:00 am to 11:55PM (20 minute limit)

Final Paper due via TurnItIn 12/20 by 11:55PM