

HUM 425-01 | Thought and Image

SPRING 2019

Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 am to 10:15 am in HUM 582

Office: HUM 416, Office Hour: 10:15 am to 11:15 am on Tuesdays

Email: 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.

Weeks **Two, Four, Seven, Eleven, Thirteen and Fourteen** are **ONLINE weeks**. This is to accommodate film screenings due to the hostile environment of the classroom. Additionally, students will be engaged in independent research during week thirteen. I will be on campus and available to you during these times in my office.

. . . 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 distanciation, 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 melodrama's 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 strongly encouraged to contact the instructor. Please do not hesitate to contact me with anything you need at any time during the semester. That is what I am here for.

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).

Beginning in Spring 2019, DPRC has launched MyDPRC, which you can learn more about and access at: <https://access.sfsu.edu/myDPRC>

I am a person with disabilities and an advocate for students and faculty with disabilities. Please make sure you get any disability accommodation forms to me as soon as possible. I am here to help.

Please note that I am deaf in my left ear. You do not need to yell at me, thank you, but please be aware that I am not aware of how loud my voice is as a result. It is also my job to project my voice so that my students can hear me. If I seem loud to students, please accept my apologies. I am not doing it on purpose.

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 vpsaem@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/
- 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.

Important Dates

- Last day to drop without a grade of W, February 15th
- Withdrawal from classes/University for serious and compelling reasons, Saturday, February 16th - Monday, April 29th

- Credit/No Credit Grading Option Deadline, March 26th
- Withdrawal from Classes/University by Exception for Documented Serious and Compelling reasons, Tuesday, April 30-Tuesday, May 14th

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance and Participation: 5%

Film Notes: 5%

First Paper: 20%

Midterm Paper: 30%

Final Paper: 30%

Final Exam: 10%

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

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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* and *In the Mood for Love*.
- Film notes are due on Sunday by 11:55PM.

PAPERS

Papers are due Sunday, 3/3 @ 11:55 PM; Sunday, 4/7 @ 11:55 PM; and THURSDAY, 5/23 @ 11:55 PM via TurnItIn

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE SPRING 2019

(Instructor Reserves the Right to Modify)

WEEK 1 | Welcome and Introduction | Mise-en-scène

Tues 1/29

Introduction and handout of course materials.

Thurs 1/31

Introduction to mise-en-scène and *All That Heaven Allows*.

1. READ

- [Handout on mise-en-scène](#)
- [Handout on *All That Heaven Allows*](#)
- Gabe Moura, [Mise-en-scène](#) (short blog post)

2. WATCH (we will watch in class)

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

3. WATCH (we will watch in class)

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

4. WATCH (we will watch in class)

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

WEEK 2 | *All That Heaven Allows* (Part One) | **This is an ONLINE Week**

1. READ

- [New Study Questions on *All That Heaven Allows*](#) (to help with your viewing of the film)
- Fassbinder, "[Imitation of Life](#)" (short essay)

2. WATCH instructional video "Taking Notes on *All That Heaven Allows*"

3. WATCH

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

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

WEEK 3 | *All That Heaven Allows* (Part Two) | First Paper Prompt Handed Out

This week we will discuss the film, *All That Heaven Allows*. Please do this week's readings **before** class on Tuesday.

For our post-screening film discussions, you will use your study questions, handouts, short videos, and assigned readings—all of these should function as a guide—together with your viewing of the film, in this case, *All That Heaven Allows*, to discuss any of the critical aspects of the film. In this

case, we will pay particular attention to those elements of the film that make use of Sirk's unique iconography, lighting, staging or any other elements of mise-en-scène.

Remember that your classroom discussions should be substantial and thoughtful and should demonstrate engagement with the assigned materials.

Tuesday 2/12

READ (Before Class Meeting)

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"](#)

I will begin with a 12-15 minute close reading of the film. After which we will open it up for discussion.

After our initial discussion of the film, I will hand out the first essay prompt, which is on *All That Heaven Allows*.

Thursday 2/14

- Discussion of *ATHA* / Sirk continued

Video extras: Instructional videos turned on in iLearn after class:

- “Reading *ATHA*”
- “Reading Two Weeks in Another Town”

WEEK 4 | *Far From Heaven* (Part One) | This Is An Online Class Day

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. POST your film notes on *Far From Heaven* 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"

Short documentary *Anatomy of a Scene* (27:27) (we will watch in class, take notes, it's good!!!)

Thursday 2/28

- Discussion continued
- We may watch any number of video extras on *Far From Heaven*, including selections from the interview with Richard Dyer below on Haynes' work and that of American painter, Richard Hopper.
- Todd Haynes/Edward Hopper (Interview with Richard Dyer and Todd Haynes on the art of Hopper and *Far From Heaven* from June, 2004) (Possible)

Post-class video extras in iLearn turned on after class:

- Instructional video, "Far From Heaven: Four Scenes"
- Instructional video, "Reading Todd Haynes"

2-Page Paper Due via TurnItIn on in iLearn Sunday 3/3 by 11:55 PM.

Week 6 | Michel Foucault | "The Means of Correct Training"

READ

- Michel Foucault, "[The Means of Correct Training](#)"

We will discuss this essay all week.

Optional Readings (not required) via iLearn

- Michel Foucault, "[Panopticism](#)" (optional)
- Michel Foucault, "Governmentality" (optional)
- Foucault, "Confessions of the Flesh" (selection) 194-198.

WEEK 7 | *Ali: Fear Eats The Soul* (Part One) | This is an ONLINE class day.

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 —feel free to skim this last reading assignment.

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)

MIDTERM PROMPT HANDED OUT

Be sure to bring the prior week's readings to class to help with our discussion of the film.

Tuesday 3/19

READ (prior to class)

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

Thursday 3/21

- Discussion continued

This week we will watch in class:

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

WEEK 9 | Melodrama And Apparatus | Midterm Review | Midterm Paper Due Sunday 4/7 at 11:55PM

Tuesday 4/2

READ

- Agamben, "[What is an Apparatus?](#)" 1-3, 6-24 (you can skip section 2)
- Review of previous course materials

Thursday 4/4

- Midterm review continued.
- We will likely 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-Page Midterm Paper Due Sunday 4/7 by 11:55PM

WEEK 10 | [SAFE] (PART ONE) | Introduction to SAFE

Tuesday 4/9

Introduction to Todd Haynes' *Safe* | Short videos watched in class

- Todd Haynes on *[SAFE]* (4:09)
- Todd Haynes and Julianne Moore on *Safe* (36:07)

Thursday 4/11

Introduction to *Safe* continued.

We may or may not watch selections from this Q&A with Haynes.

- Q&A with Dennis Lim on *Safe* (32:02)

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

WEEK 11 | [SAFE] (PART TWO) | This is an ONLINE week

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

WEEK 12 | [Safe] (Part Three) | Final Paper Prompt Handed Out

Tuesday 4/23

- Discussion of *Safe*.
- Handout of final paper prompt and discussion of independent research.

Thursday 4/25

- Discussion of *Safe* continued.

Video Extras in iLearn (turned on after class)

- Instructional video: "Some Ways Into Safe"
- Instructional video: "Architecture and Subjectivity in Safe: Three Scenes"

WEEK 13 | INDEPENDENT RESEARCH (PART ONE) | This is an **ONLINE** Week

- **See iLearn for instructions: optional reading and film assignments for you to research.**
- **There are two modules with additional work on mise-en-scène, melodrama and society, as well as additional Sirk films you can research**

WEEK 14 | In the Mood for Love | This is an **ONLINE** Week

Everyone needs to watch *In the Mood for Love* this week as part of your research. This is because we have a non-Western work required for this module.

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)

4. POST your notes on *In the Mood for Love* by Sunday 5/12 @ 11:55PM

WEEK 15 | Final Course Review

Tuesday 5/14

Final Course Review.

Thursday 5/16

Final Course Review continued.

WEEK 16 | FINAL EXAM AND FINAL PAPER DUE BY MAY 21st at 10:15 AM

Final Exam 10 Questions, Due Tuesday May 21st @ 10:15 am (20-minute limit)

Final Paper due via TurnItIn No Later Than Tuesday May 21st @ 10:15 AM