

Film and Philosophy
FRES 1010
Fall 2009
Syllabus

Professor Edward Halper
Office: Peabody Hall #128
Hours: 2:15-2:45 M, F
Other times by appointment
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Description and Objective: Many feature films explore interesting and provocative philosophical themes. This course will screen eight films that focus on self-knowledge. Often characters in films find themselves in circumstances that allow them to discover aspects of their own character that had remained hidden from themselves. As a film character comes to self-knowledge, the audience also comes to realize something about the character and, often, something about itself. Of concern here are the general questions of how we come to know ourselves and what sorts of things we can know about ourselves. We will also consider the means of verifying this knowledge, the value of self-knowledge, and the possibility of misapprehending oneself. Self-discovery is most poignant and profound when what is discovered is true not only of the character, but of everyone. The films we will watch address these issues, though usually not directly, and we will be concerned to decide what they have to say and to appreciate the artistic way they convey this content. We will also discuss whether they are right and how we could determine whether they are right. The films will serve as starting points for discussions of philosophical issues. Most films will be in foreign languages with subtitles, and some will be difficult to watch.

Requirements: Class will meet every other week, beginning August 20. Because the films are of varying lengths, some class sessions will exceed the allotted time period. **You must attend every film and every discussion** in order to pass the course. Requiring attendance is appropriate because the class meets relatively infrequently and because it is the only requirement. In the event of an unexcused absence, the professor may, at his discretion, allow you to earn credit for the missed class by viewing the film on your own and writing a three page paper of acceptable quality on how the film addresses the course's theme.

Schedule: Alternate Thursdays, 10-13th period, (6:30-9:30 p.m.), Room 115, Peabody Hall Please note that our scheduled time is three hours every other week and that class will begin at 6:30. The exact length of class will depend on the length of the film screened: some classes will **exceed** our officially scheduled time. Course meeting dates: August 20, September 3, 17, October 1, 15, November 5, 19, December 3. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Honesty: All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.