

Desire
Philosophy and Film
Philosophy 247a

Bishop's University
Fall, 2004
T/Th 4:00
Nichols 4

Bruce Gilbert
Divinity 21
bgilbert@ubishops.ca
822-9600, x2075

This course is about the predicaments of *desire*, a classic theme in the Western philosophical tradition and one that has been explored profoundly in film. Most generally, we investigate the possibility that desire is paradoxical and inherently conflicted. Why do we sometimes desire contradictory things, or desire things that are harmful to us? How is it that sometimes it seems as though the fulfillment of desire leads to happiness, and other times to dead-ends or even self-destruction? What is the relationship between *kinds* of desire...love, lust, patriotism, friendship, hunger, and so on? Is it the case that we can learn to desire that which is good for our self-realization and freedom, or is it the nature of desire to always be at odds with itself, to be at war with itself, such that to be a human being is to be a necessarily conflicted being?

The focus of the course will be our own personal experience of desire as enriched by four classic theories about the nature of desire—those of Aristotle, Marx, Freud and Bataille. We will also study these themes in and through the viewing and discussion of seven films, each of which, I believe, will greatly enhance our conversation and reflection on this theme.

Texts

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*
Manuscripts of 1844

Bataille, *Erotism*
Marx, *Economic and Philosophic*

Films

Camus, *Orfeu Negro*
Fincher, *Fight Club*
Lynch, *Blue Velvet*

Coppola, *The Godfather*
Hitchcock, *Vertigo*
Solondz, *Happiness*

Assignments

Film studies	4 x 15%	60%
Final Essay		40%

Reading Assignments and Film Viewings

September

- 9 Introduction
- 14 Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Chapter One
- 16 Freud, Chapter Two
Film: *Vertigo*
- 21 Freud, Chapter Three
- 23 Freud, Chapter Four
Film: *Blue Velvet*
- 28 Freud, Chapters Five and Six
- 29 Freud, Chapter Six
Film: *Happiness*

October

- 5 Freud, Chapter Seven, Chapter Eight, 97-102
- 7 Freud, finish Chapter Eight.
- 12 Thanksgiving holiday
- 14 Bataille, *Erotism*, Forward, Introduction
- 19 Bataille, Chapters One and Two
- 21 Bataille, Chapters Three and Four
Film: *Fight Club*
- 26 Bataille, Chapters Five and Six
- 28 Bataille, Chapters Seven and Eight

November

- 2 Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 69-84
- 4 Marx, 115-125
Film: *Orfeu Negro*
- 9 Marx, 102-106, 135-140.
- 11 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1i, ii, iv, vii, ix, xii-xiii.
- 16 Aristotle, Book 2.
- 18 Aristotle, Book 3i-vii.
Film: *The Godfather*
- 23 Aristotle, Book 6vi-xiii
- 25 Aristotle, Book 7vii-xiv
Film: *x*

- 30 Aristotle, Book 10i-v

December

- 2 Aristotle, Book 10vi-ix