

**Fall 2026 - Centre for Theory & Criticism**

**THEOCRIT 9202 Bergson – Cine-Perception**

**Instructor: Janelle Blankenship, [jblanke2@uwo.ca](mailto:jblanke2@uwo.ca)**

### **Course Description: Bergson - Cine-Perception**

This course explores Henri Bergson's meditations on moving image machines, screens, and "cinematographic consciousness", also tracing the impact of his philosophy of perception on avant-garde film theory, from Jean Epstein to Gilles Deleuze. Vivian Sobchack has argued that figures shape and transform the very problematic they try to portray. How do moving image metaphors, thought-figures and optical technologies like the cinematograph, stereoscope, kaleidoscope, shadow play, 'dark screen,' panorama, high-speed photograph, phantasmagoria, and magic lantern dissolving views structure Bergson's thoughts on the spectator's sensory apparatus/awareness? What does the vitalist philosopher have to say about the human mind and perception as a "cinématographe intérieur"? The course will lay a critical foundation for understanding the relevance of Bergson's work for contemporary film and media theory. Course readings include Bergson's translated works *Creative Evolution* and *Matter and Memory*, lectures, and interviews, and seminal texts on Bergson's media epistemology. Other theorists include Jean Epstein, Georg Lukács, Germaine Dulac, Walter Benjamin, Jakob von Uexkuell, Gilles Deleuze, David Rodowick, and Elizabeth Grosz.

### **Requirements:**

- Seminar Participation and OWL FORUM Responses (includes active seminar discussion and four 2-3 paragraph FORUM responses): **25%**
- Seminar Presentation (20-30 minutes - specific guidelines and topics discussed in class): **30%**
- Final Research Paper (16-20 pages/due Dec. 12th): **45%**

**Textbooks [TB]** (books can be shipped directly to you, or picked up at the Book Store (see their updated Safety Measures here: <https://bookstore.uwo.ca/safety-measures>). Please see the final page of the syllabus for digital book links:

**Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (1896)** trans. N.W. Paul and W.S. Palmer (Zone Books/MIT Press: 1990)

**Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (1907)** trans. Arthur Mitchell (Dover Publications: 6. Feb. 1998 - reprint of the Henry Holt and Company, 1911 edition) -

**Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*** trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1990)

**Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*** trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986)

**Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*** trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989)

**Additional course readings are available online or uploaded to folders on OWL [OWL]**

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **Week 1/Sept. 12th: Bergson's Bodies/Machines: Time, Perception, and Phantasmagoria**

Henri Bergson, "Dreams" available online - <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/20842/20842-h/20842-h.htm> [1901]

Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* [excerpt: 98-137, 147-149, 229], trans. F.I. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1910) [doctoral thesis, 1889] [OWL]

*Optional Reading:* Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1900) trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell [1900] available online [link on OWL]

#### **Week 2/Sept. 19th: Bergson's Bodies/Machines cont.: Kaleidoscopic, Stereoscopic Shakes**

Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* [*Matière et mémoire* 1896] trans. N.W. Paul and W.S. Palmer (Zone Books/MIT Press: 1990) [TB]

Sir David Brewster, "On the Application of the Kaleidoscope to the Fine and Useful Arts," *A Treatise on the Kaleidoscope* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1819), pp. 117-121, 134-137 [OWL]

Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," *The Atlantic Monthly* 3:20 (June 1859): pp. 738-748. [OWL]

*Optional Reading:* Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey* (1830-1904) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 292-300 [OWL]

### **Week 3/Sept. 26th: Screening Movement, Scientific Film and a “Cinematographic Consciousness” I**

In-Class Screening: *Tusalava* (Len Lye, 1929), available online <https://interestingengineering.com/video/watch-this-beautiful-1929-avant-garde-artistic-vision-of-how-life-originated>; *Essais de prises de vues de végétaux en accéléré : le coucou* (Jean Comandon, 1921) <https://images.cnrs.fr/en/video/6582>

*Croissance des végétaux* (Jean Comandon, 1929, France), <https://www.canal-u.tv/chaines/cerimes/croissance-des-vegetaux>

*Les cristaux liquides* (Jean Painlevé, 1978, France), <https://www.lesdocs.com/films-les-cristaux-liquides-653-27-0-0.html>

Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* [*L'Évolution créatrice* 1907] trans. Arthur Mitchell (Dover Publications: 1998 - reprint of the Henry Holt and Company, 1911 edition) [TB]

“Bergson talks to us about Cinema” by Michel Georges-Michel from *Le Journal*, February 20, 1914 [Interview translated by Louis-Georges Schwartz and published in *Cinema Journal* Vol. 50, No. 3 (Spring 2011), pp. 79-82] [OWL]

Paula Amad on the “Bergsonian” Screening Room at Albert Kahn’s *Archives de la Planète* - Paula Amad, “The Counter Archive of Cinematic Memory: Bergsonism, *la durée* and the Everyday” in *Counter-Archive: Film, Everyday and Albert Kahn’s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 96-132 [OWL]

### **Week 4/Oct. 3rd: The ‘Unrolling’ of a Cinematic Film: Cinematographic Consciousness II**

Online Screening: *Congress* (Ari Folman, 2013, France/Israel/Belgium/Poland/Luxemburg, Germany) [Lumiere link will be shared in advance]

Henri Bergson, 1931 Introduction “The Possible and the Real,” *Creative Mind* [OWL]

Robert Herring, ‘A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant Garde’, *Close Up* 4 (April 1929), 47–57 [OWL]

John Ó Maoilearca “The Cinematic Bergson: From Virtual Image to Actual Gesture” *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy*, 24(2), pp. 203-220 [OWL]

*Optional Reading:* Donato Totaro, “Time, Bergson, and the Cinematographical Mechanism: Henri Bergson on the Philosophical Properties of Cinema,” *Off Screen*, Volume 5, Issue 1, January 2001, <http://offscreen.com/view/bergson1>

## **Week 5 Oct. 10th: Life, Environment and *Élan Vital*: From Bergson to von Uexkuell**

In-Class Screening: *Faune microscopique d'un étang en juillet* (Jean Comandon et Pierre de Fonbrune, 1930, France), Musée Albert-Kahn playlist *La Science se livre 2021*,

Keith Ansell Pearson, "Bergson's Encounters with Biology: Thinking Life" *Angelaki* 10:2, (2005): pp. 59–72 [OWL]

Jakob von Uexkuell, "Receptor Time" in "A Stroll into the Worlds of Men and Animals," *Instinctive Behavior: The Development of a Modern Concept*. Trans. and ed., Claire H. Schiller pp. 29-31 [OWL]; "Environment [Umwelt] and Inner World of Animals," trans. C. J. Mellor, D. Gove in Burghardt (ed.). *Foundations of Comparative Ethology* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold), pp. 222-245 [OWL]

Akira Lippit, "Henri Bergson" [Evolutions], in *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2008) pp. 83-92 [OWL]

Alexis Carrel, "Physiological Time," *Science* Vol. 74, No. 1929 (Dec. 18, 1931), pp. 618-621

*Recommended Reading*: Elizabeth Grosz, "Deleuze, Bergson and the Concept of Life" *Revue internationale de philosophie* 2007/3 (no. 241): 287-300 [OWL]

## **Week 6 Oct. 17th: Bergsonian Vitalism at the Bauhaus: *Miracle of Flowers***

Online Screening: *Miracle of Flowers* (Max Reichmann, 1926, Germany),  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8Dknw1Tu7o>

Janelle Blankenship, "Film-Symphonie vom Leben und Sterben der Blumen": Plant Rhythm and Time-Lapse Vision in Das *Blumenwunder*', *Intermedialités* no. 16 (Autumn 2010), 83–103 [OWL]

Rudolf Arnheim on the film's interior world: Rudolf Arnheim, "Accelerated Motion" and "Slow Motion" in *Film as Art* [1932], Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006: 114-117 [OWL]

Ernst Bloch, "Decelerated Time, Accelerated Time, and Space", in *Literary Essays*, trans. Andrew Joron and others [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998]: pp. 482-486 [OWL]

*Optional*: Walter Benjamin, "News about Flowers" trans. Michael Jennings. In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*. Vol. 2, 1927–1934, part 1, Ed. Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, Gary Smith (Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999). pp. 155–57; "A Short History of Photography," originally published in *Literarische Welt* (18.9., 25.9. and 2.10.1931) [OWL]

## **Week 7/ Oct. 24th: “The Plastic Form” and Photogénie: French Impressionism/Symbolism**

Online Screening: *Fall of the House of Usher* (Jean Epstein, 1928, France),  
<https://www.cinematheque.fr/henri/film/48361-la-chute-de-la-maison-usher-jean-epstein-1928/>

*Thèmes et variations* (Germaine Dulac, 1928, France),  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1PLANdmNXI>

In-Class Screening: *Serpentine Dance* (Georges Dumenil/Gaumont, featuring performer Loie Fuller, 1897) <https://youtu.be/Ye0xAtzBotQ>

**Reading:** Jean Epstein, "Magnification," *October* 3 (Spring 1977), 9-15; "On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie," *Afterimage* 10 (Autumn 1981), 20-23; "The Senses I (b)," *Afterimage* 10 (Autumn 1981), 9-16. [OWL]; Edgar Allan Poe, "Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) [OWL]

Tom Gunning, "Loie Fuller and the Art of Motion" in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida* ed. Richard Allen and Malcom Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 75-90 [OWL]

Germaine Dulac "Visual and Anti-Visual Films," trans. Robert Lamberton, in P. Adams Sitney (ed.), *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism* (New York, Anthology Film Archives, 1987): pp. 31-35 [OWL]

*Recommended Reading:* Jacques Rancière, "The Dance of Light: Paris, Folies Bergère, 1893" pp. 93-109 [OWL]

## **Oct. 30-Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> Fall Reading Week – No Class**

## **Week 8 Nov. 7th: Cinema and Eternal Variability: German Bergsonians Georg Simmel and (Early) Georg Lukács**

Georg Simmel, "Sociology of the Senses", excerpt and "The Berlin Trade Exhibition" in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, translated + excerpts on the philosophy of history [1905], Rembrandt [1916], Kant, naturalism and historical understanding referencing "living pictures," cinematography, panopticon wax pictures, stereoscopy, and instantaneous photography [OWL]

Georg Lukács, "Thoughts toward an Aesthetic of the Cinema," [1911/1913] trans. Janelle Blankenship in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory*, pp. 377-380. [OWL]

Janelle Blankenship, "Futurist Fantasies: Lukács's Early Essay 'Thoughts Toward an Aesthetic of the Cinema,'" *Polygraph* 13 [2001]: pp. 21-36. [OWL]

## **Week 9: Nov. 14th “The Brain is the Screen”: Deleuze’s Bergsonism I**

Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1990) [TB]

*Optional Reading:* Elizabeth Grosz, “Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming” *parallax*, 2005, vol. 11, no. 2, 4–13 [OWL]; Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity* (14-159, SHORT excerpts/OWL);

## **Weeks 10 Nov. 21st-: “The Brain is the Screen”: Deleuze’s Bergsonism II**

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986), [TB]

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989), excerpts [TB]

D. N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997) [short excerpt from “Movement and Image” 20-29/OWL]

*Optional Reading:* Gilles Deleuze “Seminar on Cinema: The Movement-Image” Lecture 1, 10 November 1981 (Cinema Course 01) Transcription: La voix de Deleuze, Fanny Douarche (Part 1, 1:00:15) and Lise Renaux (Part 2, 1:01:44); transcription augmented, Charles J. Stivale; translation by Charles J. Stivale - <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/cinema-movement-image/lecture-01>

*Optional Reading:* Gilles Deleuze, “The Brain is the Screen: Interview with Gilles Deleuze on ‘The Time-Image’”. *Discourse* trans. Melissa McMahon Vol. 20, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 47-55 [OWL]

## **Week 11/Nov. 28th: Duration, Feeling/Intuition, and Bergsonian (New) Media Art**

Online Screening: *Street* (Jamie Narres, 2011, USA)

In-Class Screening: *Font Magica* (Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, 16mm born digital, 2015), <https://vimeo.com/100543047>

*Pulsions* (Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, 2007), <https://vimeo.com/100543047>

*fugitive l(i)ght* (Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, 2005)

Reading: Rebecca Hill, “intuition and feeling: reading bergson with Neidjie and country” [OWL]; “Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof,” *Moments of Perception*, 255-259 [OWL]; Mark Hansen, “Body Times” [*New Philosophy for a New Media*] or “Seeing with the Body: The Digital Image in Postphotograph” [OWL]

## **Week 12/Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> – “Nervous Magic Lantern”: Bergsonian (New) Media Art cont.**

Screening: *Nervous Magic Lantern* (Ken Jacobs, Spiral Nebula, 2005), *Anaglyph Tom* (2008: anaglyph with 3-D)

Michelle Pierson, “Jacob’s Bergsonism,” *Optic Antics: The Cinema of Ken Jacobs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 196-212 [OWL]

*Optional Reading:* Jimena Canales “Desired Machines: Cinema and the World in Its Own Image,” *Science in Context* 24(3), 329–359 (2011) [OWL]

## **INCOMPLETES**

**Please note that incompletes are only granted on compassionate or medical grounds.**

Special permission must be granted by the instructor and the Centre’s Director no later than the last day of classes.

Please note the following:

1. No later than the last day of the course, the student must contact the Director providing both the reason for the Incomplete being requested, and indicating the date by which the remaining work will be completed. The instructor must also give consent to these arrangements. Permission from the instructor is not a guarantee that the Centre’s GSC will grant a request for an INC.
2. Unless there are medical or compassionate grounds, the student will not be allowed to carry more than one INC in a semester.
3. The INC work must be submitted within one semester of the termination of the course in question, and the student must notify the Centre that the work has been submitted. Failure to comply will result in failure of the course.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

## **SCHOLASTIC DISCIPLINE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf))

## Definition - SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES

Members of the University Community accept a commitment to maintain and uphold the purposes of the University and, in particular, its standards of scholarship. It follows, therefore, that acts of a nature that prejudice the academic standards of the University are offences subject to discipline. Any form of academic dishonesty that undermines the evaluation process, also undermines the integrity of the University's degrees. The University will take all appropriate measures to promote academic integrity and deal appropriately with scholastic offences.

**Scholastic Offences** include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Plagiarism - the "act or an instance of copying or stealing another's words or ideas and attributing them as one's own." (Excerpted from Black's Law Dictionary, West Group, 1999, 7th ed., p. 1170). This concept applies with equal force to all academic work, including theses, assignments or projects of any kind, comprehensive examinations, laboratory reports, diagrams, and computer projects. Detailed information is available from instructors, Graduate Chairs, or the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Students also may consult style manuals held in the University's libraries. See <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html>
- Cheating on an examination or falsifying material subject to academic evaluation.
- Submitting false or fraudulent research, assignments or credentials; or falsifying records, transcripts or other academic documents.
- Submitting a false medical or other such certificate under false pretences.
- Improperly obtaining, through theft, bribery, collusion or otherwise, an examination paper prior to the date and time for writing such an examination.
- Unauthorized possession of an examination paper, however obtained, prior to the date and time for writing such an examination, unless the student reports the matter to the instructor, the relevant program, or the Registrar as soon as possible after receiving the paper in question.
- Impersonating a candidate at an examination or availing oneself of the results of such an impersonation.
- Intentionally interfering in any way with any person's scholastic work.
- Submitting for credit in any course or program of study, without the knowledge and written approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit previously has been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.



- Aiding or abetting any such offence. Evidence of wrongdoing may result in criminal prosecution in addition to any proceedings within the University.

Please consult the SGPS website for PROCEDURES FOR SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES and further guidelines on ACADEMIC DISHONESTY PENALTIES.

**PENALTIES** The University will treat seriously any incident of academic dishonesty and students should expect significant consequences for their actions. A serious incident or repeated offences may result in a requirement that the student withdraw from the program and/or may result in suspension or expulsion from the University. A student guilty of a scholastic offence may be subject to one or more penalties, examples of which are: 1. Reprimand. 2. Requirement that the student repeat and resubmit the assignment. 3. A failing grade in the assignment. 4. A failing grade in the course in which the offence was committed. 5. Withdrawal from the program. 6. Suspension from the University for up to three academic years or for a portion of one academic year including the academic session in which the student is currently registered. 7. Expulsion from the University.

Cine-Perception E-Book links:

*Laughter an Essay*

<https://www.vitalsource.com/pe/en-us/products/laughter-henri-bergson-v9780486113579?term=9780486113579>

*Creative Evolution*

<https://www.vitalsource.com/pe/en-us/products/creative-evolution-henri-bergson-v9780486122809?term=9780486122809>

*Cinema 1*

[https://www.amazon.com/Cinema-1-Movement-Image-Ebook-PDF-ebook/dp/B091KQ244M/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=9780816614004&qid=1629747559&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Cinema-1-Movement-Image-Ebook-PDF-ebook/dp/B091KQ244M/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=9780816614004&qid=1629747559&sr=8-1)

*Cinema 2*

[https://www.amazon.com/Cinema-2-Time-Image-Ebook-PDF-ebook/dp/B097ZDZY2X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?dchild=1&keywords=9780816616770&qid=1629747722&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Cinema-2-Time-Image-Ebook-PDF-ebook/dp/B097ZDZY2X/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=9780816616770&qid=1629747722&sr=8-1)