We want for our purposes to distinguish between three periods in the evolution of cinema as art in relation to what constitutes the “real” in the process of montage.

The first period is that of silent (speechless) cinema, when sound was not there yet: the 1920s and 1930s. Germans and Russians and Americans had made great contributions before the addition of sound effects. The Russian Sergei Eisenstein and the American Griffith come to mind here. In the case of Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein (1898–1948), he became known for his montage techniques in *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925), a commemoration of the Russian Revolution of 1905, which is celebrated for its pioneering use of montage. To think of montage is to think of cinema in relation to images and imagery. In silent movies language is introduced through frame-captions which carries dialogue, monologue, descriptions, or the ruminations of a chorus-narrator.

The second period—the 1940s—when sound cinema becomes the norm. Montage is not enough; narrative becomes predominant; but such predominance is only achieved through the work of the camera: reality appears as such in the way it is framed. Hence rather than pure imagery we’re into realism, or the absorption of reality into the work of the camera. This is the period that stretches from Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane*, and the adoption of the depth-of-field, to that of Italian neorealism. The 1940s and 1950s witness a rapid maturation of the realist style.

Claims of various New Waves in particular among the French (*nouvelle vague*) and the Germans has proven a bit premature, as there is no radical break between what the 1960s have achieved and the previous decades when sound was introduced in the 1930s and 1940s. We’ll therefore contextualize the new waves in terms of continuities rather discontinuities.
The third period has to be postponed to the 1970s. The irreversible death of Italian neorealism (marked by the premature death of Pasolini in 1975) which comes hand-in-hand with the predominance of a Hollywood revamped style of narration in the likes of Francis Ford Coppola (The Godfather, Apocalypse Now, The Conversation), Martin Scorsese, and George Lukas (the Star Wars series). This comes in conjunction with the eclosion of artistic filmmaking beyond its traditional niches in Europe (Italy, France, Germany), Russia, and the United States of America. Filmmaking would expand to developing countries like Iran, Romania, Thailand, Turkey, Argentina, Korea, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and Portugal. There is therefore a universalization of film-art far beyond its traditional restricted European and American frontiers. Indeed, as European cinema has become provincialized, the American cinema has maintained its world hegemony, only to be challenged by marginal styles of resistance from Korea to Iran and beyond.

Since its inception, cinema works with images. An image represents things—a reality—in a two-dimensional pane (in the last decade a three-dimensional perspective has been added). But the image itself is not a representation per se: the image is the representation that has been added to the represented thing. The represented object (being) is represented in a particular manner through framing, depth of field (or lack thereof), the distribution of light, color (or lack thereof: black-and-white photography), the décor and the makeup and dress outfits of the actors (whether professional or not). We’ll refer to all this as the plasticity of the image, by which is meant the power of the image to represent things through a system of representations that holds representation in relation to the represented being.

Besides the image, the second element that makes a film possible is the montage. By this we mean the organization of the imagery, as defined above, within time-space sequences. It is such time-space organization that creates meaning for the spectator: the spectator reads a film through its montage; whereby she would discover meaning in montage itself. In the same way that the novel as a literary device is organized around plots, characters, and one or more narrators that would shape its general narrative and sub-narratives, the narrative of film (a film’s narrative) comes to light through montage.

A film typically consists of frame-sequences, which could be short (just few seconds long), or long (long takes that could last for minutes without a single forced cut), and the montage is precisely the very organization of those frame-sequences into something meaningful. It is such organization that creates meaning for the spectator. The spectator-as-subject discovers his subjectivity in the very act of creating meaning from the process of montage. What is at stake here is the subjectivity of the spectator: how such subjectivity affirms itself through the process of montage. How the spectator reads certain scenes individually, assembles them into a bigger meaning: a process of power-knowledge unfolds; knowledge consists of discourses that document how things are done, and the subjects who do them. The film-montage assumes a place (space) for the subject; the subject whose capacity is to read the montage and find meaning. The ability to read, to discover and create meaning, is like other artworks (the closest of which is undeniably the novel), an infinite process which is rooted in the subjectivity of the spectator. The spectator, however, is enmeshed in power-knowledge relations; relations that are mediated by discourses and discursive formations. The spectator finds himself as subject through such
discursive formations. The latter do not necessarily emanate from a subject, but create a space (location) for the subject-as-spectator.

How does the spectator read? In the fragmentation of time-sequences, the only purpose is to create meaning from the materiality of the image, its logic, and dramatis personae of the characters. The image does not show the event; it is only pointed at, or at best alluded to. Meaning is not created from an objective content (assuming such a thing does exist), but from the organization of the elements-events, which are only alluded to in the first place. The meaning is not inside (within) the image, but in what is done to the image, that is to say, the process of montage. What is important in the image is not what it adds to reality, but what is revealed through montage. Each frame is constructed through a narrative-discursive hub: from the basic framing, the depth-of-field, the light, the actors, to elaborate narratives. The key point is to understand the construction of imagery and montage through the narrative-discursive complex and the place of the subject in interpretation (hermeneutics of the self).

In sum, we want to explore montage as a discursive and non-discursive practice. There are several practices at stake here, all of which constituted within the political web of power and knowledge. To look at montage as practice means that we are looking at montage as politically constructed: how montage is made in the process of working with images. It is how the work of images is concretely practiced that reveals the political edge of montage as a web of power and knowledge relations and as a mode of subjectivation and form of governmentality.

By the time sound comes into the picture silent cinema had already matured into an nascent young art, as it had already mastered the combination of working with imagery and montage. The period between 1930 and 1940 will for its part witness the first wave of mature sound movies in particular in the USA, France, and Germany, followed by a second wave in the 1940s and 1950s. What is of interest to us in this regard is a new look at reality, in particular in Italian neorealism as pioneered by the likes of Vittorio de Sica and Roberto Rossellini.

The 1940s and 50s have undeniably witnessed another age of maturity in filmmaking, not only in relation to the silent era but also from the perspective of the 1930s. We want to examine one style in particular which evolved in postwar Italy known as “neo-realism.” What is the “real” in neo-realism, and how does that real introduce new elements of construction in the art of montage and imagery?

The real in Middle Eastern Cinéma

Documentary vs. fiction. The Iranian films have blurred the classical distinction between “documentary” and “fiction.” The post-Fascist era of Italian neorealism, beginning with Rossellini’s Rome Open City, has famously introduced “documentary”-style shooting in scenes incorporated within larger fictional narratives. The so-called “documentary” style consisted on a reliance on non-professional actors, genuine locations (e.g. street scenes), and long takes with fixed or hand-held cameras. It also implied, albeit very partially, the non-existence of a fully developed scripted narrative. Either narratives would be very sketchy, or else “action” per se and the chronology of events would be relegated to a secondary role. But by the time neorealism had matured, it had everything into it but the
“documentary” claim. Thus, both Antonioni’s “existential” ennui style, and Pasolini’s thematic abstractionism, had foregone much of the documentary aspect of neorealism. It is well known that Antonioni, who had in the past filmed documentaries, repeatedly stated his sense of the inadequacy of such formal structure in its neorealist vision, which in Italy had found in Rossellini its most inventive representative. The reason why I bring the dilemmas of Italian neorealism in relation to contemporary Iranian cinema is because of similarities in the documentary versus fiction paradigm. On one hand, Iranian cinema introduced long shots (often with digital hand-held cameras) that look like mini-documentaries within broader fictional accounts. The street-based long-camera takes are in particular notoriously hard to embrace, as they cannot be cut and edited—they have to be repeated rather than edited (e.g. Panahi’s opening in the Circle). Herein lies their force: because they cannot be the subject of a traditional cut-and-paste editing, they place the spectator in an uncomfortable position of different expectations, while they breathe a fresh air into film. On the other hand, those mini-documentaries are not as “improvised” as it might first appear. As Kiarostami’s 10 shows, they could be as well crafted as films within traditional narratives and could even require more off-stage lengthy preparations with actors and camera equipment. In the final analysis, the major breakthrough might not be the “documentary” versus “fiction” dilemma, as much as a new way to practice montage. As the French critic André Bazin had already noted, the failure of montage lies in its decision to pre-interpret, through the syntagmatic order it elaborates, every narrative fiction. In other words, the essence lies in changing the rules of montage, and providing a fresh alternative to classical editing, while forcing the viewer to look differently (e.g. a long uninterrupted take, or when two people talk, the camera would hesitate to directly frame them, but frame something else—hors champs).

At a deeper level, some of these films (Kiarostami’s ABC Africa and The Wind Will Carry Us) recapitulate aspects of questioning the relationships that the filmmaker nurtures with his material, in particular the portrayed characters or the issues at stake (AIDS, suicide, the status of women). There is a moral, if not ethical and political, tension in some of these films between what ought to be shown, and what is expected to be depicted within the frame. For example, The Wind Will Carry Us portrays media people from the city arriving in a remote and impoverished village to wait for villagers to die. The moral dilemma, if any, of the main protagonist-cum-engineer in terms of what to show, what to conceal, what we can or cannot understand of the Other, are simultaneously those of the filmmaker himself who nurtures similar doubts as to the “viability” of his own enterprise—the very possibility of making a film about people he knows nothing about, and whose life style is so different from his own. Indeed, such questioning is not portrayed abstractly, as if could be read within the boundaries of each frame: what is inside the frame, and what remains excluded, concealed, hors-champs. There is that nagging feeling that it’s pornographic to show too much of whatever does not need to be shown, namely, that showing “too much” human suffering for the sake of it could imply gratuitous voyeurism. What is therefore at stake here is that the narrative process incessantly questions itself, and its own right of existence as narrative, from the inside. To elaborate, at times it is the very breakdown of the narrative into a non-narrative which provides a fresh opportunity for the viewer to question the possibility of narration as a linear coexistence of incompatible elements—to question what we see, and
how we see. Says Kiarostami in relation to his minimalist approach in 10: “There are basically two kinds of storytelling. One’s direct, very eventful, like a serial. The other’s about looking at something and finding something in it for yourself...not a story, but something more…” (quoted in Geoff Andrew, 10, London: BFI, 2005, 57). Ultimately, the aim would be to think this film through the image—how the image works; how the film writes itself through the image—rather than through narrative and discourse. The critical tools, whereby the filmmaker distances himself from his work, are set within that work through the image, rather than in the narration itself. What is more than the story line, except for the writing of the image?

Narratives and micro-histories. The issue of “narratives” (or lack thereof) hence turns into a crucial topoi in conjunction with the documentary/fiction issue: Do Iranian films, as pioneered for instance by the likes of Kiarostami and Panahi, have any “narratives,” or are they constructed on other types of narratives? (The same questions could be raised in relation to the Turkish filmmaker Nuri Bilge Ceylan, in particular Distant [Uzak, 2002].) I think that the issue of narrative may be as misleading as that of the documentary-style montage. In effect, the strength of Iranian films lies less in the structure of their narratives, or their presumed documentary style, than in the montage itself. It is, indeed, the montage that would promote particular scenes within a syntactic arrangement. For example, Jafar Panahi’s White Balloon is entirely constructed from the time framework of a small girl who is completely focused on recovering the object that she had lost that same day. In this case, the novelty is that the time of the movie coincides with the action’s real time—a couple of hours within the consciousness of a small girl. As everything is constructed from the eyes of a single protagonist, the spectator is left with no other perspective but that of the girl herself, which requires perhaps a different level of concentration and focus. Reliance on non-professional actors, in conjunction with a quasi-documentary style, improvisation and hand-held (digital) camera techniques, all give that whimsical impression that there is no constructed narrative. But that’s, I think, an illusion of montage. Actually, as witnessed in Kiarostami’s And the Wind Will Carry Us, and 10, there’s a great deal of formalisms deployed in the combination of narrative structure, acting, framing, and editing, all of which point to more premeditated than improvised techniques.

Political and social prohibitions. It is well known that since the 1978 revolution the Iranian cinema has operated within all sorts of constraints: women must wear a scarf or chador (“veil”), intimate/sexual scenes are forbidden, and the heritage of the Islamic revolution cannot be critiqued. Yet, in spite of all such political and social constraints, there is a great deal of freedom and experimentation in Iranian films. What is more paradoxical is that, by all accounts, the Iranian cinema has witnessed a golden era in comparison to the 1950s and 1960s first New Wave when Iran was under the “secular” régime of the Pahlavis. It seems therefore that Iranian cinema managed to operate even better—if not more freely—within its more “natural” setting of Shi‘i Islam. In other words, it is precisely the prohibitions imposed by an authoritarian Islamic régime that transformed Iranian cinema into a critical apparatus, far more trenchant in its observations than its more liberal Turkish or Israeli counterparts.
GENERAL

There are 12 films in conjunction with weekly readings that we'll discuss collectively in class. Your participation is essential for the success of the seminar.

In addition to a two-draft free-topic paper (see below the section on papers), you'll submit two interpretive essays based on our films and weekly readings: you'll receive sets of questions for each. **Each paper counts as 25 percent of the total. All interpretive essays are take-home and you will be given a week to submit them.** The purpose of the interpretive essays is to give you the opportunity to go “beyond” the literal meaning of a film/text and adopt interpretive and “textual” techniques. A failing grade in all interpretive essays means also a failing grade for the course, whatever your performance in the term-paper is. **All essays and papers must be submitted on time according to the set deadlines below.**

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<tr>
<th>First Interpretive Essay: March 3</th>
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<td>Second Interpretive Essay: May 5</td>
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<td>Term-paper: 2 drafts 10–15% each</td>
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<td>- First draft due on April 7</td>
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<td>- Second draft on May 5</td>
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Presentations, Sakai postings, and class attendance and participation 25%

- It is essential that you complete all readings on time, and that you come to class well prepared. **Always come to class with the required book:** we'll discuss all films and readings extensively.

- University regulations require a minimum 70 percent attendance record. If you are absent for more than a week, or if you submit a late paper, or you are unable to attend your assigned presentation, or your attendance record for the semester is low, you must in all such situations provide me with a written statement of apology with valid documentation (disability, hospitalization, accident, jury duty, travel, etc.).

- The first and second interpretive essays are based on our weekly films and readings. They consist of a single essay for which you'll receive the appropriate questions two weeks prior to the above dates, and you'll submit them in class.

- The use of electronic equipment (laptops, tablets, phones) is strictly prohibited, except for note-taking. Even though some of the books may be available as e-publications, it is preferable that you primarily rely on printed copies, in particular that we'll devote much of our class efforts to the reading and interpretation of texts.

- For all papers follow the procedures outlined below in the section on papers.

- It's your responsibility to submit all papers *in class* on time at the deadlines below, and an identical e-copy on Sakai. Late papers will be graded accordingly, and papers submitted a week after the deadline will be graded F. Do not e-mail your papers.

- Each non-submitted paper will receive the grade of F, and your final grade will be averaged accordingly.

- The mid-term paper is a free-topic based on a topic(s) of your own choice.

- If you do not show up for an assigned presentation, you'll be graded F.
The seminar consists of a combination of 12 films that will be shown in class each Tuesday, and one book. In each session we'll discuss one film and the reading assignments. It would be preferable that you view the films on your own before coming to class. All dates, assignments, readings and films could be subject to change, pending on our progress throughout the semester. You'll be notified of any change on Sakai. Additionally, you may be requested to do presentations either on the films or related readings.

Required reading

Recommended
André Bazin, *What is Cinema?/Qu’est-ce que le cinéma?*
Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma I & II: L’image-temps & L’image-mouvement.*
Geoff Andrew, *10*, BFI Publishing 1-84457-069-X.

Films/DVD availability
Most films should be available on the American market on DVD, zone 1, NTSC format. US copyright laws do not authorize making copies of privately owned DVDs to circulate around.

If you’ve missed a session, or if you would like to review a film privately on your own, you could either check for the DVD at the Cudahy library, or in other libraries in the Chicago area, or rent it from one of the popular stores (Facets).

You can also check DVD availability at the following services:
- Netflix (rental): Netflix.com
- Amazon.com
- Facets multimedia (Fullerton, Chicago): http://www.facets.org/
WEEKLY FILMS

1. January 21: Chien Andalou (Luis Buñuel, Spain, 1929)
2. January 28: Battleship Potemkin (S.M. Eisenstein, Russia, 1925)
3. February 4: Bicycle Thieves (Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1948)
4. February 11: Paisan (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1946)
5. February 18: Persona (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1966)
6. February 25: À bout de souffle/Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1960)
7. March 3: Discussion of European Cinema

March 3: First Interpretive Essay deadline.

8. March 17: Ali: Fear eats the soul (Werner Fassbinder, Germany, 1974)
10. April 7: A short film about killing (Krzysztof Kieslowski, Poland, 1988)

April 7: Term-paper first draft.

11. April 14: Ma nuit Chez Maude (Eric Rohmer, France, 1969)
12. April 21: Barbara (Christian Petzold, Germany, 2013)
13. April 28: Discussion of term-papers

Final papers are due on May 5th: Second Interpretive Essay & Final term-paper draft.
PAPERS

You are requested to write one major research paper to be submitted on May 5. You will have to submit, however, a first draft of this paper on April 7. The first draft should be as complete as possible and follow the same presentation and writing guidelines as your final draft, and it will count as 10% of your total grade unless the final draft is of superior quality. The purpose of the first draft is to let you assess your research and writing skills and improve the final version of your paper. It is advisable that you choose a research topic and start preparing a bibliography as soon as possible. I would strongly recommend that you consult with me before making any final commitment. It would be preferable to keep the same topic for both drafts. You will be allowed, however, after prior consultation, to change your topic if you wish to do so.

Papers must be related to film and film theory in Europe, and must include the analysis of at least one film of your own choice. Papers with broader topoi must first receive instructor’s approval. Papers should be analytical and conceptual. Avoid pure narratives and chronologies and construct your paper around a main thesis.


**May 5: FINAL DRAFT DEADLINE**

Keep in mind the following when preparing your preliminary and final drafts:

- once you’ve decided on a paper–topic and prepared a preliminary bibliography, post an abstract and bibliography of your topic on Sakai. Your abstract should include: (i) title; (ii) description; (iii) sources; (iv) methodology (e.g. suggestions on how to read sources). Your preliminary draft will not be accepted unless you’ve submitted an online abstract before March 30.
- preliminary drafts should be submitted on time, April 7.
- preliminary drafts should be complete and include footnotes and an annotated bibliography. (The Turabian reference above is annotated: it briefly spells what the book is about and to whom it might be useful.)
- do not submit an outline as a first draft.
- incomplete and poorly written first drafts will not be accepted, and you’ll be advised to revise your first draft completely.
- if you submit a single draft throughout the semester, you’ll receive F for 10% of the total and your final grade will be averaged accordingly.
- your final draft should take into consideration all the relevant comments provided on your earlier draft:
  - all factual and grammatical mistakes should be corrected, in addition to other
stylistic revisions.
• passages indicated as “revise” or “unclear” or “awkward” should be totally revised.
• when specific additional references have been suggested, you should do your best to incorporate them into your material.
• there might be several additional suggestions in particular on your overall assumptions and methodology. It will be up to you to decide what to take into consideration.
• if you're interested in comments on your final paper and interpretive essay, request an appointment by e-mail.

Please use the following guidelines regarding the format of your papers:

• use 8x10 white paper (the size and color of this paper). Do not use legal size or colored paper.
• only type on one side of the paper.
• should be double spaced, with single spaced footnotes at the end of each page and an annotated bibliography at the end (see bibliography below).
• keep ample left and right margins for comments and corrections of at least 1.25 inches each.
• all pages should be numbered and stapled.
• a cover page should include the following: paper’s title, course number and section, your name, address, e-mail, and telephone.

Electronic forum

This course is listed on the Loyola Sakai webpage to freely post messages and conduct discussions: login at <sakai.luc.edu> and follow the instructions on each forum.

Besides a synopsis of all your presentations and term-paper, you must post each week a news item on the Middle Eastern and/or world art scenes and other topics of your own choice. An Op-Ed or a reply to a posting are considered valid entries. The instructions are provided on each forum.

Recommended films

Italy
Rossellini, Rome Open City, Roma, città aperta [1945]
Rossellini, Viaggio in Italia [1953]
Rossellini, Paisà [1946]
Vittorio De Sica, Ladri di biciclette [1948], Bicycle Thief
Vittorio De Sica, Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini [1970]
Antonioni, L’avventura
Antonioni, La notte
Visconti, *Rocco and His Brothers, Rocco e i suoi fratelli*,
Fellini, *Dolce vita*
Pasolini, *Accatone; Teorema*
Paolo & Vittorio Taviani, *Padre padrone* [1977].
Nanni Moretti, *Caro diario* [1993]; *Mia Madre* [2015]

**Israel**
*Kippur* (Amos Gitai, Israel, 2000)
*Wall* (Simone Bitton, Israel, 2004)
*Ajami* (Scandar Copti & Yaron Shani, 2009)

**Turkey**
*Iki Dil Bir Bavul* [Two languages in a suitcase] (Ozgür Dogan & Orhan Eskikoy, Turkey, 2009)
*Yol* [*Der Weg*] (Yılmaz Güney, Turkey–West Germany, 1982)
*Masumiyet* [Innocence] (Zeki Demirkubuz, Turkey, 1997)
*Distant–Uzak* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Turkey, 2002)
*Once upon a time in Anatolia* (Ceylan, Turkey, 2011)
*Journey to the Sun–Günese yolculuk* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, Turkey–Netherlands–Germany, 1999)
*Waiting for the Clouds–Bulutlari beklerken* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, Greece–Turkey, 2004)
*Angel’s Fall–Melegin düşüşü* (Semih Kaplanoğlu, Greece–Turkey, 2005)
*Gegen die Wand [Head-On]* (Fatih Akin, Germany–Turkey, 2004)

**Iran**
*The House Is Black* (Forugh Farrokhzad, Iran, 1962)
*The Cow* (Dariush Mehrju’i, Iran, 1969)
*Leila* (Dariush Mehrju’i, Iran, 1996)
*The Circle* (Jafar Panahi, Iran, 2000)
*Crimson Gold* (Jafar Panahi, Iran, 2004)
*This is not a film* (Jafar Panahi, Iran, 2011)
*Close-Up* (Abbas Kiarostami, Iran, 1990)
*The Wind Will Carry Us Away* (Abbas Kiarostami, Iran, 1999)
*10* (Abbas Kiarostami, Iran, 2002)
*Ten on 10* (Kiarostami, Iran, 2004)
*The Cyclist* (Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Iran, 1989)
*Marrriage of the Blessed* (Mohsen Makhmalbaf, 1989)
*Moment of Innocence* (Mohsen Makhmalbaf, 1996)
*The Apple* (Samira Makhmalbaf, 1998)
*Blackboard* (Samira Makhmalbaf, Iran, 1999)
*20 Fingers* (Mania Akbari, Iran, 2004)
*Manuscripts Don’t Burn* (Mohammad Rasoulof, 2013)
*Fish and Cat [Mahi va gorbeh]* (Shahram Mokri, 2013)
Europe on film

A very Ordinary Citizen (Majid Barzegar, 2015)

Europa
La Bataille d'Alger (Gillo Pontecorvo, Italy, 1966)
Lessons of Darkness (Werner Herzog, Germany, 1992)
Calendar (Atom Egoyan, Canada–Germany–Armenia, 1993)

Arabia
Omar Gatlato (Merzak Allouache, Algeria, 1977)
Bab El Oued City (Merzak Allouache, Algeria, 1994)
El chergui (Moumen Smihi, Morocco, 1975)
Man of Ashes (Nouri Bouzid, Tunisia, 1986)
Golden Horseshoes (Nouri Bouzid, Tunisia, 1989)
al-Maṣir [Destiny] (Yousef Shahine, Egypt)
Ṣubyān wa-banāt (Yousry Nasrallah, Egypt, 1995)

References


Pearson, Lyle. "Four Years of African Film." *Film Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1973): 42.


