

## **Phil 009-301: Identity and the Self in Film**

Spring 2008

T, Th 9-10:30 Logan Hall 493

Instructor: Matthew Katz

Office: Logan 430

Office Hours: T 2-3, and by appointment

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### **Course Description:**

This class is a freshman writing seminar with content taken from the problem of personal identity. The course has three main sections. The first focuses on traditional accounts of the nature of personal identity over time, the second raises the question whether animals and machines may be persons, and the third concentrates on the relationship between personhood and freedom. Films are employed to introduce problems, stimulate discussion, and provide material for essays, and are chosen from a range of genres. Readings are both contemporary and historical. Writing assignments include short essays, weekly journaling, and in-class writing.

### **Required Texts:**

1. John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*.
2. Justin Lieber, *Can Animals and Machines be Persons?*
3. Valerie Ross, ed. *The Practice of Writing*.
4. Maimon, Peritz, Yancey. *A Writer's Resource*.
5. Other readings on Blackboard. [<https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu>]  
[All texts are available at the Penn Book Center, at the corner of 34<sup>th</sup> and Sansom.]

### **Films:**

Films will be screened on the following Tuesday evenings, at 7pm in Logan 402: Jan 22, Feb 5, Feb 19, Mar 4, Mar 25, Apr 8. Films will also be on reserve in Van Pelt Library.

### **Requirements:**

#### **I. Writing Assignments:**

Assigned writing will include, but will not be limited to, the following:

1. (at least) six out-of-class writing assignments
2. various in-class writing assignments
3. journal entry – at least one paragraph per week
4. peer-review

#### **II. Involvement:**

1. Attendance – No more than two unexcused absences will be allowed. Each absence after the second will result in a lower final grade by one third.
2. Punctuality – You must come to class on time. No more than two late arrivals will be allowed. Each late arrival after the second will be considered an absence.

3. Preparation – Everyone is expected to come to class having finished the reading/seen the film/completed the assignment for the day.
4. Participation – Everyone is expected to participate in class discussions, group projects, in-class writing assignments, etc. Everyone is expected to participate fully, both in class and outside, in peer-review. Also note: you will be sharing your writing with the class.

### III. Portfolios:

1. One midterm portfolio, due Feb 21.
2. One final portfolio, due Apr 29.

### **Grading:**

Final grades will be determined solely by the content of the final portfolio. If some requirements are not met (see above) final grades will be determined by the content of the final portfolio, and adjusted accordingly.

The midterm portfolio is required. However, grades given in it will not be counted towards the final grade for the semester. They will serve as guides to let you know how your writing would be graded, were it turned in as part of the final portfolio.

Note that to fulfill the University Writing Requirement, you must earn at least a “C-” for the course.

### **Schedule:**

[Note: Specific dates for readings and assignments, including those from Ross and Maimon et al., are TBA and will be posted on the course Blackboard site.]

Weeks 1-4: [Jan 17-Feb 19]

Topic: Personal Identity over Time

Films: *Being John Malkovich, Memento*

Readings: Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*  
Smullyan, “An Unfortunate Dualist” (BB)  
Rucker, “Software” (BB)  
Dennett, “Where Am I?” (BB)  
Sanford, “Where Was I” (BB)

Weeks 5-9: [Feb 20-Mar 25]

Topic: Can Animals and Machines be Persons?

Films: *Planet of the Apes, Blade Runner*

Readings: Lieber, *Can Animals and Machines be Persons?*  
Allen, "Star Witness" (BB)  
Miedaner, "The Soul of Martha, a Beast" (BB)  
Dick, *Blade Runner* (BB)  
Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs" (BB)  
Lycan, "Robots and Minds" (BB)  
Miedaner, "The Soul of Mark III, Beast" (BB)

Weeks 10-14: [Mar 26-Apr 29]

Topic: Personhood and Freedom

Films: *Minority Report, Mr. Brooks*

Readings: Ekstrom, "The Problem of Human Freedom" (BB)  
Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" (BB)  
Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" (BB)  
Lem, "The Seventh Sally" (BB)